

Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development Mohammad Mohammadi Said That as Many as 77 Planes Have Been Added to Iranian Air Fleet Since President Ebrahim Raisi Took Office in August 2021

Judiciary's Deputy Chief for International Affairs and Secretary General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Blasted a UN Resolution That Terminated Iran's Membership In the United Nations Commission On the Status of Women (CSW)

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U.S. Violates Legal Procedures Through Bullying, Hypocrisy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has urged the international community to stand against unilateralism adopted by some countries such as the U.S., saying that Washington has violated "legal procedures" through "pure bullying and hypocrisy."

Addressing a conference of foreign ministers of the group of 77 plus China on Thursday in New York, Amir Saeed Irvani condemned Washington's illegal approach to exploiting international mechanisms.

"Multilateralism is still under severe pressure from all sides, and we saw a clear example of such danger yesterday at the ECOSOC meeting," he said, referring to Iran's illegal removal from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) following a draft proposal by the United States.

The 54-member UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted the US-drafted resolution on Wednesday to "remove with immediate effect the Islamic Republic of Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women for the remainder of its 2022-2026 term." [See Page 7](#)

CBI Denies Governor Change

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has dismissed rumors about an imminent change in the bank's leadership by saying that Ali Salehabadi will stay in his job as CBI governor despite rising prices in the country's foreign currency market.

A Thursday statement by the CBI said Salehabadi still has the full confidence of the CBI's general assembly and members of the Iranian Cabinet who have the power to dismiss him.

The statement criticized as "unprofessional" a Monday report by Ham-Mihan newspaper which claimed that Salehabadi had cancelled his meetings in CBI headquarters for the previous three days.

The report cited Salehabadi's failure to control rising foreign currency prices and an increasing liquidity that has exacerbated inflation as reasons for his potential removal from the top banking job in Iran.

The CBI statement, however, dismissed the claims and said that Salehabadi had had a busy weekend and had attended numerous meetings in the bank and in other government departments. [See Page 7](#)

Iran Warns EU for Continuing Iranophobia



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned a new round of sanctions imposed by the block on the country over alleged human rights violations and drone deliveries to Russia, warning that persistent Iranophobia campaigns would affect mutual cooperation and interests.

The Iranian ministry issued an 11-article statement on Thursday in reaction to the latest sanctions which were imposed by EU's foreign ministers on Monday.

The statement expressed "strong protest" against the imposition of "unacceptable and baseless" sanctions by the European Union, noting, "The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that dialogue with the EU and its members are possible through mutual respect, trust, and interests."

"Accordingly, we have left the doors of dialogue open but meanwhile, we do not stop expressing our demands and criticisms. Naturally, the opportunities to promote mutual interests will be significantly affected if the media hype that is being followed in the framework of Iranophobia is not stopped," it read.

According to a statement issued by the EU foreign ministers, 20 individuals along with one entity -- the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting -- have been sanctioned over alleged human rights abuses, while four more people and as many entities blacklisted over the issue of drones. The bloc's new sanctions include asset freezes and travel bans to the EU.

Foreign-backed riots have hit various Iranian provinces since 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini died at the hospital on September 16, three days after she collapsed at a police station. An investigation has attributed Amini's death to her medical condition, rather than alleged beatings by the police.

The new sanctions came after Iran imposed a round of sanctions on dozens of the EU and British officials and entities over their support and instigation of recent deadly riots in the country and their meddling statements about the Islamic Republic's internal developments and support for terror in Iran.

The Thursday statement further noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been "steadfast" in supporting and promoting human rights despite campaigns waged by some governments to defame the country.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran by no means accepts the fabricated agendas, which are part of an organized political campaign to put maximum pressure on a thriving government and nation which are resisting two simultaneous challenges, namely international isolation and the US's economic warfare," it stressed.

The statement slammed in "strongest terms" the exploitation of international mechanism, be it in the UN Human Right Council or meetings of EU foreign ministers.

It noted that Iran's police and security forces have acted to contain the violence according to "precise and defined" regulations which are based on laws and religious teachings and respect for the rights of individuals.

According to the latest figures, more than 50 Iranian security forces have lost their lives during recent riots. The issue of human rights has become a tool for pursuing the "political goals" of some European and American governments, the ministry added.

The statement reminded the West of its "brazen double standards" with regard to its allies such as the Israeli regime that is flagrantly violating human rights in the occupied territories of Palestine.

These countries are "morally disqualified" to preach others about human rights, it stressed, adding that according to a UN report, Western countries have violated human rights because of following the illegal and inhumane American sanctions against Iranian people and hence, should be held accountable.

European countries have complied with unilateral sanctions imposed by the US since 2018 against Iran. These sanctions have basically targeted civilians as they have, for instance, restricted Iran's access to medicine and medical equipment.

Citing UN General Assembly resolutions A/RES/60/288, and A/RES/2625, the ministry noted that "Western countries are obliged to confront violence, hatred, terrorism, offenses, and riots of individuals in their territories." These states do not want to or cannot adhere to their international commitments under these resolutions, the statement said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does not tolerate activities of those individuals or institutes that are involved in the promotion of terrorism and violence and will use "all its legal and judiciary capacities at the national and international levels" to secure the rights of the Iranian people, it added.

Elsewhere, the statement referred to the stalled talks on the removal of the US sanctions and revival of the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA), noting that Iran's demands fall within the framework of Vienna talks.

The "long list of blatant violations" of the JCPOA by Europeans and the US leaves no other choice for Iran but to "be realistic" for the future, it maintained.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran aims to clinch a lasting and stable agreement that firstly guarantees Iran's benefits from the removal of sanctions and secondly, cannot be easily violated under the influence of internal policies of governments."

Tehran is ready to conclude the talks based on a draft that has been earlier obtained after months-long negotiations in Vienna, the statement said, adding that it is the Western side that is "confused" given its adoption of "unrealistic and miscalculated" policies. [See Page 7](#)

Kazakhstan to Increase Oil Supply to Iran Under Swap Deal

ASTANA (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan plans to ramp up its supply of crude oil to Iran under a swap deal that allows the former Soviet state to diversify its oil export routes away from Russia.

Kazakhstan's Energy Minister Bolat Akchulakov said that the country is intent on implementing plans to diversify its oil exports routes, including by increasing supplies to Iran and China.

Under a current swap arrangement, Kazakhstan supplies crude oil via tankers from Aktau to Iranian ports in the Caspian Sea for the purpose of consumption in refineries in Tabriz and Tehran in northern Iran.

Iran then commits to supplying the same amount of crude oil to tankers in the Persian Gulf for the purpose of delivery to Kazakhstan's oil customers.

Kazakhstan currently exports nearly 80% of its oil via the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) to Russian port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea.

However, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced last summer that his country will move to diversify away from the CPC and increase its supply of crude oil to other markets. [See Page 7](#)

World Scientific Community Has 841 Iranians

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Science, Research, and Technology said the world scientists community included 841 Iranian scientists.

The 23rd festival honoring the selected researchers, technologists, and innovators of the country was held on Dec. 15, 2022.

Mohammed Ali Zolfigol stated on Thursday that Iranian scientists are well known in the world, and investment in scientific diplomacy is very crucial so that via science, the country can make income.

He added that scientific investment and knowledge communities prevent mere reliance on selling oil.

The Minister underlined: The Supreme Cultural Council of the Document of the National Innovation System is being approved so that universities can make money through the knowledge-based economy, so in line with the knowledge-based economy, we should pay attention to the economics of research. [See Page 7](#)

Washington Needs to Respond Positively to Iran Goodwill in JCPOA Talks

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China says there is still hope for the revival of the 2015 Iran deal, which the U.S. unilaterally abandoned, despite a deadlock in relevant talks, saying Washington needs to respond positively to the "goodwill and flexibility" shown by Tehran in the process.

"Negotiations on resuming compliance with the JCPOA face serious complexities, but there is still hope to reach an agreement," China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a regular press conference on Wednesday, referring to the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

He urged all parties to the deal to stay committed to dialog and negotiation and step up diplomatic efforts to bring the JCPOA back on track as soon as possible.

"Iran has recently shown goodwill and flexibility on some outstanding issues of the negotiations. The U.S. needs to respond to that positively and find ways to work with Iran for the negotiations to achieve early result," the Chinese diplomat added.

Wang also urged all parties to work together and take positive and constructive steps to create a favorable atmosphere for the negotiations aimed at salvaging the JCPOA. [See Page 7](#)

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Iran, Turkey Confer on Border Issues

TURKEY (IP) - Officials of Turkey and Iran met and discussed the border security between the two neighbors on Thursday.

In this meeting, which was hosted by Iğdir province in the east of Turkey and bordering Iran, issues related to transit and security were also discussed.

The Iranian delegation was headed by Colonel Sadeq Rostamzadeh, the commander of the Mako border regiment, and the Turkish delegation was headed by Engin Sari Ibrahim.

Iran and Turkey share a border of 500 km, most of which is made up of inaccessible mountainous regions, and the four provinces of Agra, Iğdir, Van, and Hakari from Turkey border with West Azarbaijan province of Iran.

Foes Trapped In Miscalculations On Iran Unrest

BIRJAND (IRNA) - The enemies' schemes on recent and previous plots have been proven to be based on miscalculations, because the Iranian people's participation has always helped foil the foes' conspiracies, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said.

Raisi addressed residents of Nahbandan on Friday as saying that the enemies imagined that Iran is similar to other countries, and they could fool the great nation by the use of lofty slogans.

The foes thought that they can persuade people to trust in their words by the use of slogans such as life, but the Iranians know them very well, he said, adding if they do not threaten lives of people, they will not offer life to anyone in the world.

Pointing to the enemies' intervention in Afghanistan and the aftermaths of the policy, Raisi noted that you (the foes) had military presence in Afghanistan for two decades; so, what was the consequence for the oppressed nation in the war-stricken country? Is there any point in Afghanistan, which is in normal situation?

The reason that stopped the enemies from reaching their goals is the massive



participation of Iranians, who feel they should stand with the values of the Islamic Revolution, the chief executive added.

As to the significant presence of people of Nahbandan in his speech, he expressed gratitude to the support for the Islamic Republic, Supreme Leader and Islamic values.

President Raisi started his provincial trip to South Khorasan province on Thursday to inspect development projects as well as pursue his administration's efforts in order to resolve problems of people of the province.

Speaking on Thursday night in a meeting with the Pioneers of Iran's Progress and Opportunities for Economic Investments and Development, in the presence of a large number of cabinet ministers in Birjand Special Economic Zone, Raisi said that the enemy has begun hybrid warfare, and a major part of the war against Iran is in the economic field.

Iran Keeps Boosting Missile, Drone Power



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) highlighted the efforts to continually strengthen Iran's missile and drone power and said it is unacceptable in view of the enemy.

"Today, Iran is constantly boosting its drone and missile might and military power, which the enemy considers to be unacceptable," Major General Hossein Salami said Thursday while speaking at a ceremony in Qom.

In today's world, a country should either be powerful and mighty to live with independence and dignity or capitulate, the general said, stressing that there is no middle way.

There is no place for weak nations in the world's political geography, he stated.

The senior commander further said, "We are ready for hard confrontation with the enemy", adding that there is also a need for strength in confronting the enemy in the field of thoughts and the battle between ignorance and awareness.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

Iran, Afghanistan Need to Connect Economic Infrastructures

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Iranian president's special envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi said that connecting the economic infrastructure between Iran and Afghanistan is the necessity of restoring and governing civilizational, religious, and cultural relations between the two states.

In a joint meeting with Afghan economic activists in Mashhad city, Khorasan Razavi Province on Wednesday evening, Kazemi Qomi said that connecting the economic infrastructure between Iran and Afghanistan is the necessity of restoring and governing civilizational, religious, and cultural relations between the two states.

Referring to the joint economic activities between the two countries, he added that joint activities can be conducted in this regard due to Afghanistan's transit access to Central Asia.

Pointing to the significance of the Khaf-Herat railway in enhancing economic ties between the two countries, Kazemi Qomi underlined that a consortium should be formed to resume the Khaf-Herat railway activities.

IRGC Seizes Ship Smuggling Fuel in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A high-ranking Iranian Judiciary official says the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has confiscated a tanker ship carrying over 300,000 liters of smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf waters and arrested all crew members.

Mojtaba Qahremani, head of the Justice Department of Iran's southern province of Hormozgan, said on Thursday that forces from the IRGC Navy's Zolfaqar flotilla seized the vessel carrying 330,000 liters of fuel in the Persian Gulf, as part of operations to detect and fight against organized smuggling.

The IRGC forces also arrested 12 smugglers, he added.

He noted that the case is under investigation.

The official said the Hormozgan Justice Department will firmly continue its fight against fuel smuggling and will not hesitate to defend the Iranian nation's interests.

Forces from the first naval zone of the IRGC late in October seized a foreign tanker ship carrying 11 million liters of smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf.

Iran has vowed that the Persian Gulf would never be a safe place for smugglers. The IRGC's Navy has also foiled several attacks on Iranian and foreign tankers alike.

Gov't Reports "Unprecedented" Surge in Gas Usage

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Oil Minister Javad Owji has described as "unprecedented" an average annual increase of 60 million cubic meters (mcm) per day in natural gas use by households and businesses in the country.

Owji said on Thursday that the rise in demand for natural gas in Iran had come despite the fact that the country's production of gas had increased by only 25 mcm per day in mid-December compared to last year.

He said that the Oil Ministry will impose hefty fines on nearly 30% of household and business customers whom he said were heavy consumers of natural gas in Iran.

Reports on Wednesday suggested that Iran's Supreme National Security Council had authorized the use of fines and other punitive measure against heavy consumers of natural gas.

Owji made the remarks while on a tour of the headquarters of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) where officials said household and business use of natural gas had increased by more than 11% year on year in mid-December to an average of 600 mcm per day.

NIGC's head of dispatching operations Mohammad Reza Joulayi said Iranian household and business demand for natural gas is expected to reach an all-time high of 650 mcm per day in January when temperatures across the country will drop to below zero.

Joulayi said Iran's total natural gas production had increased to 977 mcm per day in December of which some 843 mcm were being supplied to the national gas grid.

He said that power plants and industries had also burnt 10% more natural gas on average this month compared to December last year.

FM Spokesman Slams UNGA's Political Resolution

Tehran (pressTV) Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman says the resolution passed by the UN General Assembly about human rights in Iran is "devoid of legitimacy," urging the West to stop exploiting international mechanisms to further its political goals.

Nasser Kanaani made the comments in a statement early on Friday, a day after a resolution dubbed "Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran" was adopted by 80 in favor and 29 against, with 65 abstentions.

Put forward by Canada and supported by European countries and the Israeli regime, the resolution "reflects the hypocrisy of its designers and is devoid of legitimacy," Kanaani said.

"The hypocritical approach of sponsors of this resolution in exploiting international institutes to exert pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran is a clear example of abusing sublime human rights concepts and values to pursue short-sighted political objectives," he added.

The spokesman said this is part of the efforts of Western countries to maintain the "Iranophobia project" and "psychological war" against the Islamic Republic.

The resolution accuses Iran of "disproportionate" use of the death penalty and "systemic discrimination and other human rights violations against women and girls."

Sponsors of this resolution have violated "all fundamental principles of human rights" in the world, he said, urging them to stop accompanying the US's economic terrorism against the Iranian nation and hosting terrorist groups instead of expressing "hypocritical" sympathy with Iranian people over human rights issues.

Respecting human rights is among religious and legal principles in the Islamic Republic, Kanaani said, noting that the country is "serious" in adhering to its international commitments with regard to human rights.

Kanaani also noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to hold dialogue and develop a constructive cooperation with all legitimate international mechanisms and countries based on mutual respect and non-discrimination to promote the status of human rights globally.

Iran, Iraq Confer On Boosting Coop

BAGHDAD (IP) - The head of the State of Law Coalition and Iran's Ambassador to Iraq met and discussed the relations between the two countries and increasing the level of cooperation.

Nouri Al-Maliki, the head of the State of Law coalition, hosted Mohammad Kazem Al-Sadeq, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraq, in his office in Baghdad.

At the beginning of this meeting, the Iranian ambassador, while conveying the congratulatory message of Iranian officials on the occasion of the formation of the new Iraqi government, announced Iran's readiness to support Iraq in various fields and emphasized the need to overcome the problems faced by both sides in a way that benefits the two neighboring nations.

Al Kazem continued: "Tehran is seeking to expand joint work areas and open new horizons for cooperation with Baghdad."

In this meeting, the head of the State of Law coalition also said Iraq is witnessing political stability and the desire to strengthen relations with all friendly countries.

Nouri al-Maliki emphasized that Iraq wishes to strengthen its relations with all supportive and friendly countries. Iraq is witnessing significant political stability, which will soon be reflected in the government's performance.

Spox Slams U.S.-Pushed Resolution Ending Iran CSW Membership

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Government Spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi has reacted to a UN resolution that terminated Iran's membership in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), blaming the move on the US which he said accounted for a third of the world's female prisoners.

The Iranian official made the reaction on his twitter page, giving figures describing the situation of women in the United States.

"1. One third of women prisoners worldwide are incarcerated in the US."

"2. At least 250 women have been killed by US police, on the streets and without trial, since 2015. Leonna Hale, a 26-year-old pregnant woman, is one of them."

"3. The US pushed for Iran's termination in the Commission on the Status of Women."

Bahadori Jahromi used #multistandard at the end of his tweet.

On Wednesday, the UN adopted the US-pushed resolution ending Iran's CSW membership with 29 votes in favor and 16 abstentions. Eight countries voted against the resolution.

Zionist Regime Is Cancerous Cell in Region

TEHRAN (IP) - The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baku, in response to the baseless statements of the ambassador of the Zionist regime, said that the fake and Zionist regime is the cancerous tumor of the region.

The Israeli ambassador to Baku, George Deek, in a Twitter message claimed that Iranian Jews have had a troubled life.

In response to the baseless statements of the Zionist ambassador in Baku, Seyyed Abbas Mousavi, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Azerbaijan, in a tweet on Thursday said: "Unlike the fake and temporary Zionist regime, whose existence for 70 years has caused nations to suffer like a cancerous tumor, Iran is a deep-rooted country with 7,000 years of recorded history, which has always been the anchor of world stability."

Iran, Armenia Plan to Increase Trade Volume to \$3b

AHVAZ (IRNA) - Ambassador of Armenia to Iran Arsen Avagyan said that Iran and Armenia intend to increase trade volume to \$3 billion per year.

Referring to the importance of scientific and academic relations between Iran and Armenia, Ambassador Arsen Avagyan said that there are a lot of positive examples in the fields of increasing ties between Iran and Armenia universities.

Pointing to the deep-rooted ties between Iran and Armenia, he underlined that the two sides have many capacities to cooperate in various fields.

He added that Iran and Armenia intend to increase trade volume to \$3 billion per year.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:13
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:38
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:08

76. Gardens of Eternity, beneath which flow rivers: they will dwell therein for aye: such is the reward of those who purify themselves (from evil).
77. We sent an inspiration to Moses: "Travel by night with My servants, and strike a dry path for them through the sea, without fear of being overtaken (by Pharaoh) and without (any other) fear."
Surah 20, Tu-ha (76-77)

Iran, Russia Sign Space Cooperation Document

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran, and Russia signed a cooperation document on the space industry.

The document was inked on the sidelines of Iran Airshow 2022 in Kish Island, southern Iran, in presence of the heads of space agencies of both Iran and Russia.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Head of the Iranian Space Agency Hassan Salariyeh said that the document included cooperation on a wide range of issues, including the construction of remote-sensing and communication satellites, creating laboratory infrastructure, assembling, launching bases and satellite tests.

He said that this agreement came as a result of months of negotiations with the Russian Space Agency with the aim of enhancement of communications in both Iran and Russia.

Noting that Iran began its space industry 20 years ago, Salariyeh said that the country has now achieved significant achievements.

He believed that the agreement could help Iran reach the goals of its 10-year vision plan in space industry in a more speedy way.



Russian Space Agency chief Yuri Borisov said for his part that Iran is not a new ally for Russia and the two countries have been cooperating on space industry since 2002.

He said that Iran's plans to develop its space industry covers all space areas and Russia will help Iran in this regard.

Sending astronauts to the Russian space station is among the mutual plans of both countries, the Russian official said, adding that Iran's success in launching a satellite in 2009 put the country among the nine world countries possessing this technology.

He said that Iran also sent a spacecraft carrying a monkey into space in 2012 to become a member of the six-member club having the technology to do so.

The 11th edition of Iran Airshow kicked off on Tuesday and will run until December 16. Some 90 companies from Iran, Russia, China and other countries are present in the event.

Tehran, Doha Call for Strengthening Mutual Ties



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian and the Qatari ambassador to Iran Mohammed bin Hamad Al Hajri in a meeting on Wednesday stressed the development and strengthening of bilateral relations in various fields.

Mehrabian met and held talks with Al Hajri here in Tehran on Wednesday.

Congratulating the Qatari government on the occasion of National Day, Mehrabian said that the meetings of the heads of the two states are a clear example of the existing will between the two sides to enhance mutual ties.

Stressing the need to further develop and strengthen the relations between the two sides in the political, economic, and cultural arenas, he expressed hope that by relying on common capacities and actively utilizing the existing capabilities of the Government of Qatar, the two sides can take further steps in the interests of the two peoples.

Pointing to the deep-rooted cooperation between the two countries, Mehrabian underlined holding the eighth joint commission on economic cooperation between Iran and Qatar in Doha provided a better opportunity to bring cooperation into the new and strategic arena with more serious decisions.

It is important to implement the agreement between the two countries so as to enter the phase of comprehensive cooperation and participation in all economic areas, including energy, transportation, customs, standards, banks, agriculture, and industry to advance the level of cooperation, he underscored.

HOSCO Policy Is Successful Presence in Export Markets

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Enhancing the quality of products, beside increasing the share of steelmakers in the domestic market, leads to their successful presence in the exporting market.

According to IRASIN, the increase in the quality of products will lead to both rise in the share of steelmakers in the domestic market and to their successful presence in the exporting markets but to this end, implementation of some programs and intra-organizational changes along with some extra-organizational supports are required.

Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) with the stock symbol of Hormoz has achieved many successes in the quality and technology spheres in recent years with implementing different projects as well as increasing interaction with knowledge-based companies, universities and technology parks; in between, some hurdles like electricity shortage can

act like bumpers on course of development of a group like Hormozgan Steel Company but successive records in the rise in production and quality bespeak of precise planning in this group and materialization of motto of the year.

HOSCO is among the big steelmakers of the country and due to its location in Persian Gulf special zone and access to the free waters has abundant advantages in the field of export and it can play colorful role in creating forex earnings from non-oil exports. The company is to improve its position in exports with boosting quality and quantity and to have major share of the exporting market.

Actions by HOSCO have made it a brilliant gem among the affiliate companies of Mobarakeh Steel Company Holding. Several items and factors have helped HOSCO to be considered among the top steel producing companies of the country and one is the management approach in this group which has caused successive

record-breakings even in the hardest time of energy shortage and it has maintained its share of the market.

The quality of products has been 98.77% in the first seven months of the year while the figure was 98.25% last year and it saves waste of costs in the organization. The company has also minimized the level of defect and waste during the production and it has increased the quality of the final product. HOSCO has also increased its activities in the field of research and development and the plant of the company is now one of the most modern plants and it has boosted cooperation with the knowledge-based companies which leads to more job creation and saving the forex.

On the whole HOSCO with an expertise roadmap and collaboration of its staff as well as investment in the research and development tries to boost quality of its products in the international standards and to improve its position in the rankings of the steel producers.



Mazandaran's Rice Market to Boom With Eliminating Export Tariffs, Gov't's Direct Purchases From Farmers

Iranian Tarem Rice In The Russian Market



the price of rice. He emphasized: "This year, with the efforts of farmers and the introduction of scientific agriculture to paddy fields in different rice-growing provinces, we were able to increase rice production by 20 percent in the whole country, after which, due to some issues, part of the rice remained in the hands of farmers." And somehow the demand in the market had decreased. According to Yazdanpanah, about 60% of the rice production remains in the hands of farmers, and this has led to a decrease in the price of rice and worries of rice farmers. The price of unpolished rice in Tarom Hashemi had decreased from 93,000 to 80,000 toman per kilo in the past few days.

Field Visit of Governor From Amol rice market

Complaints and complaints of paddy farmers and rice sellers brought Mazandaran governor to the rice market in Amol city yesterday to evaluate the market situation closely and in dialogue with sellers, farmers and buyers. Seyed Mahmoud Hosseinipour, pointing out that the first shipment of quality rice was loaded from the International Trade Center and Iran's rice export terminal in Amol to Russia, expressed his hope that the opening of the rice export route would solve the current problem of the rice market, to play an important role in the added value and economic profitability of this product for Mazandarani farmers. The governor of Mazandaran, explaining the reason for the long shelf life of rice in warehouses, said: This year, the rice farmers had a significant growth in rice production with their efforts and efforts, but at the same time as the harvest, the import of foreign rice was done with the aim of regulating the market, which affects the buying and selling market has affected to some extent. Emphasizing the point that the import was made with the aim of regulating the rice market, he explained at the same time: We raised the concerns of Mazandaran farmers about selling their products with the national officials, including the President and the Minister of Jihad of Agriculture, and in order to overcome the existing problems. Solutions were provided in the farmers sales section.

emphasized: "Mazandaran rice has a good market in Arab and European countries, but due to the competitiveness of the rice market, we must pay attention to the category of quality improvement and standardization in the production of rice, especially high-yield varieties. He added: "Now we have problems in exporting high-yielding varieties of Mazandaran rice to different countries of the world, which should be done with the efforts of farmers and rice research institutes towards quality and standardization."

Direct Purchase of Rice by the Government at the Order of the President

Hosseinipour, expressing hope for the prosperity of supply and demand of Mazandaran rice market in the near future, said: "The purchase of 50 thousand tons of quality rice from Atka store will be implemented by the President's personal order by next week. He informed about the conditions for payment of working capital facility for the purchase of Mazandaran rice and said: Currently, the process of supply and demand in the rice market promises the prosperity of the market and the removal of obstacles." In an interview with "Iran" Persian daily and touching upon he reasons for the stagnation of the Mazandaran rice market, Esfandiar Ghasemzadeh, the official of the Mazandaran Rice Association, said: "There are various reasons for the stagnation of the rice market. Some farmers refused to supply rice thinking that this year the price of rice in the market may reach three times the price at the beginning of the harvest season." "Since the government has committed to buy the product at the market price in the form of contract cultivation, they put their hands on it and we saw that this did not happen, and on the other hand, the import was more than the needs and the economic condition of the people was all the more reason for the rice to be abundantly deposited in the market and fall into stagnation. The situation has become such that if this trend continues, even farmers who have high capacity and were less willing to sell their products to brokers in the past years will be forced to give their products to brokers and they will also suffer," he added.



Removing Rice and Citrus Export Tariffs

The governor of Mazandaran, referring to the government's solutions for opening the rice and citrus markets of this province, said: In the first solution, the export tariff has been removed to balance the supply and demand and the prosperity of the province's agricultural products market, especially rice and citrus fruits. The high representative of the government in Mazandaran



Irish UN Peacekeeper Killed In Southern Lebanon

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - An Irish soldier of the UN peacekeeping force in south Lebanon near the Israeli border was killed and three wounded after their convoy came under fire, Irish officials said.



Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin said he was "deeply shocked and very saddened" by the loss of life. The UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL said the "incident" happened near the village of Al-Aqbiya, just outside the force's area of operations in a strip along Lebanon's border with Israel. The Irish military said "a convoy of two armored utility vehicles carrying eight personnel travelling to Beirut came under small arms fire" around 2115 GMT on Wednesday.

Last French Troops Leave Central African Republic

BANGUI (Dispatches) - The last French troops deployed in the Central African Republic left on Thursday following a chill in relations caused by closer ties between Bangui and Moscow, an AFP reporter saw.



Forty-seven troops from a logistical support unit left Bangui airport aboard a C-130 transporter aircraft, becoming the last of a 130-person French contingent to leave the troubled country. France, the former colonial power, dispatched up to 1,600 troops to help stabilise the country after a coup in 2013 unleashed a civil war along sectarian lines. The operation, named Sangaris, was France's seventh military intervention in the CAR since the country gained independence in 1960.

Peru Declares State of Emergency, Seeks Jail for Castillo



LIMA (Dispatches) - Peru announced a nationwide state of emergency, granting police special powers and limiting freedoms including the right to assembly, after a week of fiery protests that have left at least eight dead.

The protests were sparked by the ousting of former President Pedro Castillo on Dec. 7 in an impeachment vote. Castillo, a leftist elected in 2021, was arrested after illegally trying to dissolve the Andean nation's Congress, the latest in a series of political crises the world's second-largest copper producer has faced in recent years.

Prosecutors said they were seeking 18 months of pretrial detention for Castillo, who has been charged with rebellion and conspiracy. Peru's Supreme Court met to consider the request but later suspended the session until Thursday.

Castillo's former vice president, Dina Boluarte, was sworn into office after his removal, and her presidency has divided other Latin American leaders.

The political upheaval has sparked angry and sometimes violent protests around the Andean country, especially in the rural and mining regions that propelled the former peasant farmer and teacher to office in July last year.

Eight people, mostly teenagers, have died in clashes with the police, authorities have said. At least six were victims of gunfire, according to rights groups. Protesters have blockaded highways, set fires to buildings and invaded airports.

"We have agreed to declare a state of emergency throughout the country, due to the acts of vandalism and violence," Boluarte's defense minister, Alberto Otarola, told reporters.

"This requires a forceful response from the government," he said, adding that it would mean the suspension of certain freedoms, including the right to assembly and freedom of transit, and give authorities the ability to enter homes without a warrant.

Peruvian President Pedro Castillo at the VII Ministerial Summit on Government and Digital Transformation of the Americas

Boluarte, speaking to reporters from the presidential palace, called for peace and said "we can't have a dialogue if there's violence between us."

She said elections could be moved forward further to December 2023 from April 2024, a date she had pledged earlier. The vote is currently slated for 2026 when Castillo's term would have ended.

Boluarte's government also spoke with a slate of officials from the region Wednesday, likely looking to shore up international support as the leader has faced criticism from Latin American leftists such as Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

The Peruvian foreign minister, Ana Cecilia Gervasi, said she spoke Wednesday with her counterparts from Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Ecuador. The previous day, Boluarte had met with a number of European ambassadors.

Russia Preparing For Long War With Ukraine

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia is digging in for a long war in Ukraine and still wants to conquer the entire country, a senior Ukrainian military official said.

Brigadier General Oleksiy Gromov told a military briefing that although he did not expect Moscow to launch an attack from Belarus, Russian was training new troops on its neighbour's soil and had moved military aircraft there.

Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar, at the same briefing, warned against allowing complacency to set in after recent Russian military setbacks.

"The Kremlin ... is seeking to turn the conflict into a prolonged armed confrontation," Gromov said. Malyar added: "We and the world should not relax, because the ultimate goal of the Russian Federation is to conquer all of Ukraine, and then it can move on." Gromov did not say what Russia's aim might be in prolonging the already nearly 10-month-old war.



Ukrainian officials have portrayed the Kremlin as desperate to reverse recent military setbacks - which included a retreat from the southern city of Kherson after months of occupation - and secure victories to justify the war to the Russian public.

The Kremlin has never fully defined the goals of its Feb. 24 invasion, which it said was partly intended to protect Russian-speakers in eastern Ukraine.

It said last week that it was still set on securing at least the bulk of the parts of east and south Ukraine that it has declared its own, but appeared to give up on seizing other areas in the west and northeast that Ukraine has recaptured.

Ukraine's military staff said Moscow's current main focus was on the eastern cities of Bakhmut and Avdiivka, but that Russian forces were shelling Kherson daily and trying to get a stronger foothold in the southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia.

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China Recalls Six Diplomats Over Manchester Violence

LONDON (Dispatches) - China has removed six diplomats from the UK, including its consul-general in Manchester, after they were accused of assaulting a Hong Kong protester in the northern English city, Britain said.

UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said the six envoys had left the country by a Wednesday deadline imposed by London for them to waive their diplomatic immunity and be questioned by police over the October incident.

Greater Manchester Police launched a criminal probe after Hong Konger Bob Chan alleged Chinese diplomats subjected him to "barbaric" treatment -- dragging him inside their compound to assault him -- at an anti-Beijing protest.

"As part of that investigation, we requested that six Chinese officials waive diplomatic immunity so they can be questioned," Cleverly said.

He added that the Chinese embassy in London had been informed of the deadline for "them to take action".

"In response to our requests, the Chinese government has now removed from the UK those officials, including the consul-general himself," Cleverly noted.

Britain's top diplomat said London's response demonstrated its "adherence to the rule of law" as well as "the seriousness with which we take these incidents".

In response, China's embassy to Britain issued a rebuke to Cleverly, saying he made "irresponsible

comments by distorting facts".

"The British government failed to effectively prevent the intrusion and assault carried out by those rioters and to protect the premises and members of the Chinese Consulate General," the Chinese embassy said in a statement posted on its website.

"The UK side shows no respect for justice and the rule of law, and is being most irresponsible and disgraceful," it said, adding that they had "launched solemn representations" with Britain over the issue.

In October, the UK's Foreign Office department summoned Yang Xiaoguang, China's Charge d'Affaires in London, after footage emerged backing up the claims of the pro-democracy protester.

Senior ruling Conservative lawmakers had accused consul-general Zheng Xiyuan, one of China's most senior UK diplomats, of being at the Manchester scene and ripping down posters during the peaceful protest.

The removal of the six Chinese envoys is likely to please hardliners on China in the Conservative party, who had demanded their expulsions and accused the UK government of appeasing Beijing.

MP Alicia Kearns, chair of parliament's watchdog Foreign Affairs Committee, welcomed the development, saying the six had "fled the UK like cowards, making clear their guilt".



Thousands Protest Against Conviction of Istanbul Mayor

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Thousands of Turks protested the conviction and political ban of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu on Thursday, voicing criticism of the government ahead of elections next year set to be one of President Tayyip Erdogan's biggest political challenges.

A Turkish court on Wednesday sentenced Imamoglu, a popular rival to Erdogan, to two years and seven months in prison, which like the ban must be confirmed by an appeals court. The verdict drew wide criticism at home and abroad as an abuse of democracy.

As patriotic music rang out, the crowd waved Turkish flags in front of the Istanbul municipality building in the city of 16 million people. A large portrait banner of Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was hung from the building.

"Rights, law, justice... The day will come when the AKP is called to account," the crowd chanted as the rally began, referring to Erdogan's ruling AK Party.

"The government is afraid and that's why there was such a verdict. Nobody can stop this nation," said Filiz Kumbasar, 56, who came from the town of Duzce some 200 km (125 miles) away for the rally.

Imamoglu was convicted for insulting public officials in a speech he made after he won Istanbul's election in 2019. Critics say Turkish courts bend to Erdogan's will. The government says the judiciary is independent.

Imamoglu said his jail sentence punished his success. "Sometimes in our country, no success goes unpunished," he said. "I see this meaningless and illegal punishment imposed on me as a reward for my success."

Presidential and parliamentary elections due to be held by June may be the biggest political challenge yet for Erdogan after two decades in power, as Turks cope with rising costs of living after a currency collapse and inflation surge.

The six-party opposition alliance formed against Erdogan, led by Imamoglu's Republican People's Party (CHP), has yet to agree their presidential candidate. Imamoglu has been mooted as a possible challenger and polls suggest he would defeat Erdogan.

Imamoglu was tried over a speech in which he said those who annulled the initial 2019 vote - in which he narrowly defeated a candidate from Erdogan's AK Party - were "fools". Imamoglu says his remark was a response to Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu for using the same language against him.



Germany Plans Record Debt Issuance in 2023

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany plans record debt issuance of more than 500 billion euros (\$533 billion) next year to fund costs associated with the energy crisis and the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, German Finance Agency issuance plans published on Wednesday showed.

The government intends to issue federal securities with a total volume of about 539 billion euros in 2023, the agency said. That compares with 449 billion euros this year and 483 billion in 2020, the previous record.

Europe's biggest economy is trying to cope with surging gas and electricity costs caused largely by a collapse in Russian gas supplies to Europe, which Moscow has blamed on Western sanctions following its invasion of Ukraine in February.



UK Inflation Slows But Remains Elevated

LONDON (Dispatches) - British inflation slowed in November but sat near the highest level in more than 40 years, data showed, as a cost-of-living crisis sparks fresh strikes.

The Consumer Prices Index eased somewhat to 10.7 percent last month, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement, against expectations of 10.9 percent.

That marked a modest improvement from October's 11.1 percent, the highest level since 1981, but pressures remain high due to soaring domestic energy and food bills after Russia's war on Ukraine.

The news comes amid crippling industrial action by public and private sector workers demanding higher wages, which have been dramatically eroded by rising living costs this year.

Railway staff are currently staging their second day of a two-day national strike, kicking off a month of walkouts involving professions from nurses to passport control and postal workers that spells Christmas misery for millions.

November's inflation data was also published on the eve of an interest rate decision from the Bank of England, which is widely expected to deliver the ninth hike in a row as policymakers try to tackle rampant prices.

"Although still at historically high levels, annual inflation eased slightly in November," noted ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner.

"Prices are still rising, but by less than this time last year, with the most notable example of this being motor fuels."

British finance minister Jeremy Hunt blames Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine for fuelling sky-high energy prices, as well as the economic reopening from Covid restrictions.

"The aftershocks of Covid-19 and Putin's weaponisation of gas mean high inflation is plaguing economies across Europe, and I know families and businesses are struggling here in the UK," Hunt said.

"Getting inflation down so people's wages go further is my top priority."

"I know it is tough for many right now, but it is vital that we take the tough decisions needed to tackle inflation -- the number one enemy that makes everyone poorer."

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative government insists that inflation-busting pay hikes would further worsen the situation.

Nurses are set to walk out for the first time in their union's 106-year history on Thursday.

Inflation is still running at more than five times the BoE's official target level of just two percent.

Britain remains on course for a long-lasting recession on fallout from the highest inflation in decades, despite this week's news of economic growth in October.

The government and BoE have each said they believe Britain is already in a recession that the bank expects to last all next year.

Wednesday's data nevertheless stoked hope that inflation may have peaked in October, but analysts warn more hefty interest rate hikes could further darken the outlook.

Malaysia's GDP to Slow to 5% in 2023

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - RAM Ratings projected Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth to slow to between four and five per cent in 2023 from an estimated 8.2 per cent in 2022.

The rating agency said global economic slowdown is anticipated to dampen Malaysia's exports while the still notable price pressures and tighter monetary conditions might impact domestic consumption.

"That said, domestic demand is expected to drive the economy as businesses and households climb out of the lingering shadows of the Covid-19 pandemic," it said in a statement today.

It said Malaysia's broad and diversified base would cushion intensified headwinds to growth in 2023.

RAM Ratings said the economic growth would also be supported by stronger labour market conditions next year with the average unemployment rate projected to fall to 3.5 per cent from an estimated 3.8 per cent in 2022.

It said the resolution of issues related to foreign workers and supply chains should also provide additional impetus for growth.

Meanwhile, it said sharper-than-expected deterioration in the global economy and/or domestic inflation are key downside risks for next year.

On the fiscal side, the rating agency said the more moderate commodity price levels, and in turn the related subsidy expenditure, might keep the fiscal deficit contained within 5.4 per cent of GDP from an estimated of 5.8 per cent in 2022.

"This estimate is still subject to the final formulation of subsidy rationalisation plans for key items including petrol and electricity tariffs," it said.

It said with the status quo, the current fiscal space remained fairly tight with government debt projected to reach RM1.1 trillion in 2023 or 62.4 per cent of GDP and debt servicing at a significant 16.9 per cent of total projected revenues for 2023 from an estimated 15.1 per cent in 2022.



Oil Demand Growth Set to Slow But Stay Robust in 2023

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global oil demand growth will slow next year but will still be at a robust 1.7 per cent as China recovers from Covid-related economic doldrums, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said.

This year China is still headed for a contraction in oil demand of 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 15.4 million bpd, the IEA added, before recovering by almost one million bpd in 2023.

Russia's oil output will fall by 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd) next year the IEA predicted, further tightening balances as a December 5 price cap imposed by the G7, the European Union and Australia takes effect seeking to curb Moscow's wartime revenue. Russia's output rose by 90,000 bpd in November to 11.2 million bpd, just 200,000 bpd below levels seen before Moscow sent troops into Ukraine.

Its output has consistently outstripped IEA predictions though lower global prices and steeper discounts on Russian oil meant Moscow's revenue fell by US\$700 million (RM3 billion) to US\$15.8 billion, the IEA said. "While lower oil prices come as a welcome relief to consumers faced by surging inflation, the full impact of embargoes on Russian crude and product supplies remains to be seen," the IEA said.

Brent oil prices stood at US\$81.57 a barrel at 1150 GMT on Wednesday, down from a high near US\$140 a barrel reached briefly in March.

Global economic challenges and concerns over demand in top oil importer China have helped erase most oil price gains this year, but the IEA said demand in some areas was surprisingly robust.

China, India and the Middle East picked up some of the slack left by flagging oil uptake in Europe and elsewhere in East Asia, the IEA said.

The data prompted the IEA to raise its estimate for oil demand growth this year by 140,000 bpd to 2.3 million bpd and for next year by 100,000 bpd to 1.7 million bpd for a total of 101.6 million bpd.

"While restriction levels in (China) remain high, the stage is now set for a progressive reopening in 2023. We have raised our estimates for 2022 and next year's growth by 50,000 bpd and 40,000 bpd, respectively."

"As we move through the winter months and towards a tighter oil balance in Q2 2023, another price rally cannot be ruled out," the IEA said.

EU Agrees €20b Boost for Energy Funding to Quit Russian Gas

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Union will raise an extra 20 billion euros from its carbon market for investments to help end more swiftly the bloc's reliance on Russian fossil fuels, under a political deal reached.

Negotiators from EU countries and the European Parliament agreed in the early hours

of Wednesday to raise 60% of the grants from an EU Innovation Fund - an existing pot of carbon market revenue that is currently spent on breakthrough green technologies.

The other 40% would come from proceeds from CO2 permit sales held earlier than planned.

The EU carbon market forces power plants and factories to buy CO2 permits when they pollute. The price of those permits has surged in recent years, increasing the revenues that countries receive from selling them to CO2-emitting companies.

The funding will go into areas such as expanding renewable energy, energy-saving renovations, and projects to help heavy industry decarbonise.

EU member states and the European Parliament all need to formally approve the deal before it takes effect next year.

EU carbon permit prices have been driven higher partly by tougher emissions-cutting targets that will shrink the supply of CO2 permits available this decade. The benchmark EU carbon permit price traded on Wednesday at around 88 euros per ton.

The European Commission had originally proposed that the money for new energy investments come from selling permits stored in the carbon market's "market stability reserve" - a scheme designed to absorb excess permits and stop the market becoming oversupplied.

Countries including the Netherlands and Denmark opposed that idea, warning that toying with the reserve could undermine trust in the carbon market and depress the EU carbon price.

EU negotiators will also attempt to strike a deal later this week on a broader carbon market overhaul, which is central to the EU's target to cut its net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% from 1990 levels by 2030.

Ghana Reaches \$3b IMF Deal to Battle Economic Crisis

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Ghana agreed on a \$3 billion credit deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as part of the country's battle to end its worst economic crisis in decades.

The West African state is facing over 40% inflation, a risky debt burden and a sharp decline in its cedi currency since the start of the year.

The IMF said Ghana's government had committed to "a wide-ranging economic reform program" that will restore stability and debt sustainability.

"These are really grave times and in a really difficult economic environment," Finance Minister Kenneth Ofori-Atta told reporters in Accra.

"But this now today paves the way for the IMF management and executive board to approve Ghana's program request early, hopefully, next year."

The three-year IMF loan agreement has yet to be approved by the fund's board.

The program also aims to reduce inflation, strengthen the economy's resilience to external shocks and improve market confidence in the country, the IMF said.

A top cocoa and gold producer, Ghana also has oil and gas reserves, but its debt has soared, and like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, it has been hit hard by fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war.

The crisis forced President Nana Akufo-Addo's government to reverse its position earlier this year and seek IMF help as economists warned of a default on debt payments.

The government has already announced a domestic debt swap as part of the program to ease a crunch in payments and is soon expected to release details about restructuring foreign debt.

IMF mission chief Stephane Roudet said IMF board approval for the deal would come after Ghana's creditors give assurances and the debt exchange program is shown to be sufficient.

"What is very important for the IMF is that the government strategy as a whole be sufficient to put debt on a sustainable path and to bring debt sustainability over the medium term," he said.

The government has already increased value-added tax (VAT) by 2.5% and frozen state-sector hiring to help trim spending and boost domestic revenues.

Officials say vulnerable groups will be protected, but critics are concerned the government program will lead to more austerity.

"Ghana having reached a staff-level deal with the IMF is quite good news, although we have yet to get the full details. But on the whole, it will facilitate the final approval," Ghanaian economist Daniel Anim Amartey said.

OPEC Sticks to 2022, 2023 Oil Demand Growth Forecasts After Downgrades



LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC stuck to its forecasts for global oil demand growth in 2022 and 2023 after several downgrades, saying that while economic slowdown was "quite evident" there was potential upside such as from a relaxation of China's zero-COVID policy.

Oil demand in 2023 will rise by 2.25 million barrels per day (bpd), or about 2.3%, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said in a monthly report, after growth of 2.55 million bpd in 2022. Both forecasts were unchanged from last month.

"Although global economic uncertainties are high and growth risks in key economies remain tilted to the downside, upside factors that may counterbalance current and upcoming challenges have emerged as well," OPEC said in the report.

"A resolution of the geopolitical conflict in Eastern Europe and a relaxation of China's zero-COVID policy could provide some upside potential," the report said in a separate section.

While keeping the annual demand growth forecasts steady, OPEC trimmed the absolute demand forecasts in the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Chinese demand, hit by COVID containment measures, has contracted in 2022, OPEC said.

Before Tuesday's report, OPEC had been downgrading its demand forecasts for months and, with the wider OPEC+ alliance, in October had agreed to their biggest oil output cut since 2020. OPEC+ at its last meeting on Dec. 4 left policy unchanged.

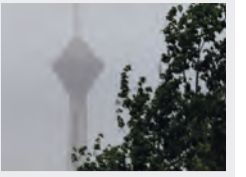
In the report, OPEC nudged up its 2022 economic growth forecast to 2.8% and left 2023 steady at 2.5%. As well as the relaxation of China's COVID policy, the report listed other sources of upside including commodity price weakness.

Tehran Remains in Grip of Unhealthy Air Quality

TEHRAN (IFP) - Air pollution has remained at an unhealthy level in the Iranian capital, Tehran, for several days, with officials urging sensitive groups of people to reduce spending time outdoors.

Tehran's air quality index (AQI) for early Friday was reported to be 150, which means it is unhealthy for the sensitive groups including those suffering from heart complications, the elderly and children. Other large cities have also been grappling with lower levels of air pollution, a condition which weather officials say will continue until next week.

Earlier this week, poor air quality in Tehran and adjacent cities forced the closure of schools.



China Readying \$143b Package for Its Chip Firms

HONG KONG (Dispatches) - China is working on a more than 1 trillion yuan (\$143 billion) support package for its semiconductor industry, three sources said, in a major step towards self-sufficiency in chips and to counter U.S. moves aimed at slowing its technological advances.

Beijing plans to roll out what will be one of its biggest fiscal incentive packages over five years, mainly as subsidies and tax credits to bolster semiconductor production and research activities at home, said the sources.

It signals, as analysts have expected, a more direct approach by China in shaping the future of an industry, which has become a geopolitical hot button due to soaring demand for chips and which Beijing regards as a cornerstone of its technological might.

The plan could be implemented as soon as the first quarter of next year, said two of the sources who declined to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media.

The majority of the financial assistance would be used to subsidize the purchases of domestic semiconductor equipment by Chinese firms, mainly semiconductor fabrication plants, or fabs, they said.

Such companies would be entitled to a 20% subsidy on the cost of purchases, the three sources said.

The fiscal support plan comes after the U.S. Commerce Department passed in October a sweeping set of regulations, which could bar research labs and commercial data centres' access to advanced AI chips, among other curbs.

The United States has also been lobbying some of its partners, including Japan and the Netherlands, to tighten exports to China of equipment used to make semiconductors. read more

And U.S. President Joe Biden in August signed a landmark bill to provide \$52.7 billion in grants for U.S. semiconductor production and research as well as tax credit for chip plants estimated to be worth \$24 billion.

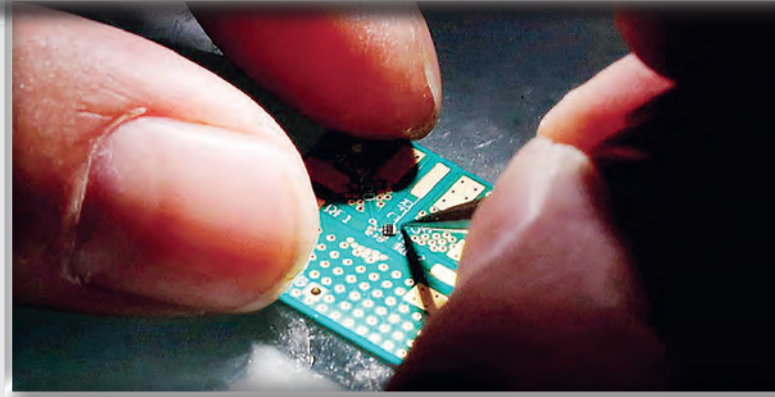
With the incentive package, Beijing aims to step up support for Chinese chip firms to build, expand or modernise domestic facilities for fabrication, assembly, packaging, and research and development, the sources said.

Beijing's latest plan also includes preferential tax policies for the country's semiconductor industry, they said.

China's State Council Information Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The beneficiaries will be both state-owned and private enterprises in the industry, notably large semiconductor equipment firms like NAURA Technology Group, Advanced Micro-Fabrication Equipment Inc China and Kingsemi, the sources added.

Some Chinese chip shares in Hong Kong rose sharply after news of the package. Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC) added more than 8%, sending its daily gain to nearly 10%. Hua Hong Semiconductor Ltd closed up 17%,



while mainland markets were closed when the report was published.

Achieving self-reliance in technology featured prominently in President Xi Jinping's full work report at the Communist Party Congress in October. The term 'technology' was referred to 40 times, up from 17 times in the report from the 2017 congress.

Xi's call for China to "win the battle" in core technologies could signal an overhaul in Beijing's approach to advancing its tech industry, with more state-led spending and intervention to counter U.S. pressures, analysts have said.

The U.S. sanctions published in October have caused major overseas-based chip manufacturing equipment companies to cease supplying key Chinese chipmakers, including Yangtze memory Technologies Co (YMTC) and SMIC, and makers of advanced artificial intelligence chips to cease supplying companies and laboratories.

The world's second-largest economy has launched a trade dispute at the World Trade Organization against the United States over its chip export control measures, China's commerce ministry said on Monday.

China has long lagged the rest of the world in the chip manufacturing equipment sector, which remains dominated by companies based in the United States, Japan, and the Netherlands.

A number of domestic firms have emerged in the past twenty years, but most remain behind their rivals in terms of ability to produce advanced chips.

NAURA's etching and thermal process equipment, for example, can only produce 28-nanometer and above chips, relatively mature technologies.

Shanghai Micro Electronics Equipment Group Co. Ltd (SMEE), China's only lithography company, can produce 90-nanometers chips, well behind that of the Netherlands' ASML, which is producing those as low as 3 nanometers.

EU Strikes Deal on Carbon Border Tariff



LONDON (Dispatches) - The European Union member states have agreed to adopt a mechanism that will impose a tariff on imports of polluting goods - such as iron, steel, cement, fertilizers, aluminium and electricity.

The world-first scheme aiming to support European industries as they decarbonise, known as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), will cover industrial imports from the regional bloc's 27 member states, targeting the highest polluting products first.

The deal that was reached on Tuesday morning in Brussels will require companies, both domestic EU industries and overseas ones, to buy certificates to cover their embedded CO2 emissions. Companies outside the EU are already required to buy permits from the EU carbon market when they pollute.

"CBAM will be a crucial pillar of European climate policies," said Mohammed Chahim, a member of the European Parliament from the Netherlands, in a statement released by the parliament.

"It is one of the only mechanisms we have to incentivize our trading partners to decarbonize their manufacturing industry," he said.

Chahim added that it would allow the EU to "apply the 'polluter pays' principle to our industry".

The goal of the policy is that European companies are not undercut by cheaper goods produced in countries with weaker environmental rules.

The deal includes imported hydrogen which was initially not proposed by the EU, but the politicians pushed for in the negotiations.

Some details on the law, including its start date, will be determined later this week in related negotiations on a reform of the EU carbon market.

The test period for the agreement will begin in October 2023, during which importing companies will have to report their carbon emission obligations.

"The new bill will be the first of its kind," the European Parliament said in a statement, adding that it was designed to comply with World Trade Organization rules in order to push back on accusations of protectionism.

Moderna, Merck Cancer Vaccine Combo Cuts Melanoma Recurrence by 44%

CHICAGO (Dispatches) - A combination of Moderna Inc's experimental melanoma vaccine and Merck & Co's blockbuster immunotherapy Keytruda cut the risk of skin cancer's recurrence or death by 44 per cent compared with Keytruda alone in a mid-stage trial.

Moderna's shares rose over 8 per cent in premarket trading today after the data, which the companies hailed as spectacular. Merck's shares were up nearly 2 per cent at \$111.12.

The study is the first randomised trial to show that combining mRNA vaccine technology - which has been behind the development of successful Covid-19 vaccines - with a drug that revs up the immune response would offer a better result for patients with the most deadly type of skin cancer.

"It's a tremendous step forward in immunotherapy," Eliav Barr, Merck's head of global clinical development and chief medical officer, said in an interview.

Paul Burton, Moderna's chief medical officer, said in a separate interview the combination "has the capacity to be a new paradigm in the treatment of cancer."

Iran Warn EU...

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The talks have remained stalled since August, as Washington continues to insist on its hard-nosed position of not removing all sanctions that were slapped on the Islamic Republic by the previous US administration.

The Foreign Ministry also noted that as a member of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Iran has always cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency according to its international commitments and is "determined" to maintain this cooperation.

It also advised the Western states "not to politicize" the case and "disturb technical cooperation" between Iran and the IAEA.

Iran's Foreign Ministry also reiterated the country's "principled stance" on the Ukrainian crisis which has always been "supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the need to end the conflict through political solutions."

It once again rejected the Western media's reports of drone delivery to Russia, noting that "Iran has not offered any drone to any side for using in the Ukraine war."

The statement further noted that governments of the US, the UK, and France have "knowingly" provided the Saudi-led coalition with lethal arms which according to the Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights have been used in attacks against civilians.

These arms, provided by Western states, have played a major role in war crimes in Yemen, it stressed.

Iran has never waged war on its neighbors, but has been the target of attacks, the ministry added in another article of the statement.

The 8-year war with former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's regime, which enjoyed the "all-out" support of some countries in Europe and West Asia as well as the US, turned the "development of defense capabilities" into a necessity for Iran and this "will never be negotiable," it added.

"Iran is committed to endogenous and inclusive security, stability, and welfare of the region," it added.

Iran has extended hand of brotherhood to all its neighbors as bilateral cooperation with neighbors have increased in the past one and a half year, noted the ministry.

Regional stability and security will be guaranteed only by the cooperation of regional states, the statement stressed.

Iran will continue the policy of neighborliness with the aim of arriving at collective security in the region, said the statement, adding that "baseless accusations" will not hamper Tehran's efforts on this path.

Washington Needs to...

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He warned of the consequences of attempts to tie the Iranian nuclear program with other issues or unilaterally tighten sanctions and pressure on Tehran, which he said would "only lead the negotiations to a dead end and even undo previous diplomatic efforts."

The stalemate on the nuclear deal was triggered in May 2018, when former U.S. president Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the accord reached between Iran and the world powers and imposed harsh economic sanctions against the country under the so-called "maximum pressure" policy.

U.S. Violates...

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"Unfortunately, once again, unilateral dictatorship, pure bullying, hypocrisy, abuse of political power, intimidation and coercion, as well as the use of double standards by America and its allies, overcame multilateralism, legal procedures and the rule of law, and as a result, the legal membership of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Women's Commission was unjustly terminated," said the diplomat.

The United States attacked "main organs and the basic values" of the United Nations by this "political adventure," he said, noting that Washington is "weakening the principles of the Charter and manipulating the procedures of the ECOSOC."

"Therefore, if we are really looking for a solution to global crises, we must stand against such unilateral and illegal actions. Otherwise, sooner or later, all UN members will face the disastrous consequences of such an approach."

On Wednesday, Iran Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani slammed the anti-Iran measure as politically motivated and against the UN Charter.

Elsewhere, the Iranian diplomat pointed to the need for free access of developing countries to the world trade system.

He also said it is important to provide the necessary resources for investment in developing economies and to facilitate the transfer of technology and technical know-how to these states, noting that the G-77 could play a major role with regard to these issues.

The Group of 77 was established on June 15, 1964, by 77 developing countries signatories of the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries" issued at the end of the first session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva.

Although the members of the G-77 have increased to 134 countries, the original name was retained due to its historic significance.

The Group of 77 is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations, which provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the UN system, and promote South-South cooperation for development.

CBI Denies...

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The statement comes as foreign currency prices have risen by more than a fifth in less than a month in Iran. The U.S. dollar rose to nearly 385,000 against the Iranian rial on Thursday, up from 320,000 reported a month ago.

The CBI and the government have in the past blamed foreign sanctions and speculative trade for the rise in currency rates.

Salehabadi on Wednesday named a new deputy CBI governor for foreign exchange and appointed the former holder of the post as his advisor.

Kazakhstan...

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The plans are mainly aimed at China, a country which imported only \$1.9 billion worth of crude and oil products from Kazakhstan in 2021. That comes as total oil and products exports from Kazakhstan reached \$31.1 billion last year.

Akchulakov was quoted as saying by inbusiness.kz that Kazakhstan has also plans to increase its oil exports via Azerbaijan to Georgia, Turkey and other countries.

World Scientific Community...

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He emphasized the fundamental changes in the education field in order to meet the country's needs.

The Minister said that science production creates authority and prosperity, which is why investment in science is important.

In the ceremony, the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology for Innovation reported that Iran is ranked 53rd in the world and first in the region in terms of innovation indexes and converting science into wealth.

Ali Kheyroddin stated that 27 Parks were introduced to be commercialized out of 221 top technologies, 32 parks, and five research institutes.

He went on to say: "Around 110 million dollars of parks' products were sold."

Attending the ceremony, Deputy Minister of Science for Research Peyman Salehi noted: "Iran ranks 15th in the world and first in the region in producing science, and many Iranian articles were cited in Scopus."

Scopus is Elsevier's abstract and citation database, launched in 2004. Scopus covers nearly 36,377 titles from approximately 11,678 publishers, of which 34,346 are peer-reviewed journals in top-level subject fields: life sciences, social sciences, physical sciences, and health sciences.

He stressed that many Iranian universities had enhanced their international cooperation.

Saudi Arabia to Open 2024 F1 Season

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - The Australian Grand Prix will remain in Melbourne until at least 2037 with a new deal to be the season-opening race on at least four occasions and Saudi Arabia to kick off the 2024 campaign, the Victoria state government said. The deal for a further two years at Albert Park follows a 10-year extension announced in June. "Part of the deal will see Melbourne host the first race of the Formula One season for at least four years between 2023 and 2037," the government said in a statement.

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Mari Back in Training After Stabbing

MONZA (Dispatches) - Spanish defender Pablo Mari has returned to training at Serie A side Monza, two months after undergoing surgery having been stabbed in an attack in an Italian supermarket that left one man dead. Milan's Niguarda hospital said in October its trauma team reconstructed two muscles in the back of the 29-year-old centre back, who is on loan at Monza from Premier League club Arsenal. Mari tweeted a picture of him in training yesterday with the caption: "Step by step."

Curry Suffers Injury In Golden State Loss At Indiana

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry suffered a left shoulder injury late in the third quarter of reigning NBA champion Golden State's 125-119 loss at Indiana.

Curry, last June's NBA Finals Most Valuable Player, was hurt trying to strip the ball from Indiana's Jalen Smith as the Pacer drove to the hoop.

Curry held his shoulder until leaving the game moments later and was taken quickly to the locker room.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr said Curry will have an MRI exam on Thursday to determine the extent of the 34-year-old guard's injury.

"We'll see how he is tomorrow," Kerr said. "He's in good spirits and we'll hope for the best."

Curry finished with game highs of 38 points and seven assists as well as seven rebounds. He scored 27 points in the two quarters, half of the Warriors' first half total as they trailed 74-54, and finished with his 250th career 30-point performance.

Tyrese Haliburton led Indiana with 29 points while reserve Bennedict Mathurin added 24 for the Pacers. Golden State, seeking a fifth NBA title in nine seasons, fell to 14-15 overall and 2-12 on the road.

"My message to the group was it's about competing, it's about weathering the storm," Kerr said. "This has been a tough start to the season. We're in a tough stretch."

Curry has averaged 30 points a game this season and hit 50% from the floor. He also averaged 6.7 rebounds, 5.5 assists and 1.7 blocked shots a game.

Losing Curry for any length of time would be a major setback for the Warriors.

"Maybe it's going to get tougher if Steph is out for a little while. If he's out, for sure it will be tougher," Kerr said.

"But you've just got to persevere, keep playing and keep fighting. If we're healthy we feel like we can beat anybody."

Two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic scored 43 points to lead the Denver Nuggets over visiting Washington 141-128.

The 27-year-old Serbian center added 14 rebounds, eight assists and four steals to



spark Denver, which improved to 17-10 and only one game behind Western Conference co-leaders New Orleans and Memphis.

Tyler Herro scored a game-high 35 points and sank the winning jump shot with 4.9 seconds remaining to give the Miami Heat a 110-108 victory at Oklahoma City.

Damian Lillard scored 37 points to lead Portland to a 128-112 triumph at San Antonio while Donovan Mitchell scored 34 points to power the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 105-90 victory at Dallas.

Paul George managed a triple double with 17 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists to spark the host Los Angeles Clippers over Minnesota 99-88. Kawhi Leonard added 19 points and eight rebounds for the Clippers.

New York's Jalen Brunson scored six points in overtime as the Knicks outscored Chicago 11-3 in the extra session for a 128-120 road victory.

Julius Randle led New York with 31 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists while Brunson had a season-high 30 points and DeMar DeRozan scored a game-high 32 for the Bulls.

Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox scored 27 points and passed off 10 assists while Domantas Sabonis added 21 points and 20 rebounds to lift the Kings to a 124-123 victory at Toronto.

Alec Burks came off Detroit's bench to score 27 points while Killian Hayes had 25 for the Pistons in a 141-134 victory at Charlotte.

Germany's Franz Wagner scored 24 points and Sudanese-born Bol Bol added 21 to lead the Orlando Magic over visiting Atlanta 135-124.

Wagner scored 11 points in the first quarter, when Orlando set a club record by scoring 50 points. It was one shy of the NBA first-quarter record set by Denver in 2019.



Schumacher Switches From Ferrari To Mercedes.

PARIS (dispatches) - Mick Schumacher was dropped by Ferrari as a reserve driver today and immediately signed with their rivals Mercedes in the same role.

After Ferrari announced the 23-year-old German was leaving after four years in their academy by mutual agreement, Mercedes said they had signed him.

Mick's father Michael won five driver titles with Ferrari before finishing his career with three seasons at Mercedes.

Mick Schumacher raced the last two seasons for Haas, which uses Ferrari engines.

He failed to register a point in 2021. This year, his best finish in 22 races was sixth.

He ended up 16th in the driver standings. Haas dropped him in November and signed 35-year-old compatriot Nico Hulkenberg.

Mercedes, who struggled to cope with changes to Formula One's technical rules last season, are busy developing their "W14" model.

"Mick will play an important role in the ongoing development of the W14. He will conduct regular work in the simulator," the team said on their web site.

Mercedes has seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton and George Russell, who finished fourth in the standings last season, as their race drivers.

Croatia and Morocco Dust Themselves Off For Bronze

DOHA (Dispatches) - As Croatia and Morocco pick up the pieces after their World Cup semi-finals defeats, the two teams will welcome the prospect of potentially leaving Qatar on a high when they square up in the third-place playoff.

Beating two world class teams in Argentina and France to reach the final proved to be a step too far for Croatia and Morocco, who handsomely defied pre-tournament odds to reach the semis.

Morocco rewrote history along the way when Walid Regragui's fearless squad became the first African team to reach the last four of football's showpiece event.

They will be welcomed home as heroes regardless of the result having not only earned the respect and support of the continent and the Arab world, but also having found a place in the hearts of neutral fans who love a true underdog story.

Croatia and Morocco will face off in Qatar for a second time after playing out a 0-0 draw in their group opener, just as in 2018 when Belgium and England met each other in the group stage and third-place playoff.

"It will be difficult on a mental level. I will give opportunities to those who did not play and we will try to clinch third place," Regragui said.

"The important thing is that we presented a good look to our team and that football in Morocco is not far from the top level."

For 2018 runners-up Croatia, reaching a second consecutive final looked unlikely when they won just one group game.

But through sheer graft and tenacity, two penalty shootout wins over Japan and favourites Brazil earned them a semi-final match with Argentina, where an in-form Lionel Messi was the architect of their destruction.

"Realistically speaking, before the start of the tournament, we would all have accepted reaching the semi-finals. However, we started to dream about the trophy," Croatia midfielder Lovro Majer said.

"Still, we will give everything we've got on Saturday and try to win the bronze medal."

Nadal, Swiatek Named ITF World Champions for 2022



Swiatek, who inherited the world number one spot in March following the shock retirement of Ashleigh Barty, claimed a second French Open and then captured the US Open.

PARIS (Dispatches) - Rafael Nadal and Iga Swiatek were named world champions by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) after a season in which they claimed two Grand Slam titles apiece.

Nadal swept to the Australian Open and then backed it up with a 14th French Open, taking his majors total to a men's record of 22.

Nadal swept to the Australian Open and then backed it up with a 14th French Open, taking his majors total to a men's record of 22.

"I'm very happy to be named ITF World Champion for the fifth time," said 36-year-old Nadal. "When I first won the award in 2008, I would not have expected to still be playing at such a high level 14 years later."

Nadal also made the semi-finals at Wimbledon but was forced to quit before facing Nick Kyrgios due to an abdominal strain.

Rajeev Ram of the United States and Great Britain's Joe Salisbury are first-time winners of the men's doubles world champion award after claiming their third Grand Slam title together at the US Open and then taking the ATP Finals title for the first time in November.

Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova won the women's doubles prize for the third time. The Czech pair won three Grand Slam titles, triumphing at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and US Open.

EU Legal Adviser Backs UEFA in Battle With Super League

LUXEMBOURG (Dispatches) - The European Court of Justice's top legal adviser said that football governing bodies UEFA and FIFA had acted within the law when they threatened to expel clubs or players who joined a proposed Super League.

The opinion of Advocate General Athanasios Rantos is not binding on the court, which is examining a complaint from the company that planned to run the new league, but it will be influential and taken as a sign of the direction the case is taking.

"EU competition rules do not prohibit FIFA, UEFA, their member federations or their national leagues from issuing threats of sanctions against clubs affiliated to those federations when those clubs participate in a project to set up a new competition," he wrote.

The court's final decision is not expected until early next year, but the decision will be a relief for the world's biggest football associations and the existing national European leagues wary of allowing some of their richest clubs to break away.

The legal opinion was immediately welcomed by FIFA and the Spanish La Liga as well as lobby groups representing European football clubs, leagues and supporters.

FIFA said it was happy Rantos had said it could "approve any new football competitions", that he had said it could impose sanctions and it "had exclusive rights to market" its international competitions.



Sale of Man United Could Be a "Good Thing"

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manager Erik Ten Hag said the Glazer family's decision to explore a sale of Manchester United could be a good thing and that he has been reassured any change in ownership would not impact the "objectives, goals and culture" of the club.

United's U.S. owners last month began looking at options for the 20-times English champions, including new investment or a potential sale, 17 years after buying the club.

The club's fans have been clamoring for a change of ownership and the Glazers have been the target of intense criticism as the team, which has a record 13 Premier League titles, have gone five years without winning a trophy.

Ten Hag said he had not spoken with the owners but had instead discussed the plans with United CEO Richard Arnold.

"My information is that it will only be good things because there will be more investment possible, which is good," Ten Hag told reporters at United's training camp in Spain.

"We spoke about the culture we want, we spoke about objectives, goals and the culture and he (Arnold) confirmed it won't change, it will be even better because more money will become available for this project."

Ten Hag said United needed investment just to keep up in the Premier League and that it was important the funds were spent wisely.

