

The Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami Said That Some Officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Are To Visit Iran in the Coming Days

# IRAN NEWS

A Group of Iranian Students and Social Activists Gathered in Tehran, the Capital of Iran, on Wednesday to Protest the Double Standards of the UN Commission

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## HCHR Slams West's Double Standards Toward Unrest in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The High Council for Human Rights of Iran has severely condemned double standards and paradoxical approaches by human rights entities and the West when it comes to protests and unrest in the Islamic Republic.

Vice-President of the Judiciary for International Affairs and Secretary General of the Islamic Republic of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi sent a report to international entities involved in human rights issues as well as member states of the United Nations, condemning the double standards and paradoxical approaches in dealing with unrest in Iran because the human rights bodies adopt completely different stances when it comes to other countries.

While several European states have been engaged in protests inside their territories and they used harsh methods and suppressed peaceful protestors, the supporters of rioters in Iran embark on systemic violation of peaceful protests in their own countries, the secretary general said.

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## Enemy Creates Chaos, Prevents Economic Progress

TEHRAN (IP) - President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said that the enemies seek to keep the people engaging in unrest and insecurity so that the problems are not solved.

Raisi made the remarks at the 14th national conference of managers and officials of Khatam al-Anbiya construction headquarters.

The President said on Wednesday that the enemies have launched a hybrid war on Iran to prevent the country from being powerful in the economic field.

Raisi stressed: "Our Iran must be a strong country, and the economic power is one of the manifestations of a strong Iran; a strong Iran is not possible without a strong economy and infrastructure."

He mentioned the marine economic advancement of some European countries that did not enjoy marine borders as much as Iran: "We possess long coastal areas. Our GDP gained from the sea is 2-3%, while some countries earn more than 50% of their GDP from the sea."

He said that some of the neighboring countries earn as much from the digital economy as Iran did from selling oil, but this was not the case in the country.

The Control Center of the Khatam Anbiya Construction Headquarters was opened with the aim of real-time monitoring and increasing the progress of projects in a ceremony on Tuesday.

## Tehran, Moscow Discuss Joint Production of Passenger Planes



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia are discussing joint production of passenger planes with a capacity of 70-150 seats, Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Manochehr Manteghi says.

Manteghi announced the plan at the opening of the 11th Iran International Airshow & Aerospace Exhibition which he described as a starting point for strategic cooperation and advancement in the country's aviation industry.

"One of the important discussions of this exhibition is networking and providing a platform to achieve the desired accomplishments in the aviation industry," he said.

Manteghi said some of the results of the previous exhibitions were the placement of knowledge-based companies in the supply chain and manufacturing of airplanes and helicopters, as well as the development of UAVs in the commercial sectors of the country, and the creation of a consortium between technological companies for the design and development of airplanes and helicopters.

In the current exhibition, the joint cooperation between Iranian and Russian aviation industries in the field of joint cooperation in the MRO of commercial aircraft, construction of aircraft with a capacity of 100 to 150 passengers by the Russian Aviation Union, as well as joint cooperation in the design and manufacturing of 70 to 100 passenger aircraft and ka226 helicopters in Iran are strictly pursued in Iran, Manteghi emphasized.

Over 90 Iranian and foreign companies are taking part in the 11th Iran International Airshow & Aerospace Exhibition from 13 to 16 December 2022, in the Persian Gulf Kish Island.

The Kish Air Show also known as Persian Gulf Airshow is an aviation exhibition that is held biennially on Kish Island. The first edition of the exhibition was held in 2002, as 11 foreign companies from France, Russia, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, and Switzerland took part in the expo.

In August, the head of the Civil Aviation Organization unveiled plans to produce a 50-seat passenger plane as part of efforts to counter the West which he said is waging a full-scale war against Iran's aviation sector.

"The idea and plan to build a passenger plane has been around for years. It is an order and strategy that the Islamic Republic is following," Mohammad Mohammadi-Bakhsh said.

According to Mohammadi-Bakhsh, three platforms of 50-, 72- and 150-seat passenger planes have been prepared, wherein the country's needs have been taken into account.

The production will start with a 50-seat model at the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries Corporation based in the central city of Shahin Shahr, he said.

The civil aviation program includes a 10-year roadmap charting out the direction which it has to take according to the needs of the regional and extra-regional markets.

Iran's aviation industry depended on foreign consultants, mainly Americans, before the 1979 Islamic Republic to keep the fleet airworthy, but amid the sanctions the job today is done by Iranian specialists.

"Sanctions in the aviation sector is a light word. We are in a full-scale war with the West. In this regard, we use all our capacities to make the sanctions ineffective and less effective, which we have been successful so far," Mohammadi-Bakhsh said then.

## Iran, China Reach Good Agreement on Joint Oil, Gas Fields

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Referring to the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister's visit to Tehran, the Iranian Oil Minister announced that good agreements were agreed upon with the Chinese side regarding the development of oil and gas fields.

Regarding strategic issues, Iran shares the same opinion with the Chinese side, Javad Owji told reporters on the sidelines of the cabinet session on Wednesday.

Owji made the comments, referring to the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister's visit to Tehran.

During this trip, good agreements and MoUs were concluded with the Chinese side regarding the development of oil and gas fields as well as joint fields.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Owji spoke about the oil supply of industrial units during the winter days.

"We will not cut off the fuel of any industrial unit in the winter season," he said, adding that the government will make all efforts to get through the winter without challenges.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Iran-China comprehensive cooperation meeting was held in the presence of the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Hu Chunhua, and Iran's First Vice President.

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## ViewPoint U.S. Plots Unable to Stop IRI's Progress

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

The U.S. since 1979 and the day the Islamic Revolution in Iran came to power has resorted to any plots and sanctions to stop the progress of Tehran or to undermine the influence and power of this emerging power in the region and the world, and now this arrogant power is resorting to another plot and pretext to oust Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Washington due to recent riots in Tehran has found another pretext to exert more pressure against the Islamic Republic of Iran as the U.S. officials are fanning the flame of the riots in Iran either directly or indirectly through its allies.

Women in Iran has turned into a new tool for the U.S. to increase its pressure on Iran as Tehran does now give in the excessive demands of Washington and its allies, and recent incidents in Iran have provided an opportunity for the West to pursue its ill intentions.

The U.S. and its allies' decision to oust Iran from the UN women commission have even seen backlashes from some European countries as they are not ready to follow the U.S. plot.

The Netherlands is one of them which has censured the United States-led political attempt to remove Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), emphasizing that the world body should be a venue for all members of the international community to arrive at a consensus.

Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra said the CSW, dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, is a place for all UN member states, particularly those whose policies are less aligned with the rest, to work together and build a consensus.

Australia, Canada, England, Guatemala and New Zealand have already announced their support for Washington's push to oust the Islamic Republic of Iran from the 45-member commission.

On Tuesday, Iran's High Council for Human Rights denounced a meddlesome and politically-motivated statement issued by the United States and eight other countries over Iranian women's access to online platforms, saying it is definitely "doomed to failure."

The rights council issued a statement on Tuesday in reaction to a joint statement that was released last Thursday by the governments of the United States, Australia, Canada, Chile, Iceland, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

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## U.S., Allies Liable For Israel Crimes

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has condemned the Israeli killing of a female Palestinian teenager, saying the Tel Aviv regime's Western backers are responsible for the unchecked Israeli atrocities that target Palestinians every day.

"Not a day goes by without the world people hearing some news about martyrdom, injury, or detention of Palestinian children, teenagers, and youths at the hands of the apartheid Zionist regime," Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani tweeted on Tuesday. "Not only Israel, but also the regimes in America, England, France, and Germany are, as the [Israeli] regime's main supporters, responsible for these atrocities and should answer in the dock," he added.

The remarks came two days after 16-year-old Jana Majdi Zakameh was killed in the city of Jenin in the north of the Tel Aviv-occupied West Bank, after an Israeli sniper targeted and fatally shot her in the head.

The Israeli military alleges that the victim was killed during Israeli forces' clashes with Palestinians in the city.

It also claimed that an initial review of the incident had found a "high probability" that Zakameh had been killed by "the accidental fire of" Israeli forces that had been "directed at Palestinian gunmen during the battle."

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## Supreme Leader Condolences Death of Tireless Ex-Minister

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has offered condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the former minister of road and urban development, Rostam Qassemi, over his unexpected death on December 8.

In the message, the Ayatollah Khamenei described Qassemi as a "revolutionary, tireless" minister who continued to serve the people and the country until the very end of his life.

At the end, Ayatollah Khamenei prayed for Qassemi who passed away on Thursday due to cancer. Qassemi, who had stepped down from his post as minister last month, died after struggling with cancer for two months.

## Leader Calls for Punishment of Thugs Behind Murder of Sunni Cleric

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



"Relevant institutions are duty-bound to rapidly and seriously prosecute and punish the criminals," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also commiserated with the Sunni cleric's family and all the population of Sistan and Baluchestan province, especially the residents of Khash and Iranshahr cities, and prayed for God's mercy upon all Iranians.

Iran's Intelligence Ministry announced in a statement on Tuesday that it had identified and arrested three of the main terrorist elements behind Molavi Abdulvahed Rigi's assassination.

"These terrorist elements were planning to abscond from the country after the assassination of the martyr when they were arrested" by the intelligence forces, the statement noted.

Iran's Intelligence Ministry said further information regarding the case will subsequently be released.

The provincial officials confirmed on Friday that Molavi Abdulvahed Rigi had been kidnapped and murdered by unknown individuals as the police investigated the case.

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has denounced the abduction and assassination of renowned Sunni cleric Molavi Abdulvahed Rigi in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, stating that those responsible for the heinous crime have actually served parties opposed to the prosperity and unity of all Iranian ethnic groups.

Ayatollah Khamenei, in a message released on Wednesday, expressed deep condolences over the tragic incident, calling upon relevant authorities to promptly and seriously prosecute those involved, and bring them to justice.

The kidnapping and the martyrdom of "this benevolent and brave scholar filled my heart with great sorrow. The bandits who committed the crime are dishonored mercenaries of enemies opposed to the prosperity of our Baluch compatriots and the unity of the entire Iranian nation," the Leader wrote.

## Getting Rid of Dependency Key to Political Independence

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said that the key to the political independency is to get rid of dependency.

Speaking at an annual Conference of Khatam-al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, held in Tehran on Wednesday, the IRGC chief commander emphasized, "We must be strong and act strongly in order to overcome the existing problems."

In the contemporary world of today, one cannot be weak and act independently, he said, adding that if nations and governments are not strong, they will collapse in a short while.

Emphasizing that the noble nation of Islamic Iran has chosen to be powerful adding that political independence cannot be achieved without having power and attaining self-reliance in the production field.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Major General Salami said that the country will be progressed with diligence and perseverance relying upon its domestic capabilities and capacities.

The enemies of the country want the Iranian people to be dependent on them while the noble nation of the country has chosen the right path of acting independently in line with overcoming the existing problems, he underlined.

Salami once again pointed out that getting rid of dependency is the key to achieving political independency and this issue must be taken into serious consideration.

Independence means not accepting the influence of others' will so that Iranian people want to act according to their national will while enemies of the country want exactly the opposite, he added.

## Tehran, Tokyo Ink MoU on Climate Change

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Japan in Tehran signed a MoU on reducing the consequences of climate change.

Pir-Hossein Kolivand, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society made the remarks in a meeting with Japan's ambassador to Iran Aikawa Kazutoshi.

With 100 years of continuous experience in disaster management, the Iranian Red Crescent has valuable experiences to offer, Kolivand stated.

The entity is planning to build a training park to deal with



natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, he further noted.

The Japanese envoy, for his part, said that climate change has now increased the occurrence of natural disasters.

Mutual cooperation will be helpful and effective in responding to the incidents, he added.

Japan has inaugurated the main project to control flood problems coinciding with the drought, he said, voicing his country's readiness to work with the Iranian side on the adverse consequences of climate change.

## Tehran Censures Political Shows by EU Council

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has censured the anti-Iran measures taken by the Council of the European Union in the aftermath of foreign-backed riots in the country.

Amirabdollahian denounced "certain political shows" that have been put on display by the council under the pretext of defending the issue of human rights.

The top diplomat made the remarks during a telephone conversation with his Irish counterpart Simon Coveney.

The European Council has imposed a slew of sanctions against Iranian natural and legal entities since the September death in police custody of an Iranian woman, Mahsa Amini.

In addition to the coercive economic measures, the European council's members taken the podium on numerous occasions ever since to attack Iran's response to the foreign-backed riots that ensued Amini's death and caused the death of around 200 Iranians.

Iran has returned the adversarial measures and meddlesome statements with sanctions against European individuals and institutions.

On a separate note, the Iranian official addressed the issue of talks between the Islamic Republic and world powers aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

The US left the deal, which is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in 2018, and returned the draconian sanctions that the agreement had lifted.

The foreign minister reiterated Iran's readiness for conclusion of a "good, sustainable, and strong agreement", but said the country "will not cross its redlines, which consist of meeting the Iranian people's interests."

Amirabdollahian and Coveney also addressed such issues as the status of the bilateral ties as well as regional and international subject matters.



## Iranian, Russian Prosecutor Generals Ink 2 Cooperation Documents

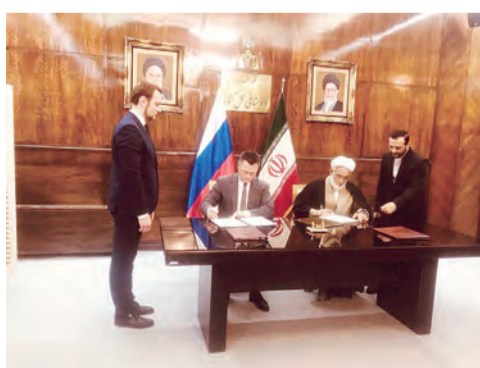
TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Prosecutor General Hojjatoleslam Mohammad-Jafar Montazeri and his Russian counterpart Igor Krasnov here on Tuesday signed two judiciary cooperation documents.

Montazeri at the beginning welcomed his Russian counterpart arguing that five years ago when Iran was just an observing member in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) he had proposed that an active Secretariat Office and a committee will pursue the issue of SCO prosecutor generals' meeting, and that proposal was approved.

He said that now Iran is an official member of the SCO, and Iran and Russia have much deeper relations, which calls for stronger judiciary relations between the two countries, among our two countries' other comprehensive relations.

Montazeri said that Iran and Russia have similar challenges and share enemies, that have imposed different types of problems against both countries, one of which is sanctions, imposed by the United States and some European countries for years.

"Of course, Iran has mightily left behind the hardships of sanctions, but their effects still remain in our country," he said.



The Russian Federation prosecutor general, too, expressing delight to be visiting Iran, and appreciating his Iranian counterpart's invitation, said, "Iran joined the SCO this year and its presence there will lead to closer relations between the two countries judiciary officials, as well."

Igor Krasnov also referred to his upcoming meeting with the head of the Iranian General Surveillance Organization, arguing that since some parts of that organization's duties are similar to the prosecutors' job, in future meetings a representative from the organizations, too, can be invited.

"I believe the two countries' cooperation will contribute to boosting both countries and both nations' security. The officials in different sectors, including those involved in the campaign against terrorism are present in our delegation, and in this meeting, we can reach an agreement on members of the workgroup, and the time schedule."

Igor Krasnov added that the entire acts must be on time and take place rapidly.

"We are ready for direct cooperation, but for other legal and judiciary acts, too, our ambassador is here for rapid reactions," he said.

## Historical Relations, Good Basis for Iran-Belgium Constructive Interaction

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign minister said in a phone talk with his Belgian counterpart that the historical relations between Iran and Belgium are a good basis for constructive bilateral talks and interactions.

Hossein Amirabdollahian and Hadja Lahbib in their Tuesday evening phone talk focused on the most important issues of mutual interest, regional developments, and bilateral and international developments.

The Iranian foreign minister considered the old record of bilateral relations as a good basis for their further deepening and broadening.

He also welcomed the further expansion of bilateral ties in various political, economic, and cultural fields, based on mutual respect, and to secure both nations' interests.

Ms. Hadja Lahbib, too, referring to the importance of the background of bilateral relations and the Islamic Republic of Iran's role in the region, said, "Our contacts and information about the realities in Iran play an important role in the establishment of a clear comprehension about the developments."

The two foreign ministers in their phone talk also focused on the most important issues in bilateral ties, including the consular issue.

## Air Pollution Inflicting Losses Worth Up to \$11b in Iran

TEHRAN (IFP) - The head of the Iranian Parliament's Environment Faction says air pollution inflicts damages worth between 7 to 11 billion dollars on the country each year.

Somayeh Rafi'ei said in a note published by her office that more than 41,700 people lost their lives in Iran in 2021 due to air pollution, citing data by the World Bank.

She criticized the government for failing to take effective action toward improving the air quality in large cities.

The parliamentarian warned that the number of days with unhealthy air quality has doubled in the Iranian capital, Tehran, since the start of the current Persian calendar year on March 21, compared to two years ago.

The number of days with highly unhealthy and dangerous air quality has also increased by 200 percent, she added, offering similar alarming figures for other air pollution hotspots in the country.

Earlier, Jafar Tashakori Hashemi, who heads the Transportation Commission of Tehran's City Council, said Tehran had been ranked as the 21st polluted capital city in the world.

Over the past days, the unhealthy levels of air pollution have forced the closure of schools in Tehran.

## 194 Lawmakers React to France's Interference in Iran Internal Affairs



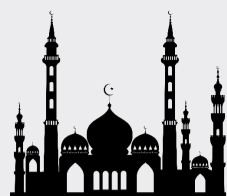
TEHRAN (IRNA) - 194 members of Majlis (the Iranian Parliament) in a statement slammed France's interference in Iran's internal affairs.

Recently, the representatives of the French National Assembly and senior French officials, including the president and foreign minister, in an interventionist action contrary to the principle of non-interference in the affairs of countries, which is one of the fundamental principles of international law and the principles included in the United Nations Charter, especially paragraph 7 Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, have made remarks and taken actions seeking intervention in Iran's internal affairs and accused the Islamic Republic of Iran of actions in which France has a long history, the statement reads.

On the one hand, the French president supports the MEK leaders, which is a terrorist group, and holds a meeting with the opposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is officially seeking to overthrow the United Nations member state, it added.

On the other hand, he sends his spies into the country under different guises in order to disturb Iran's national security by participating in riots and managing them, or to damage the vital Iranian centers, the lawmakers said.

France defends the rights of Iranian women while the history books are full of pictures of the crimes they committed during its 30-year-long presence in Algeria, they noted.



## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	11:59
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:12
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:37
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:07

74. Verily he who comes to his Lord as a sinner (at Judgment),- for him is Hell: therein shall he neither die nor live.  
75. But such as come to Him as Believers who have worked righteous deeds,- for them are ranks exalted,-

Surah 20, Ta-ha (74 - 75)

## Iran Ready for Drilling In Arash Field

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN - The CEO of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) says Iran is ready to have drilling operation in the Arash gas field as the country is ahead of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in planning.**

The Arash gas field or Durra gas field is a natural gas field located on the maritime borders of Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. It was discovered in 1967. It began production in 2013 and produces natural gas and condensates.

Speaking on the sidelines of the first conference and exhibition of technology management of knowledge-based products in Iran's oil industry in Tehran, Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said that although Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed a MoU for developing Arash gas field, Iran is ahead of them in planning for oil and gas production and the company has required approval and allocated resources for starting the drilling operation in this field.

He also announced the company's plan to increase the country's gas production capacity by 500 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) by 2029.

"Our dear people should know that the employees of the oil industry are in the true sense of the word doing jihadi work to bring prosperity, comfort and warmth to them," said Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr.

He also touched on the pressure boosting plan of South Pars Gas Field:



"Design, engineering and implementation of pressure boosting for sour gas is a new issue in the world and even the neighboring countries, like us, is in the first stage, that is, design."

Stating that the NIOC has important plans for increasing pressure of the South Pars joint gas field, he added: "Conceptual and basic engineering studies for implementation of the pressure boosting project are in the form of a pilot, and the conceptual and basic studies have already been completed and the design of the turbo compressor to compress gas has progressed 70%."

The deputy oil minister pointed out that in parallel with the implementation of this pilot, the basic engineering work of all phases of South Pars for different hubs is being done, and God willing, these studies will be completed by the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year to March 2023.

Khojasteh-Mehr further announced that gas from Phase 11 of South Pars was to come online in the near future as it is regarded as NIOC's top priority.

He noted that the company is keen to use capacities of the knowledge-based companies provided that it leads to rise in production and enhancing the production output.

## Online B2B Meeting Between Iranian, Spanish Businessmen

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) launched a three-day online B2B meetings between businessmen of Iran and Spain which kicked off yesterday.



According to the ICCIMA, Iranian and Spanish economic activists in the fields of cosmetic and hygienic, home appliances, olive oil, agro machineries and sport supplements are to have B2B online meeting and discuss ways for cooperation. The seven-day meeting officially kicked off yesterday December 14.

Spain is one of Iran's European trade partner that their trade volume has been decreased because of the sanctions.

## Iran-China Officials Reach Financial and Banking Agreement

TEHRAN (MNA) - An Iranian banking official said that the facilitation of trade exchanges, joint investments in the fields of industry, railway, and science were stressed in a meeting with the Chinese financial and banking officials.

Regarding the details of 16 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) inked between Iran and China in a meeting in Tehran between the officials of the two countries, the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Asghar Abolhassani Hastiani said this MoU emphasized facilitating bilateral trade exchanges and joint investments in the industrial, rail, scientific, technology and agricultural fields with the People's Republic of China.

"In that meeting, in order to prepare the ground for the implementation of the cooperation strategic partnership between the two countries of Iran and China, the finalization of suitable financial and banking mechanisms as soon as possible was emphasized and the necessary agreements were made in that regard," according to the deputy CBI governor.

Iranian and Chinese banking officials also agreed to facilitate the banking affairs of Iranians living in China and Iranian traders through eliminating the existing barriers as soon as possible.

## Iran Reports Renewed Increase in Exports to Iraq

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian trade authorities say exports to neighboring Iraq picked up in November after months of dropping sales.

Deputy Iranian trade minister Alireza Peymanpak said that exports to Iraq had topped 4.305 billion in the eight calendar months to November 21, up 4% against the same period last year.

Peymanpak, who serves as head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (PMO), said the government body brought in measures in recent months to reverse a declining trend in Iranian exports to Iraq that had been caused by tighter American restrictions on banking relations between the two countries.

He said, however, that total Iranian exports to Iraq in March-November, including sales of natural gas to the Arab country, had fallen by 24% year on year to reach \$4.665 billion.

The official said Iranian gas exports to Iraq had declined by around \$1.6 billion compared with the eight months to late November 2021. The PMO chief said Iran had supplied increased shipments of steel products, urea, transformers and plastic products to Iraq over the March-November period.

Iraq is Iran's second largest export customer after China. The two neighboring countries aim to reach an annual trade target of nearly \$20 billion in the upcoming years.

## Iran Crude Steel Output Registers 18% Growth in H1

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Director-General of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade for Industries Affairs said that the country's crude steel production volume in the first six months of the current year showed an 18 percent growth.

Seifollah Amiri put the volume of crude steel produced from March 21 to Sep. 22 at 15.3 million tons, saying that it indicates an 18 percent hike as compared to the same period of last year.

It is estimated that the country will produce 47 million tons of crude steel by the yearend (to end March 20, 2023), he added.

Amiri pointed to the production of sponge iron in the country and noted that 17.7 million tons of sponge iron were produced in the first half of the current year, registering a 20 percent hike as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Statistics indicated that 26.2 million tons of iron conglomerate were produced in the country from March 21 to Oct. 22, export of which hit a 162 percent hike.

He went on to say that 10,317,000 tons of steel products were produced in the first seven of the current year, 1,826,000 tons of which were exported, showing an 11 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year.

## IMIDRO Named Top Entrepreneur of Year

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian Mines, Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) was chosen as the top entrepreneur of the year in the 31th Festival of Research and Technology of University of Tehran.

According to the public relations of IMIDRO, in the ceremony, Director of Education, Research and Technology of IMIDRO Mr. Gholamreza Molla Taheri on behalf of the organization felicitated the research week and said that one of the strategies of IMIDRO, as the biggest holding in the field of mines and mining industries, is to empower the mining and mining industries which it requires effective connection between university and industry.

He added that in this line, IMIDRO since 2008 has defined some applied-research projects and totally 80 projects worth of 45b tomans have been defined by the organization. He added that



17 projects worth of 9b tomans are underway in collaboration with University of Tehran. Molla Taheri then pointed to establishment of two university centers of the third kind, adding that establishment of joint IMIDRO and University of Tehran center (UNIDRO) and smart and monitoring technology center of Sharif University of Technology are of the effective actions of IMIDRO in line with reinforcing the connection between industry and university.

He went on to say that currently these two centers are considered as the think-tanks of IMIDRO and IMIDRO is of the few organizations which has handed over its think-tanks to the university centers. He then pointed to the roadmap of the organization and said that smartization of mines by University of Tehran is underway.

Molla Taheri added that IMIDRO tries to employ all scientific capacities of universities of the country and it continues efforts for increasing effective connection between industry and university.

## "Service Date" to Serve" Launched at Tehran Municipality Transport, Traffic Organization

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - The inspection department of Municipality of Tehran launched a scheme called "Service Date" at Tehran Municipality Transport and Traffic Organization for boosting services to the citizens and improving the relation between the organization and citizens.

The plan was launched in the presence of managers and related officials at the Tehran Municipality Transport and Traffic Organization.

Head of Executive Office of Inspection Department of Municipality of Tehran Mr. Mohammad Zolfaghari announced the news of the plan and said that managers and staff of the organization need effective communication in the organization to maintain the integrity, create innovation and fulfill obligations and deployment of the strategy of "Service Date" and "Organizational Excellence" will boost potential capabilities of staff in the individual and collective and organizational levels and will use them. He added that this strategy will both boost justice and make the staff participate in different affairs and to have good communications with them and it will also create incentive and required commitment to serve the citizens in the best way possible.

Zolfaghari noted that "Service Date" will both provide required readiness for the organization

and let the organization identify the grounds for improving and taking required actions for improving the processes and to have proper plans against other assessments.

He added that "Service Date" will be held on weekly basis in the affiliate organizations and departments of the municipality in order that the personnel can attend and raise the issues which will help sincere services to the citizens.

Then deputy of the inspection department of the municipality in the field of transport and traffic Mr. Mohammad Reza Derakhshan said that they are eager to do the jobs professionally and said that they are in the municipality to serve no matter they are principals or reformists and they are all the personnel of the municipality.

He warned against any injustice and unfair bonuses and reiterated that the inspection organization of the municipality is one of the most transparent organizations for inspection in the country as Tehran Municipality is on good track.

Then Advisor to Traffic Department of the municipality Mr. Aliabadi said that if the inspection arm accompanies the managers, then advancement of goals will happen faster.



## MAPNA Group Partakes In Int'l Airshow o Kish Island

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The 11th Iran International Airshow & Aerospace Exhibition kicked off in Kish Island of Iran on Tuesday where MAPNA Group along with some 90 domestic



and foreign companies took part in to display its capacities in the air industry.

During the event and for the first time MAPNA Group is to test live the passenger plane engine and by the way the group is to unveil mobile jet engine mobile testing system which has been researched, designed and manufactured by the group with using the knowhow capacities of the group.

It is worth noting that MAPNA Group with reliance on its knowledge-based and infrastructures capacities as well as its engineering capabilities has entered the air industry and air center of MAPNA Group is missioned to repair and test engines as well as design and manufacture of jet engines with observing all international standards with employing its specialized forces and state-of-the-art technologies of the world in line with boosting capability and capacity of national air fleet.

Over 90 Iranian and foreign companies are taking part in the 11th Iran International Airshow and Aerospace Exhibition from 13 to 16 December 2022, in the Persian Gulf Kish Island.

## Kosovo to Face Opposition For Applying to Join EU

MITROVICA (Reuters) - Kosovo will apply to join the European Union this week, Prime Minister Albin Kurti said, a process that is expected to take years if not decades and is dependent on its normalising relations with Serbia.

Albanian-majority Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 with the backing of the West, following a 1998-1999 war in which NATO intervened to protect the territory.

Kosovo is not a member of the United Nations and five EU states - Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus - refuse to recognise Kosovo's statehood.



## UK PM Announces Crackdown On Illegal Immigration

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain said it planned to bring in new legislation to prevent migrants who cross the English Channel from remaining in the country, as the government tries to control a surge in people arriving in small boats on its southern coast.

The number of people arriving in England across the Channel has more than doubled in the last two years, with government figures showing Albanians account for the highest number of people arriving by this route.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a new five-point strategy for dealing with illegal immigration, including plans to fast-track the return of Albanian asylum seekers and double the number of asylum case workers handling claims.



# Half of Donetsk Under Moscow Control



DONETSK (Dispatches) - More than half of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region is under Russian control but heavy fighting has stalled further advances, a Moscow-installed official said.

The so-called Donetsk People's Republic is one of four areas in Ukraine that Moscow annexed in September in an exercise Ukraine and its allies denounced as a "sham" coercive referendum.

"A little more than 50 percent of the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic has been liberated," Denis Pushilin, the Russian-backed administrator, told Russian state-owned news agency RIA on Tuesday.

Fierce battles in the region in recent weeks have left it unclear which parts of Donetsk are under Russian and Ukrainian control.

Russia has claimed to be gradually advancing its positions, with the defence ministry saying on Monday its offensive killed 30 Ukrainian military personnel the day before.

However, Pushilin said the situation was tough along the Lyman line of contact in the region's north. Ukraine liberated Lyman hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin proclaimed the annexation of Donetsk.

"The situation remains difficult, the enemy is trying to counterattack, but our units are now holding all positions," said Pushilin. "It is not always possible to move forward."

Russia's sustained shelling of the front line in Donetsk has destroyed the city of Bakhmut and heavily damaged the city of Avdiivka, which lies in the region's centre, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday.

On Monday, the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said Russia kept concentrating its efforts to advance and capture both cities.

"Near Bakhmut, the occupiers rained mortar and artillery fire on nearly 20 settlements," it said in an evening update. Nine settlements came under shelling near Avdiivka, the military said.

The United Kingdom's defense ministry said Russia was still likely to be planning deeper advances within Donetsk, but it cast doubt on its ability to do so.

"It is highly unlikely that the Russian military is currently able to generate an effective striking force capable of retaking these areas," it said.

"Russian ground forces are unlikely to make operationally significant advances within the next several months."

Meanwhile on Tuesday Russia dismissed a peace proposal from Ukrainian President Zelenskyy that would involve a pullout of Russian troops, saying Kyiv needed to accept new territorial "realities".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said those realities included Russia's addition of four Ukrainian regions as its "new subjects" - annexations it proclaimed in September but which most countries of the United Nations have condemned as illegal.

He was responding to a request by Zelenskyy to leaders from Group of Seven powers on Monday for more military equipment, support for financial and energy stability, and backing for a peace solution that would start with Russia withdrawing troops from Ukraine, beginning this Christmas.

"These are three steps towards a continuation of hostilities," Peskov said.

"The Ukrainian side needs to take into account the realities that have developed during this time," he added when asked about the proposed Russian troop withdrawal.

"And these realities indicate that new subjects have appeared in the Russian Federation. They appeared as a result of referendums that took place in these territories. Without taking these new realities into account, no kind of progress is possible."

## India Reports Injuries on Both Sides In Border Clash With China

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian troops prevented Chinese soldiers from entering Indian territory on Dec. 9 during a border scuffle that led to injuries on both sides, India's defense minister said on Tuesday, in the first such clash since 2020 between the Asian giants.

The incident occurred in the Tawang sector of India's northeastern Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China's south and is also claimed by Beijing.

The Indian troops "illegally crossed the line to block" a routine patrol of Chinese border troops, a spokesperson from the Western Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said on Tuesday.

"We urge the Indian side to strictly control and restrain the front-line troops, and work with China to maintain peace and security on the border," the spokesperson said.

An Indian defense source told Reuters that patrolling teams from both sides came face-to-face at one of the peaks there and that in an ensuing hand-to-hand fight, some soldiers fell on the rocky surface and injured themselves. Two other sources said around half a dozen Indian soldiers suffered minor injuries.



## Protests in Sudan Against Deal to End Post-Coup Crisis

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Hundreds of Sudanese protesters took to the streets to protest a recent deal aimed at ending the crisis caused by last year's military coup, AFP reporters said.

"No to the settlement," protesters chanted, heading toward the presidential palace in the capital Khartoum.

Near-weekly protests have rocked Sudan since army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan led an October 2021 military coup derailing a transition to civilian rule. Sudan's short-lived transition was installed following the 2019 ouster of president Omar al-Bashir.

On December 5, military leaders and multiple civilian factions signed the deal as the first component of a planned two-phase political process.

But critics have slammed the deal, which largely fell short on specifics and timelines, as "vague" and "opaque".

"We are against this deal, which doesn't provide any clarity regarding our demands of justice and accountability," said Nisreen, a 38-year-old protester in Khartoum.

"We no longer trust the military. We gave them the trust once before and they later launched the coup."

Others carried banners demanding justice for people killed during anti-coup protests.

At least 122 people have been killed during a crackdown on demonstrations, according to pro-democracy medics.

Last week's deal was signed by Burhan and his deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo as well as civilian groups including the Forces for Freedom and Change, which was ousted in last year's coup.

During the signing ceremony, Burhan vowed that the military would "go back to the barracks".

Civilian and military signatories to the deal have pledged to hammer out the details of transitional justice, accountability and security reform "within weeks".

## Supporters of Bolsonaro Attack Police Headquarters

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Supporters of far-right Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attempted to invade the federal police headquarters in the capital Brasilia, in a flash of post-election violence on the day the president's electoral defeat was certified.

Reuters witnesses saw Bolsonaro supporters, many in their trademark yellow national soccer jerseys or draped in Brazilian flags, confronting security forces at police headquarters. Police fired stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the crowd. Nearby buses and cars were set on fire.

Federal police said "disturbances" near the headquarters were being handled with support from capital security forces.

The violence unfolded after a Bolsonaro supporter was detained for allegedly organizing violent "anti-democratic acts," according to the judge who ordered his arrest.

Earlier on Monday, the federal electoral court (TSE) certified the Oct. 30 election victory of Bolsonaro's leftist rival, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, as president. After months of baseless suggestions that Brazil's voting system is vulnerable to fraud, Bolsonaro has neither conceded defeat to Lula nor has he formally blocked the handover of power.

But some of the president's most diehard supporters have blocked highways in protest and camped out in front of army barracks, calling for a military coup to bar Lula from office.

Hundreds of Bolsonaro supporters gathered outside the

presidential residence on Monday afternoon with banners calling for "military intervention." The president joined them for a public prayer but did not address the crowd.

"There's not going to be an inauguration," said Jose Trindade, 58, one of the Bolsonaro supporters in the crowd. "Bolsonaro was re-elected, but they stole it. So only the army can put things in order."

The conspiracy theories and subsequent violence have rekindled memories of the January 2021 invasion of the U.S. Capitol by supporters of former U.S. President Donald Trump. It also raises security concerns about Jan. 1, when Lula takes office in a public ceremony in Brasilia.

Senator Randolfe Rodrigues, a key Lula aide, said there were concerns about the physical safety of Lula and Vice President-elect Geraldo Alckmin, as protesters had surrounded the hotel where he is staying in Brasilia. Lula's team denied reports that Lula would be removed from the hotel by helicopter.

Brasilia's public security officials said they had secured the area around Lula's hotel, and urged motorists to avoid the center of the city where many roads had been closed.

The violence in Brasilia came after Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has led probes into Bolsonaro and his allies, on Monday ordered the temporary arrest of José Acácio Serere Xavante for allegedly carrying out anti-democratic acts.



## European Parliament Removes Kaili From Post Over Graft Charges

STRASBOURG (Dispatches) -

The European Parliament stripped Greek lawmaker Eva Kaili of her senior assembly post over allegations that World Cup host Qatar had bribed her to influence decision-making, charges she has denied.

Kaili, one of 14 vice presidents in the parliament, was among four people arrested and charged in Belgium over the scandal that has triggered outrage in Brussels and risks damaging the European Union's image.

The case, in which police discovered stacks of cash, casts a shadow over the European Parliament which seeks to be a moral compass, criticizing global rights abuses and taking EU governments to task over any hint of impropriety.

Qatar has denied any wrongdoing.

The parliament acted quickly to loosen ties with Kaili, with 625 MEPs voting in favour of the move, only one against and two abstaining.

"The integrity of EuroParl\_EN comes first and foremost," President Roberta Metsola tweeted.

Michalis Dimitrakopoulos, Kaili's lawyer in Greece, said earlier on Tuesday: "Her position is that she is innocent, I can tell you that."

"She has nothing to do with financing from Qatar, nothing, explicitly and unequivocally," Dimitrakopoulos told Open TV in a first public comment. Several EU states including Germany, said the 27-nation union's credibility was at stake. Countries which have faced criticism from the assembly, including EU member Hungary, said it had lost the moral high ground.

Al Marri, Qatar's minister of labour, meets with Kaili, VP of European Parliament, during a meeting in Qatar

"From now on the European Parliament will not be able to speak about corruption in a credible manner," Hungary Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto wrote on Facebook.

Belgian police searched 19 homes and the offices of the parliament from Friday to Monday as part of their investigation and seized computers, mobile phones and cash, some of it found in a suitcase in a hotel room.

None of the four people charged have been formally identified, but Kaili's name was rapidly leaked to the press.



## France Bets on Tech And Transparency To Beat Chinese Caviar



PARIS (Dispatches) - At the fish farm near Bordeaux, Christophe Baudoin is running an ultrasound device over the belly of a large sturgeon to check its eggs.

"Caviar!" he shouts as the monitor shows the right sparkle around each little round ball. "Over-mature!" comes the next shout, indicating the fish's pregnancy cycle has gone too far and the eggs have softened -- losing the crucial crunch. It will go back in the lake to await another cycle in two years.

For the company, Sturia, it's an incredibly laborious process -- they ultrasound some 20,000 fish a year for a total of 300 tons of caviar -- but climate change has made it vital.

Many fish are coming out "over-mature", in part because warmer waters have accelerated the pregnancy cycle.

For the guys standing in the water, scooping up the huge fish for inspection, the winter days when 10 centimeters (four inches) of ice coated the lakes are not entirely missed.

But the change is still shocking.

"It's been 10 years since we've seen any ice on these lakes," said Baudoin.

One in five of the fish died in 2021 when water temperatures hit 30 degrees, five degrees above a sturgeon's comfort zone.

"You might not know each one by name, but it's never nice to pull out a dead fish -- and of course the cost for the group is enormous," said Sturia boss Laurent Dulau.

Fished to the brink of extinction in the wild -- including the once-rich Russian and Iranian waters of the Caspian Sea -- sturgeon now exist almost exclusively in farms, most of them in China.

Sturgeon were fished in France's Gironde river for centuries, but their eggs were given to children, old people and pigs until Russian nobles fleeing the Communist revolution a century ago showed locals their potential.

It became a delicacy in Paris after Armenian emigrants Melkoum and Moucheh Petrossian convinced the Ritz Hotel in Paris to serve caviar in the 1920s.

Farming only started in France in the 1990s, and since it takes up to a decade to raise a sturgeon, progress is painstaking.

Unable to compete with China on quantity, French producers focus on sustainable and healthy farming. The ultrasound avoids unnecessary killing and Sturia sends the meat to be used for rillettes pate, the collagen-rich gonads for cosmetics, and the skin for leather and a specialist glue favoured by violin-makers.

Dulau said the focus on traceability and quality is rebuilding caviar's image after the over-fishing crisis. "The idea is to produce less, but produce better," he said. "People will eat less because it's a lot more expensive, but it will be so good that they'll be satisfied."

But Michel Berthommier, of nearby Caviar Perlita, is frustrated that "nine out of 10, maybe 10 out of 10" French restaurants still source from China. He blamed middle-men for preferring the mark-up on foreign eggs.

"It's bizarre at a time when restaurants are always saying they source their products locally. We sell more to Singapore than restaurants 10 kilometers down the road," he said.

But he said the transparency of French production will win over buyers.

"There used to be a mystery around how these fish were raised and harvested. We have opened our books on how our fish live, how they are fed and selected.

"We can't be number one in production, but we can lead the way in creativity and science."

## Franco-U.S. Satellite Set For Unprecedented Survey of Earth's Water



PARIS (Dispatches) - A Franco-U.S. satellite is due for launch this week on a mission to survey with unprecedented accuracy nearly all water on Earth's surface for the first time and help scientists investigate its impact on Earth's climate.

For NASA and France's space agency CNES, which have worked together in the field for 30 years, it's a landmark scientific mission with a billion dollar budget.

French President Emmanuel Macron went to NASA's Washington headquarters at the end of November alongside US Vice President Kamala Harris.

He highlighted the liftoff -- scheduled for early Thursday on the US west coast -- of the Surface Water and Ocean Topography (SWOT) mission to monitor the levels of oceans, lakes and rivers, including in remote locations.

Its predecessor, TOPEX/Poseidon, launched in 1992, was also a Franco-US joint venture that measured ocean surface to an accuracy of 4.2 centimeters (1.7 inches).

It aided the forecast of the 1997-1998 El Nino weather phenomenon and improved understanding of ocean circulation and its effect on global climate.

The 2.2-tonne SWOT mission will be put into orbit from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

The satellite's primary payload is an innovative instrument to measure the height of water called KaRin, or Ka-band radar interferometer. Its two antennas, separated by a big boom, create paralleled swaths of data.

"We're going to get ten times better resolution than with current technologies to measure sea-surface height and understand the ocean fronts and eddies that help shape climate," said NASA Earth Science Division Director Karen St. Germain.

"It's like looking at a car number plate from space when before we could only see a street," added Thierry Lafon, SWOT project leader at the CNES.

The stakes are high. While the impact of major ocean currents such as the Gulf Stream is known, more local flows and eddies covering dozens of kilometres remain more of a mystery.

But they too affect sea water surface temperatures and heat transfer as well as the absorption by the oceans of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

SWOT will improve weather and climate modelling, the observation of coastal erosion and help track how fresh and saltwater bodies change over time.

With an "optimal" orbit of 890 kilometers (about 550 miles) above Earth, Lafon said SWOT will "take in all the components that affect water levels such as tides and the sun".

NASA says SWOT will survey nearly all water on Earth's surface for the first time.

It will monitor water levels, surface areas and quantities at more than 20 million lakes with shores of more than 250 meters. The entire length of rivers more than 100 meters wide will also be observed.

Water management, flood and drought prevention will be improved, said Lafon.

Flying the satellite to Vandenberg from the Thales Alenia Space (TAS) site in Cannes, southern France, proved a headache.

"Due to the conflict in Ukraine, there were no more Antonov 124s available and the 747 cargo is too small," said TAS project leader Christophe Duplay.

"We decided to ask the USAF to provide one of its C-5 Galaxies."



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## Colombia's Central Bank Set for December Rate Hike

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombia's central bank is set to raise its key interest rate this week at its final meeting of the year and will be under pressure for another hike starting in 2023 as inflation expectations keep rising and economic growth remains at potential, a Reuters poll showed.

In the poll, 13 out of 14 analysts said the central bank would raise benchmark interest rates by 100 basis points to 12% this month, while one projected a rise of half a percentage point to 11.5%.

If the majority market forecast is met, interest rates could reach levels unseen since December 1999 and would have risen by 1,025 basis points since the beginning of the upward cycle in September last year.



## Positive Effects of Low Rates Policy To Be Felt More Soon in Turkey

ANKARA (Dispatches) - President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Monday said Turkey would start to see a stronger positive effect of the government's economic policy prioritizing low interest rates on inflation soon, as he reiterated the government's aim to address the soaring cost of living.

The government has endorsed low interest rates to boost exports, production, investment and create new jobs as part of an economic program, eventually aimed at lowering inflation by flipping the country's chronic current account deficit to a surplus.

"We will feel the positive effects of our low interest rate policy, which prioritizes production, employment and exports, on inflation more soon," Erdoğan told an event in Istanbul.

To counter the expected economic slowdown in the second half of this year, Turkey's central bank embarked on an easing cycle between August and November, slashing its policy rate by 500 basis points to 9%.

Price increases in Turkey moderated in November, according to official data, signaling that inflation pressures that have been plaguing consumers for about a year and a half might be finally easing.

Annual inflation dropped below 85% last month after touching a 24-year high in October. It is expected to decline sharply as a result of the base effect at the end of the year and falling energy prices globally.

"We are solving the issue of the cost of living, which is the biggest source of distress in the whole world, including Europe and America, step by step," Erdoğan said.

Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati on Monday said the decline in inflation will be seen due to the base effect that will last until the end of May next year, stressing that negative rates may be observed in food all with summer.

"The citizen does not look at the 'base effect' in inflation, but at his pocket. We will see a mathematical decline, but there will also be a decline that will be felt," Nebati told the Turkish business daily *Nasil bir Ekonomi*.

Nebati also addressed the recent remarks by exporters who complained that the Turkish lira was becoming increasingly overvalued and that foreign exchange rates should be directly proportional to inflation levels.

The lira's current level is not "too far away from the optimal point" and further depreciation could fuel consumer inflation, he said.

"(Exporters) should not complain in vain about the exchange rate ... The increase in the foreign exchange will disrupt our inflation plan," the minister noted.

Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) chair Mustafa Gültepe last week said the stability in the lira, despite soaring inflation, is hurting exporters' competitiveness and some risk losing markets. However, he did not propose a specific lira level.

Authorities have employed a battery of regulations to tightly control the exchange rate in the wake of a deep slide in the lira in late 2021, a year in which the Turkish currency lost 44% to the U.S. dollar. The currency dropped another 29% this year, but has stabilized since the summer and held steady near TL 18.6 since early October.

## Russia to Hold Rates at 7.5% This Week

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian central bank is expected to hold its key interest rate at 7.5% on Friday, as inflation continues to slow and in order to assess the possible economic impact of the oil price cap and embargo, a Reuters poll showed.

The bank's rate-cutting spree has ended, after the gradual reversal of an emergency rate hike to 20% in late February that followed Russia's decision to send tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine and the imposition of increasingly wide-ranging Western sanctions in response.

The Bank of Russia has made six rate cuts since then, but opted to hold at 7.5% at its last meeting in October, cautioning that expectations of price rises had grown and that Russia's partial mobilisation could stoke longer term inflation due to a shrinking labour force.

All 23 analysts and economists polled by Reuters on Monday predicted that Russia would keep its benchmark rate unchanged again on Friday.

There is no intrigue surrounding Friday's rate decision, said Dmitry Polevoy, head of investment at Locko Invest.

"The 7.5% rate is unlikely to be changed and the neutral signal maintained," he said.

Inflation is far above the central bank's 4% target, but down from 20-year highs reached shortly after the now more than nine-month long conflict in Ukraine began.

Annual inflation slowed to 11.98% in November, partly due to the strong rouble and weak demand.

"Inflation is slowing down now, but not sharply," said Andrei Dyuryagin, investments director at MKB Investments. "Due to the high base effect, this trend is likely to continue into the first quarter of next year."

Several analysts expected the Bank of Russia to adopt a wait-and-see approach.

"The regulator will probably prefer to wait, in order to assess the impact on the economy, rouble rate and inflation of new restrictions on Russian oil," said Mikhail Vasilyev, chief analyst at Sovcombank, referring to the EU embargo and G7 price cap.

Russia's economy, saddled with subdued consumer demand, falling disposable incomes and labour shortages that the government has flagged as a concern, is on shaky ground. Analysts have warned that mobilization will be a significant drag in 2023. "The most significant proinflationary factor will be the continued decline in the output of products in the economy, due to sanctions and the shortage of skilled labor," said Rosselkhozbank's Dmitry Tarasov.



## ECB Mulls Rate Hike Slowdown On Peak Inflation Hopes

LONDON (Dispatches) - Growing hopes that the eurozone's red-hot inflation is nearing its peak could prompt European Central Bank (ECB) policymakers to settle for a smaller rate hike on Thursday, observers said.

Following two consecutive interest rate hikes of 75 basis points, markets are on tenterhooks to see whether the ECB will keep up the aggressive pace or downshift to 50 basis points as the region braces for a winter recession.

This week's meeting of the ECB's 25-member governing council in Frankfurt will be the final one of 2022, a year that will be remembered for unprecedented consumer price shocks as Russia's war in Ukraine sent food and energy costs soaring.

Like other central banks, the ECB has fought back with a series of interest rate rises - walking a tightrope between raising borrowing costs enough to tame inflation, without dampening demand so much that it triggers a deep economic downturn.

ECB governors may take heart from November's eurozone inflation data, which showed prices slowing for the first time in 17 months on the back of cooling energy costs.

Inflation remains high, however, at 10% - five times the ECB's target - and President Christine Lagarde has repeatedly said further rate hikes are needed.

But the rare bit of good news has bolstered hopes that price pressures are finally easing in the 19-nation in currency club.

"I would be reasonably confident in saying that it is likely we are close to peak inflation," the ECB's chief economist Philip Lane said last week.

The early Christmas present could "take away some of the urgency to continue with jumbo rate hikes," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski, even if a 75-basis-point hike is "still on the table."

Andrew Kenningham, the chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, said he expected the ECB "to slow the pace to 50 basis points."

Observers may look across the Atlantic for clues on Wednesday when the U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) is set to announce its latest monetary policy decisions.

The Fed, which began hiking earlier and faster than the ECB, has signaled it could scale back the pace of its rate increases.

The ECB's rate decision will be guided by the latest economic forecasts due to be unveiled on Thursday.

Analysts expect them to show that inflation will remain well above the 2% target in 2023 before falling back in 2024 and 2025.

The eurozone economy is seen shrinking in the final quarter of 2022 and the first months of 2023, meeting the technical definition of a recession.

Berenberg Bank economist Holger Schmieding said he expected "a significant winter recession for the eurozone as consumers and businesses hold back."

## IMF Says Global Debt Well Above Pre-Pandemic Levels

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Global public and private debt saw its biggest drop in 70 years in 2021 after reaching record highs because of the impacts of COVID-19, but overall remained well above pre-pandemic levels, the International Monetary Fund said.

In a blog released with its inaugural Global Debt Monitor, the IMF said total public and private debt decreased by 10 percentage points to 247% of global gross domestic product in 2021 from its peak of 257% in 2020. That compares to around 195% of GDP in 2007, before the global financial crisis.

In dollar terms, global debt continued to rise, although at a much slower rate, reaching a record \$235 trillion last year.

The global lender said private debt, which includes non-financial corporate and household obligations, drove the overall reduction, decreasing by 6 percentage points to 153% of GDP, citing data for 190 countries.

The drop of 4 percentage points for public debt, to 96 percent of GDP, was the largest such drop in decades, it said. The unusually large swings in debt ratios - or "global debt rollercoaster" - were caused by the economic rebound from COVID-19 and the ensuring swift rise in inflation, the IMF said.

Debt dynamics varied widely across country groups. Advanced economies saw the biggest drop in debt, with both public and private debt dropping 5% of GDP last year, followed by similar results in emerging markets, excluding China.

But low-income countries saw their total debt ratios continue to increase in 2021, driven by higher private debt, with total debt reaching 88% of GDP.

## India's November Retail Inflation Below 6%

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's annual retail inflation eased below its central bank's upper tolerance level for the first time this year in November amid a softer rise in food prices, surprising economists, with some expecting a pause in rate hikes.

Annual retail inflation rose 5.88% in November from 6.77% in the previous month, government data showed on Monday. Analysts in a Reuters poll had predicted a November reading of 6.40%.

Food price inflation, which accounts for nearly 40% of the consumer price index (CPI) basket, eased to 4.67% in November from 7.01% in October.

That was mainly due to a decline in prices of fruit and vegetables. However, prices of cereals, pulses and eggs continued to rise.

"Favourable base effect and seasonal correction in food prices drove the November CPI inflation to a 10-month low," Elara Capital's Garima Kapoor said.

A correction in commodity prices and a seasonal softening in food prices led by vegetables are likely to be key tailwinds for the inflation trajectory, she added.

Global Brent crude prices have fallen nearly 30% since August.

Retail inflation had been above the upper end of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 2%-6% tolerance band since January, mainly due to supply shocks caused by the Ukraine war, which started in February. It hit an eight-year high of 7.8% in April.

To rein in inflation, the RBI has raised interest rates by 225 basis points, including a 35 basis points hike last week.

The RBI recently wrote a letter to the government explaining the reasons for failing to contain inflation within the set band for three successive quarters. The Indian government said it would not publish the letter.

Some economists expect inflation to hover around the 6% mark in the coming months and forecast the central bank would pause rate hikes at the next meeting in February.

"The current trend suggests that the RBI would be in the pause mode during the next monetary policy decision," said Sujana Hajra, economist at Anand Rathi, a financial services firm.

Also on Monday, India posted a 4% annual contraction in industrial output for October, its worst performance in 26 months, after revised growth of 3.5% in September, due to rising interest rates and slowing global demand.

Economists said core inflation could remain sticky in the coming months as price pressure will continue in health, education, clothing and personal care, among other sectors.

## Morgan Stanley to Slash 2022 Banker Bonuses in Asia by Up to Half



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Morgan Stanley plans to slash investment bankers' annual bonuses by as much as 50% in Asia, said two people with direct knowledge of the matter, as the Wall Street firm reins in costs to tackle tough market conditions that have hit its revenue.

The scale of the cuts in Asia could be replicated in Morgan Stanley's U.S. and European operations, and would be in contrast with 2021 when its top bankers earned up to 20% more in bonuses globally, said the sources.

Bonus payout discussions are currently underway at Morgan Stanley globally, they said.

A third person with knowledge of the matter said the bonus cuts in Asia for the bank are expected to be around 30% on average for all its investment banking teams and markets.

The reduced payouts could lead to its bankers' overall compensation in Asia dropping by an average of 30%, said the first two sources.

While cuts to bankers' 2022 bonuses have been well anticipated, this is the first time the likely extent of the reductions at the U.S. bank are being detailed.

Bonuses form a significant part of total compensation for bankers, and are usually linked with performances of business units and individuals.

Morgan Stanley, which does not disclose details of bonus payouts, declined to comment. The sources did not want to be identified as the information is confidential.

Many banks globally are pausing dealmaking activities due to higher interest rates and weak economic prospects, with the U.S. economy heading into a short and shallow recession over the coming year.

That has put pressure on earnings of investment banks after they made record profits last year from advising on mergers, acquisitions and initial public offerings as the world emerged from COVID-19-induced restrictions.

### Russia Ready to Exchange Advanced Space Experiences With Iran

TEHRAN (MNA) – Attending an aviation exhibition in Iran’s Kish Island, Roscosmos chief Yuri Borisov said that Russia has valuable experience in the advanced space industry and is ready to exchange such experiences with Iran. The Head of Russia’s state space corporation Roscosmos Yuri Borisov said that the launch of the Khayyam satellite in August is a joint experience for Iran and Russia in the development of space cooperation and it will lead to

more interactions between the two countries in the future. “This exhibition is a great opportunity to get to know and present the technological and space achievements of Russia,” Borisov added. “Iranian “Khayyam” satellite has been launched into orbit from the Moscow-operated Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, marking what Iran called the beginning of “strategic” aerospace cooperation between Tehran and Moscow.



## Europe’s Gas Market Faces Risks From EU Price Cap

OSLO (Dispatches) - A European Commission plan for a gas price cap risks reducing liquidity in Europe’s gas market, posing a threat to how it functions, head of trading at Norwegian oil company Equinor told Reuters, but its own gas deliveries will not be affected.

The aim of the cap is to shield European consumers from the surge in energy prices they have faced since Russia invaded Ukraine, and which have helped to fuel inflation. For Equinor, the biggest concern is what happens to the liquidity in the gas market, Helge Haugane, Equinor’s head of gas and power trading, said in an interview.

Haugane has previously raised the alarm on market liquidity. In September, he warned that some 1.5 trillion euros (\$1.58 trillion) tied up in the margin calls that traders pay to protect against defaults could squeeze gas and power market liquidity and see smaller market participants struggling.

But he said this was no longer a “big issue”, with margin calls now only “a fraction” of what they were at the end of August.

“I think the price cap is the one that we need to pay attention to,” Haugane said.

The European Commission is proposing to introduce a cap to the front-month contract on Europe’s main gas trading hub the Dutch Title Transfer Facility (TTF), which sets Europe’s benchmark and is the market’s most liquid contract. But member states disagree over the details.

“From the Equinor perspective, we should still be able to get our gas to the markets and we should get the gas to the markets where it’s needed the most,” Haugane said of the Commission’s proposal.

Equinor has become Europe’s largest supplier of natural gas after a sharp drop in pipeline volumes from Russia’s Gazprom (GAZP.MM) in the wake of Ukraine crisis.

Equinor sells most of its gas in the physical day-ahead or even same-day market, which are outside the scope of the current market intervention plans.

But in line with other critics, Haugane said a cap on financial contracts, such as on the TTF front-month, which are used to manage price risks, could drive participants, including Equinor, away from exchanges and into the bilateral over-the-counter (OTC) market.



“We might also trade a little bit less in the financial market than we otherwise would because the liquidity will be lower. That means the bid-ask spread will typically be higher and we will have a less well-functioning market,” he said.

Equinor, other big oil companies and trading houses will be able to find alternatives for managing their risk, but smaller industrial players without their own trading organisation would not have the same bilateral or OTC opportunities, he said.

Meanwhile, Equinor has doubled volumes for new physical bilateral gas contracts entered into year-on-year, totalling more than 50 billion cubic metres (bcm), Haugane said.

These contracts are typically indexed to various gas price indices and cover delivery terms of up to 10 years, he added.

Equinor is also open to discuss longer term fixed price contracts, but so far there has been limited interest from buyers, he added.

One reason could be that such contracts also carried a price management risk for buyers, were gas prices in the spot market to fall.

### U.S. Plots Unable to...

FROM PAGE 1

“The political and instrumental approach of Western countries to human rights, including rights of women and girls, which only aims to exert pressure on independent countries, is doomed to failure,” the council said.

It is a bitter irony that the U.S. foreign secretary and some of his Western counterparts accuse Iran of violating the rights of women and girls in a meddlesome joint statement and with an insolent tone while claiming to defend and support women’s rights, it added.

According to the statement, some countries look at women and their rights only as a means to achieve their own political interests and preferences and impose their own incorrect perception of women and women’s rights on other nations and cultures.

These states do not hesitate to victimize women and girls and violate all their rights, it said.

It emphasized that various reports and research conducted by Western institutions have shown that the rights of women and girls are violated in Western states, particularly the U.S., more than in other parts of the world.

The Iranian body said the degradation of women’s dignity and identity and turning them into means of exploitation, extreme violence and obvious discrimination against women and girls, the very high number of female prisoners, the forced separation of refugee mothers from their children as well as a discriminatory view and torture of black, colored and migrant women and girls are only among examples of arrogant states’ approaches to the issue.

It is better for Western countries to adopt new strategies in their states to observe the rights of women and girls if they are really concerned about the issue, it added.

In their joint statement, the U.S. and eight other countries claimed that the Iranian women and girls are facing “extreme violence” ever since riots broke out in the wake of the tragic death of 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini in mid-September.

The Iranian rights body said the U.S. and Western states have proved that they do not care about the rights of women and girls in Iran at all as they have fully supported terror attacks against thousands of Iranian women, men and children, as well as their killing, particularly during Iraq’s war against Iran in 1980s, when they imposed oppressive and illegal sanctions with adverse consequences on health and welfare and prevented the presence of successful Iranian women and girls in global sports and scientific fields.

It also called on Western states to abandon unilateral and oppressive sanctions against women, girls and children instead of doing a political show.

The West has always used women, children, labor and human rights as good tools for increasing pressures on countries which do not follow their policies while the West is itself one of the main violators of all of those human issues.

Of course Iranians and independent nations do not expect the UN to resist against the West because this international body mostly follows the policies of the West or what the West dictates but we hope this international body at least listen to countries like the Netherlands which is from the Western bloc and to reject any decision from the U.S. to oust Iran from the CSW. This is a real acid test for impartiality of the UN, but the U.S. should know that its plots are unable to stop the Islamic Republic of Iran from marching on road to progress and prosperity.

### Iran, China...

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for the Economic Diplomacy Affairs said that the value of trade between Iran and China will reach over \$30 billion before the termination of the current year in 1401 (to end March 20, 2023).

Mehdi Safari made the comment on Wednesday and stated that the value of trade between the two countries of Iran and China in the first seven months of the current year (from March 21 to Oct. 22) reached more than \$20 billion, \$10 billion of which related to Iran’s export of products to this country.

With the agreements made with China, it is expected that Iran’s export of agricultural products will increase to China, he emphasized.

Earlier on Tuesday, Iranian and Chinese officials agreed to facilitate issues in line with strengthening bilateral ties in the field of trade and economy.

### Cheetah Cubs Found Early December In Good Condition



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Two cheetah cubs found less than two weeks ago in Touran, a park in central Iranian province of Semnan, are in a good condition, according to an official at Iran’s Department of Environment (DoE).

Gholam-Reza Abdali, DoE’s director of office for wildlife protection and management, said the female cubs are experiencing a digestive change which is a critical stage in their growth.

The cheetahs are going through teeth cutting and their diet will change from drinking milk to eating meat, Abdali said.

The official added that to protect the two newborn cheetahs, they will be fed according to a diet plan developed by cheetah conservation centers in Africa.

He expressed hope that the cubs could safely go through this critical phase of their life.

It was on December 2 that a shepherd recovered the two baby cheetahs in Touran and handed them over to officials in the provincial branch of the DoE.

Officials said at the time that the cubs were about 16 to 20 days old.

In a related development, three cubs of critically endangered cheetah subspecies were given birth in Touran on April 30, 2022.

However, two of the baby cheetahs died later because their mother neglected them. The third one, by name of Pirouz, still survives.

### Emphasis on Using Domestic Capabilities in Manufacture of Civil Helicopters

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

EHRAN – On the sidelines of the 11th Iran International Airshow and Aerospace Exhibition on Kish Island, Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) and Russian Helicopters Company held a joint conference and reviewed bilateral cooperation in the field of manufacture and supply of civil helicopters.

Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of IDRO Mr. Ali Navavi in the meeting noted that IDRO for years has put on its agenda to meet the needs of the country for rescue helicopters in different fields, adding that in the project for manufacture and provision of light civil helicopters, IDRO considers using the domestic manufacturing capabilities and transfer of technology as well as using knowledge-based capacities’ capabilities in the process of producing the product and parts.

Nabavi pointed to the signed MoU between IDRO and Russian



Helicopters Company and emphasized that joint investment in production and sales of products, parts and after sale services are of the main confirmed policies of IDRO.

He then mentioned some of the actions taken by the organization regarding the project for manufacture and supply of civil helicopters and stipulated that currently they are pursuing preparation of a draft for the commercial project for final agreement by the shareholders.

Nabavi also expressed hope that with operationalizing this project, the needs of the country to light civil helicopters will be met.

In the meeting, Igor Panshin, Sales Director for Civil Helicopters of the Russian Helicopters Holding, introduced Kamov 226T and other products of the company and stipulated that there are huge potentials for cooperation with IDRO. Then IDRO and Russian Helicopters signed a MoU on cooperation.

### Abadan Refinery to Launch Largest Distillation Unit in ME

TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Engineering and Construction Company announced the implementation of the largest distillation unit in the Middle East with a capacity of 210,000 barrels in Abadan Refinery.

Farhad Ahmadi told a press conference on the eve of the official startup of the project on Tuesday (December 13): “Implementation of this project started in September 2017 and during its implementation, it was faced with various challenges, including heavy sanctions, financial resources, the coronavirus pandemic, fine dust and unprecedented heat, but fortunately, during the past year, with the efforts of local experts it progressed more than 32%.”

He announced the project’s investment at around €2.6 billion, and stated: “Due to the pressure of sanctions, the project was divided into two parts and €1 billion was invested in the first part.”

Referring to the opening of the first part of phase 2 of the Abadan Refinery Capacity Stabilization Plan in the near future, Ahmadi emphasized: “We hope that at the same time with the opening of this part, the ground would be broken for the start of the implementation of the second part of the second phase of the project.”

In the first part of this project, the capacity of the Abadan refinery will be fixed at 210,000 barrels per day, and with the implementation of the second part within three years, the quality of the produced items will also meet the European Euro 5 standard, which is planned to be implemented in the shortest possible time.

### U.S., Allies Liable...

FROM PAGE 1

The spokesman for Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres called for an investigation into the “shocking” death of the Palestinian teenager.

“That killing today is, indeed, shocking,” Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York.

The shooting death “needs to be fully investigated,” the spokesman said, adding that “it is yet another example of the price that civilians are paying in this atmosphere where we’re seeing increased violence.”

Reacting to the tragedy, the Gaza Strip-based Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas said targeting minors was a heinous crime, calling for mass mobilization against Israeli military forces and settlers’ attacks throughout the occupied territories.

Following the murder, the Palestine Liberation Organization umbrella group’s Executive Committee Secretary-General Hussein al-Sheikh also broached the issue with United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland, urging the UN to “provide international protection for our people.”

Last month, the United Nations said 2022 had been the deadliest year for the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, based on a fatality count that the UN started to keep a tally of in 2005.

Unabated and indiscriminate violence by the Israeli regime has cost the lives of more than 200 Palestinians since the beginning of the year.

### HCHR Slams...

FROM PAGE 1

The international human rights entities kept mute when it came to the crackdown in the Western states, while they spared no effort to show solidarity with rioters in Iran, he noted.

He called for paying heed to differences between peaceful and violent gatherings, warning that other countries may face a similar situation that Iran is facing now, so it would be better to stop backing riots in a country on the basis of political purposes.

Gharibabadi further pointed to the crackdown of protesters in Britain, the US, Germany, France, and Canada in recent years.

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info@irannewsdaily.com  
**ISSN 1024-6053**  
**P.O. Box:** 15875-8551  
**Address:** No 13, Pajouhesh St.,  
Golestan II St, Golestan St.Marzadaran  
Blvd., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Printed by:**Honar Sarzmin Sabz  
**Distributed by:**  
Cities of Iran Cultural and  
Artistic Institute  
**Managing Director:** Fereydoon Taherpour Asl

## Pele's Health Improving, But Not Ready for Release

PARIS (Dispatches) - Brazilian football legend Pele's health continues improving, but no date has been set for his release from hospital, where he was admitted nearly two weeks ago, doctors said. Pele, 82, considered by many the greatest footballer of all time, was hospitalized in Sao Paulo on November 29 for what his medical team called a re-evaluation of his chemotherapy treatments, which he has been receiving since having surgery to remove a colon tumor in September 2021. Doctors also diagnosed him with a respiratory infection.

## Quartararo Injured in Motocross Accident

PARIS (Dispatches) - French MotoGP star Fabio Quartararo announced he has broken his left hand in a motocross training accident. "Yesterday I had a crash during my motocross training and I suffered a little fracture on my left hand," the 2021 world champion announced on social media with a photo of himself with a cast up to the elbow. "No surgery needed, time to recover," Quartararo, 23, added. The accident comes less than two months after the French rider broke a finger during a fall in the last free practice session before the Malaysian Grand Prix.

# Clippers Rout Celtics, Nets Cruise Past Wizards

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Los Angeles Clippers dealt the Boston Celtics another setback Monday, beating the top team in the NBA in decisive style, 113-93. Paul George scored 26 points and Kawhi Leonard scored a season high of 25 points with nine rebounds and six assists as the injury-plagued Clippers showed how good they can be at full strength. Jalen Brown scored 21 points and Jayson Tatum added 20 with 11 rebounds for the Celtics, who were coming off a 123-107 loss to the NBA champion Golden State Warriors in an NBA Finals rematch on Saturday. It's the first time since October that the Celtics have dropped two games in a row, their league-best record falling to 21-7.

The Clippers dialed in defensively on the Celtics' dangerous scorers, limiting Tatum to four-of-12 shooting in the first half as Los Angeles took a 56-47 lead at the break. Tatum and Brown combined for just three three-pointers in 14 attempts as the Celtics made just nine of 39 from beyond the arc. Leonard said the strong defensive display was "a group effort by everybody." Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said he thought the Celtics "lost our poise" in the third quarter, which Leonard and George started on a scoring tear. Elsewhere, the Brooklyn Nets cruised to their fourth straight victory as Kevin Durant's 30 points fueled a 112-100 win over the Wizards in Washington. The Nets, who battled through early season struggles that saw coach Steve Nash sacked then dealt with the suspension of Kyrie Irving in an anti-Semitism row, have now won eight of their last nine games. "We're building something," Durant said. "We've got to keep fine-tuning."

The Nets led by double digits for much of the second half, holding the Wizards to 45 points after the interval. Durant added nine rebounds and six assists and Irving added 24 points as the Nets dealt the Wizards a seventh straight defeat. Will Barton scored 22 points off the bench to lead the Wizards, who had 20 points apiece from Kristaps Porzingis and Kyle Kuzma. The Nets trail Cleveland by just half a



game for third place in the East after the Cavaliers were up-ended by Western Conference stragglers San Antonio 112-111. Josh Richardson scored 24 points to lead the Spurs, who were up by 10 with 4:35 to play and held on despite a Cavs rally that cut the deficit to two on Donovan Mitchell's putback basket with 53 seconds remaining. Evan Mobley added a free throw that pulled Cleveland within one with 37.9 seconds left. But Keldon Johnson blocked a shot by Mitchell, Cleveland's Darius Garland missed a three-pointer and Spurs reserve Devin Vassell came up with a steal to seal the victory. The injury absence of Ja Morant was no problem for the Memphis Grizzlies, who roared to a 128-103 home victory over the Atlanta Hawks. Tyus Jones scored 22 points and Jaren Jackson delivered 15 points, seven rebounds and a career-high eight blocked shots — which tied the Grizzlies' franchise single-game record shared by Marc Gasol, Pau Gasol and Stromile Swift. The Grizzlies won their sixth straight and moved within half a game of the New Orleans Pelicans atop the Western Conference. In Dallas, Luka Donic scored 38 points and pulled down 11 rebounds in the Mavericks' 121-114 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder. Tim Hardaway Jr. added 20 points for the Mavericks, who drained 22 three-pointers and withstood a 42-point performance from Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander to snap a two-game losing streak. In Portland, Damian Lillard drilled 11 three-pointers on the way to 38 points in the Trail Blazers' 133-112 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves. Lillard might have challenged the single-game record of 14 three-pointers, held by Golden State's Klay Thompson, but he sat out the fourth quarter with the game in hand.

## Neymar Cleared of Corruption Over Barcelona Transfer

BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Brazilian football superstar Neymar was cleared of corruption charges related to his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013. A court in Spain acquitted all nine defendants in the trial. In addition to Neymar, this included his parents, FC Barcelona and former club presidents Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, Santos FC and former president Odilio Rodrigues Filho, and N&N -- the company founded by Neymar's parents to manage his career. Brazilian company DIS had argued they lost out financially on Neymar's transfer because they owned 40 percent of Neymar's sporting rights at Santos and believed the true value of the deal had been obscured by those involved. "According to the court it has not been proved there was a false contract or that DIS was intended to be harmed," said the court in a statement. Neymar's high-profile trial got underway in mid-October in Barcelona, just a month before the start of the World Cup in Qatar. The 30-year-old -- who now plays for French champions Paris Saint-Germain -- and Brazil crashed out after a penalty shootout against Croatia in the quarter-finals.

## Golf Gets Makeover With Short-Format Teams-Based Event

SYDNEY (Dispatches) - A new short-format golf event modelled on cricket's Indian Premier League will debut in Australia next year with 10 city-based teams, including the Bangkok Blades, Dubai Kings and New York Tigers, it was announced. The Ultra Golf Championship, designed to turbocharge the sport, is played over nine holes with four-player teams that include a marquee captain. No names have been announced, although local reports said world number two Scottie Scheffler of the United States and Australian world number three Cameron Smith were being targeted. The unique scoring system will reward risk-taking, with 10 points for a hole-in-one, eight for an albatross, six for an eagle, four for a birdie, and two for a par. There will also be four feature hole opportunities that must be used, including a longest drive, power-play, alternate-shot and best-ball, where more points can be accumulated. Teams will play seven rounds and a final series over four days.

The concept is the brainchild of Deke Smith, with the Australian PGA serving as a promoting partner and sanctioning body. "For more than five years, we've been working on the UGC as a short-formed, strategic and tactical golf tournament," Smith said in a statement released through the Australian PGA. "We are appealing to a wider fan base, giving people a new way to consume their golf, sport and entertainment, and we think that it's a great way to grow the game of golf. "We see this concept appealing to a younger audience because we will see a result in two hours of golf. We see parochial sports fans getting behind their own city team." Along with Bangkok, Dubai and New York, others teams locked in will represent Delhi, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Shanghai, Seoul and Tokyo. "We know once this world-first format has some of the best players in the world showcasing it on TV next year, Ultra Golf Championship will become a part of all golf fans' life," said PGA Tour of Australia tournaments director Nick Dastey.

# Enrique Wants New Challenge at Club Level



Luis Enrique was sacked last Thursday after Spain lost on penalties to Morocco in the last 16, with the country's under-21 manager Luis de la Fuente named as his replacement. "I want to coach, I see myself wanting to take on a club and be able to develop with greater finesse and precision what I have not been able to do in the national side," Luis Enrique said in a Twitch interview with internet celebrity Ibai Llanos. "(But) I will probably wait for next season. This morning I was told I've been signed up for a mountain bike race that I'm going to do with my brother."

MADRID (Dispatches) - Former Spain coach Luis Enrique is ready for a new challenge and hopes to continue his managerial career at club level, he said, after his four-year spell in charge of the national side ended last week following their World Cup exit.

Luis Enrique added that he was offered the chance to extend his Spain contract after Euro 2020, which was played in 2021 due to the Covid pandemic, when Spain were eliminated on penalties by eventual champions Italy in the semi-finals but he refused. "I said that the best thing to do was to finish the World Cup (first)," he said. "I think it makes more sense. (Otherwise) they renew you before a big event, as a reinforcement, but if it goes wrong they will have to compensate you. "Here they simply (needed to) tell me that I was not going to renew and the contract is over. "I thought I was going to have to make a decision (about my future) but I didn't even need to". The 52-year-old former Barcelona player and coach added that it was the first time in his managerial career that his contract would not be extended. "I prefer it that way," Luis Enrique said. "If there is no more trust and the thought that you are not the right person then I am happy to move on."

## Messi Leads Argentina Into World Cup Final

DOHA (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi will get his date with World Cup destiny, and the chance to emulate Diego Maradona, after Argentina's emphatic 3-0 win over Croatia on Tuesday took them through to the final in Qatar. It is 36 years since Maradona dragged Argentina to their second and most recent World Cup triumph in Mexico, the crowning moment of his dazzling but often troubled career. Messi came to this World Cup admitting it would surely be his last at the age of 35 and therefore his final opportunity to lift the trophy that escaped him in 2014, when Argentina were defeated by Germany in Brazil. The sense that Messi was building up to this moment was apparent in his displays for Paris Saint-Germain in the months before the tournament and he has performed at this World Cup like a player with no more time to waste. Sixteen years after making his World Cup debut as a teenager, Qatar has witnessed Messi finally score in the knockout stages of the tournament, and he has done so in three straight games. On Tuesday he scored his 11th World Cup goal, overtaking compatriot Gabriel Batistuta, who previously held the Argentine record. He has now equalled former German player Lothar Matthaeus' record of 25 World Cup appearances. Messi's performance against Croatia at Lusail Stadium was typical of his late career -- a player who saves energy and spends long periods on the fringes of the game.



## Fury Wants to Spar With Rooney in Preparation For Usyk Bout

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's WBC heavyweight world champion Tyson Fury has chosen an unusual sparring partner for a potential fight with Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk after ex-Manchester United and England striker Wayne Rooney agreed to help him prepare for his next bout. The Old Trafford club's record goalscorer Rooney, now in charge of Major League Soccer team DC United, is a big admirer of compatriot Fury, who said he was keen to get involved. "I spoke to Wayne last night and he's well up for it," Fury told ITV at the weekend. "But he's a right-handed person, so he's got to switch up to be southpaw left-handed. "So we're going to bring Wayne in for preparation for Usyk." Asked if he was joking, Fury replied: "No, very, very serious. He's agreed, so he's going to come into camp for around four weeks to help me." The boxer added that he was a big fan of Rooney, who sang Fury's praises earlier this month after the champion beat Derek Chisora to retain his WBC title. "I think he's the best we've seen in a long time, and I don't think anyone will beat him. I think he's an absolute legend for what he's done for boxing," Rooney had told TalkSport. Fury responded last week, saying he grew up watching Rooney as a youngster for England and United, adding that the forward was a huge boxing fan and comes from a boxing family. "So, hopefully, we can have a little spar in the future sometime," Fury added. "I do need someone smaller to prepare for Usyk. Wayne, if you're listening, get on the blower, son."

