

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the COVID-19 Pandemic in Iran Stayed Unchanged at 144,664 With Another Zero Death Day Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

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Mossad Spy Network Busted

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Intelligence Ministry has identified and arrested members of a spy network who were planning to sabotage the country's defense industry through front companies and security marketing.

Iran's Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday that Iran's intelligence forces uncovered a plot by a Mossad espionage network to gather information from Iranian knowledge-based companies that cooperate with Iran's defense industries.

The Israeli regime's Mossad spy agency hired data broker Frank Genin, who introduced himself as the chief of a spare parts manufacturer company and was able to contact several Iranian companies and employees, the report said.

The Mossad agent then invited his coworkers to a seminar in Malaysia, where he introduced them to another Mossad agent, Hadrien Lavaux.

As a cover-up, Lavaux has been the managing director of Triple A Industries, an Aerospace advanced alloys and composites company that was established in Singapore in 2017. Since then, the company started communicating with Iranian companies that provide carbon fibers, resin, and other metal alloys.

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Iran Ready to Cooperate With Neighbors in All Fields



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister says that Tehran is ready to hold a joint meeting of foreign and defense ministers between Iran and the Persian Gulf states and other neighboring countries.

Speaking at the third edition of the Tehran Dialogue Forum (TDF), Hossein Amirabdollahian said that the policy of neighborhood is the centerpiece of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy.

The administration uses all its might to build trust and strengthen the foundations of friendship with its neighbors in the region, he added.

The foreign minister noted that Iran has always been one of the foundations of stability and security in the region and the frontline of the fight against ISIL terrorism, adding that Iran has always been at the forefront of fighting all kinds of terrorism in the region and the world.

Iran is ready to build trust and cooperate in all dimensions with its neighbors in the region and the Persian Gulf region to establish security and stability in the region, he underlined.

Tehran is ready to hold a joint meeting of foreign and defense ministers between Iran and the Persian Gulf states and other neighboring countries, Amirabdollahian said.

Stating that the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to develop relations with its neighbor, he added that Ebrahim Raisi's administration is ready to focus more on the development of regional and international cooperation through constructive and forward-looking dialogue.

Iran has received a large number of Afghan refugees in the last year while it is under the most severe sanctions, said the Iranian foreign minister.

Iran believes that stable security in Afghanistan is possible only through the formation of an inclusive government, he added.

Iran has always welcomed China's regional cooperation with the countries of the region, said Amirabdollahian, adding that in recent years, Tehran and Beijing have raised the level of their relations to long-term strategic cooperation. "Last week, two Iranian and Chinese representatives held talks in Tehran to follow up on the implementation of the joint comprehensive program of strategic cooperation between the two countries."

Referring to the joint statement issued by the PGCC member states with the presence of China during Xi's visit to Saudi Arabia, he said Iran announced its displeasure and protest through diplomatic channels in an official form and sent an official note to the Chinese side.

Emphasizing the continuation of strategic cooperation with China, he noted that Iran won't allow anyone to comment on its territorial integrity.

The third Tehran Dialogue Forum (TCF) has kicked off in Tehran, with officials and representatives from different countries across the world taking part.

This year's initiative, which kicked off on Monday morning, is focused on the policy of the Islamic Republic toward its neighbors and its approach to friendship and trust-building. The forum is attended by nearly 70 officials and representatives of think tanks and research centers from 36 countries.

Meanwhile in the forum expressing Iran's readiness to return to its JCPOA obligations, the head of Iran's Foreign Policy Strategic Council said that for decades, Iran has been after a region free of nuclear weapons.

Kamal Kharrazi spoke about the recent development in Iran.

What happened in Iran in recent months was a hybrid war, Kharrazi said, adding that many foreign media, intelligence agencies, and terrorist operations were involved in this hybrid war.

Disturbing of public opinion is one of the features of this hybrid war, which is called cognitive war, he noted. "You have witnessed how some countries including France, the UK, and the US deal with riots," he said and stated that Iran is no exception.

He also referred to IAEA technical team's visit to Tehran, saying, "Now Iran is ready to return to its JCPOA obligations. Many problems have been solved so far except for the safeguard issues, and we hope that these issues will be resolved during this visit."

For decades, Iran has been after a region free of nuclear weapons, he said, stressing that Israel's nuclear weapons should also be destroyed and it should join safeguard.

Today, Iran has the necessary nuclear capability, but the country has no intention to build nuclear weapons, he underlined.

Meanwhile on the sidelines of the event Amirabdollahian said that diplomats of the European Union and Iran seriously follow up on consultations on the resumption of the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Amirabdollahian said in a press conference that his Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani and Deputy Secretary-General European Union Enrique Mora as well as he himself and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell continue consultations.

Borrell and Mora are going to visit Jordan concurrent with the arrival of the Iranian delegation to the second Baghdad Conference on December 20, the Iranian top diplomat said.

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Iran Eyes Rise in Trade with Kazakhstan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - An Iranian deputy foreign minister called for the expansion on non-oil trade exchanges between Iran and Kazakhstan, including via the export of technical and engineering services.

The Headquarters for the Coordination of Foreign Economic Relations of Iran held a meeting on the "obstacles and approaches of Iranian companies exporting technical and engineering services and a review of the latest economic ties with Kazakhstan".

The meeting was chaired by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mahdi Safari.

In the meeting, the Iranian diplomat described exporting technical and engineering services as a highly important move that have the potential to earn foreign currency for Iran.

Safari also noted that banking restrictions on issuing guarantees poses one of the most important hurdles to the export of technical and engineering services to neighboring countries and those beyond the region.

He stated that if the obstacle to the issuance of guarantees is removed, the pace of exporting technical and engineering services will increase, the Foreign Ministry's website reported.

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Iran Offers China-Style Strategic Deal for India

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Iran has offered India a strategic cooperation pact on the lines of a deal it signed with China in 2021, two people aware of the matter said, as the sanctions-hit country tries to attract investments in its energy and infrastructure sectors.

Details of the Iran-China deal have remained under wraps. However, according to reports in the international media last year, Beijing will invest close to \$400 billion in Iran's infrastructure and energy sector under a 25-year cooperation agreement. In return, Tehran will provide China with a steady supply of discounted Iranian oil. The deal was seen as a major expansion of Beijing's footprint in West Asia and an effort by Iran to court non-Western sources for critical investments.

Iran has offered a similar deal to India to attract Indian investments and develop its transport and energy infrastructure, the people cited above said, adding that Ali Bagheri Kani, Iran's deputy foreign minister confirmed the offer during an interaction with a group of experts during his visit to New Delhi last month.

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Iran Economy Expanded 3.6% in September Quarter

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Ali Salehabadi says the country's economy grew by 3.6% in the quarter to September 22.

Salehabadi announced the figure in a news conference where he dismissed criticism about CBI's failure to control rising foreign currency prices in Iran.

He said that Iran's economy had expanded by 3% in March-September with oil sector being the best performer among the economic sectors with a 6.6% growth reported over the period.

The top banker said other sectors of the Iranian economy, including manufacturing and mining, agriculture and services sectors, had also expanded over the two quarters to late September.

The remarks come days after the CBI dismissed rumors suggesting there would be an imminent change in the bank's leadership after Salehabadi was criticized in economic circles for his failure to control foreign currency prices.

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Indian Tea Exporters To Iran in a Quandary as Orders Dry Up

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Apart from tea, Iranian buyers haven't been registering for imports of basmati rice from India too, over the last many weeks.

Export of tea to Iran stood at Rs 515 crore in January-September 2022, up 7.3% from the year ago period.

Tea exporters to Iran, one of the largest markets, are facing uncertainties as the buyers from the West Asian country have stopped signing fresh contracts.

After a gradual drop of exports for the last two years due to payment issues, shipping container shortages and the pandemic, year shipments of Indian tea to Iran was rising till a weeks ago, on the back of improvement in container availability and easing of freight rates. Apart from tea, Iranian buyers haven't been registering for imports of basmati rice from India too, over the last many weeks.

Export of tea to Iran stood at Rs 515 crore in January-September 2022, up 7.3% from the year ago period.

There is a lack of clarity over the reasons for Iranian buyers' reluctance to get into new contracts with Indian exporters. Importers in Iran have to get proforma registrations from the authorities before shipments are allowed.

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■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:14
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:40
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:10

82. "But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right, who, - in fine, are ready to receive true guidance."
83. (When Moses was up on the Mount, Allah said:)
"What made thee hasten in advance of thy people, O Moses?"

Surah 20, Ta-ha (82 - 83)

Good Things Happen In Iran Refineries

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Javad Owji said the 13th administration has initiated sizable movements in the country's refining industry including quality improvement in Abadan Refinery and all the refineries across the country.

According to ICANA, Owji spoke about the quality improvement of the Iranian refineries: "Fortunately, good things have happened regarding the quality improvement of the refineries in the 13th administration to the point that the quality improvement of the Isfahan Refinery has reached the operational stage and we will soon put this project into operation in the presence of the President so that 15 million liters per day of Euro5 gasoil will be added to the country's diesel production capacity."

Regarding the country's need to invest in the oil and gas sector, he added: "To date, we have signed nearly \$100 billion worth of MoUs and contracts in the upstream and downstream sectors of oil and gas for domestic and foreign investment, of which \$20 billion are contracts, although according to estimates, we need nearly \$250 billion of investment."

The Oil Minister said: "Although some of these investments were made by foreign companies, we also tap the capacity of domestic companies and banks. For example, 7 domestic banks have joined the development of the massive Azadegan field and



we have invited domestic economic heavyweights to join us in the project, too."

Meanwhile the installed capacity of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) is planned to hit 46 million tons per year by 2026 from currently 28 mt/y, an official with the holding says.

Hassan Neshanzadeh Moghadam, PGPIC's director of planning and business development, said on Sunday that PGPIC's strategy under the new leadership is to reach Germany's BASF, which is achievable due to the existence of huge feedstock resources and knowledge-based companies in Iran.

Pointing out that Iranian knowledge-based companies are more than a century away from large European companies, he noted that each of them is, nevertheless, competitive in their field.

5 Personnel of HOSCO Become Evaluators of Excellence Award

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Manager of Industries Engineering of Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) says five personnel of this company after passing intensive courses in the organizational excellence center of Industrial Management Institute were chosen as the evaluators for the national award and ambassadors of the organizational excellence of HOSCO.



Ms. Marzieh Hamidi said that in the last Iranian calendar year and in line with the strategic goal "Boosting Organizational Excellence, a project dubbed "Training Excellence Ambassadors" was defined whose main goal was to have approved individuals in the field of organizational excellence ward and since they are themselves evaluators they will have better view and approach regarding the organizational excellence issue and they can guide their organization towards better evaluation. The approved individuals with participating in the evaluation process in the big and reputed organizations can be present as the ambassadors of HOSCO and improve the brand of the company. These people can earn valuable experiences for the company and implementing them through their presence in the evaluation processes in other companies.

These personnel passed different courses in four stages and after passing the tests in September were chosen as the evaluators of the company.

Ms. Hamidi, Seyed Hamzeh Seyed Mohseni, Ali Kharazmi, Ms. Fatemeh Moradi and Mandana Soltani were the HOSCO personnel who could pass the courses and to become ambassadors of the company.

LSEZ to Continue Fulfilling Social Responsibilities

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The CEO of Lamerd Special Economic Zone (LSEZ) in the first meeting of the administrative council after his appointment expressed his views and approaches regarding acceleration in growth and development of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone.

Eng. Kourosh Fattahi who was speaking among the board of directors, managers and officials of the energy site of the zone pointed to the existence of capable

human resources in Lamerd and noted that he sees all strong points of the town of Lamerd as capacities and all capacities should be used.

He also hinged the development of Lamerd on the growth and development of the LSEZ and noted that development is a collective identity and no one can claim he has by himself been behind the growth and development in the region.

He stipulated that parallel to developing the infrastructures, the zone should act seriously in

attracting investment and creating and nourishing the sustainable revenue sources is very important for development and stability of the region.

Fattahi once again reiterated that the zone is determined to continue fulfilling its social responsibility and all should work for turning LSEZ to a big and stable organization.



Persian Gulf Star

Leader in Holding "Passengers of Progress" Camps



To introduce achievements and capabilities of young experts of the country in the biggest gas condensates refinery of the world, "Passengers of Progress" camps are set up in this refinery in weekly basis. As per report of the public and international relations of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company, the CEO of the Persian Gulf Star Oil Company stated: "In line with the implementation of the Supreme Leader's orders regarding Jihad of explanation and the important priority of historiography and recounting the achievements of the Islamic system in all areas, including the oil industry, the best solution for disambiguating and identity building for people, especially young people who are exposed to poisoned news feed, is to explain these achievements.

Alireza Jafarpour stated that the enemies' conspiracies are to stop the Iranian nation from the path of the peaks of knowledge and progress, and noted: "In this era when the enemies seek to weaken the spirit of the youth who are the future builders of our beloved country, this stratum by raising the practical level and their own evil plan of culture will bring them to destruction." He continued: "Persian Gulf Star Refinery, as the world's largest gas condensate refinery, is considered a national achievement, which was built and launched by the domestic experts of our dear country Iran at the height of the cruel sanctions of global arrogance, and now has a share of more than 40% in the gasoline production is in charge of the country." Jafarpour added: "Before the establishment of this refinery, we were importers of gasoline, and with the increase of hostile sanctions, the enemies sought to create bottlenecks for the entry of gasoline into the country that the youth of this country with the launch of such a refinery not only could destroy their vicious plot but also could reach self-sufficiency in gasoline production and for the first time the country turned into a gasoline exporting country among the



super powers." He said: "In line with the explanation of the Jihad that has taken place in the Persian Gulf Star Refinery in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Student Basij, weekly camps are being held under the title of "Passengers of Progress" where the visitors get acquainted with achievements of the young experts of the biggest gas condensates refinery of the world." This official stated: "Due to the need to narrate Jihad in the refinery, these camps have been implemented and so far more than 1,500 students have visited this refining star of the country. In the end, he said: "I hope that the future makers of this border and region will be more efficient and successful day by day by following the path of the martyrs and bring glory to Islamic Iran as before."

Germany Cuts the Ribbon On First LNG Terminal



BERLIN (Dispatches) - Germany inaugurated its first liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal, built in record time, as the country scrambles to adapt to life without Russian energy.

The rig in the North Sea port of Wilhelmshaven was opened by Chancellor Olaf Scholz at a ceremony on board a specialist vessel known as an FSRU, named the Hoegh Esperanza.

"It's a good day for our country and a sign to the whole world that the German economy will be able to remain strong," Scholz said from the boat.

The Hoegh Esperanza sounded its horn as the chancellor, dressed in a high visibility jacket, approached.

The ship has already been stocked with gas from Nigeria that could supply 50,000 homes for a year, and the terminal is set to begin deliveries on December 22.

Germany plans to open four more government-funded LNG terminals over the next few months as well as a private terminal in the port of Lubmin.

Together, the terminals could deliver 30 billion cubic metres of gas a year from next year, or a third of Germany's total gas needs -- if Berlin can find enough LNG to service them.

LNG terminals allow for the import by sea of natural gas which has been chilled and turned into a liquid to make it easier to transport.

The FRSU stocks the LNG, then turns it back into a ready-to-use gas.

Until now, Germany had no LNG terminals and relied on cheap gas delivered through pipelines from Russia for 55 percent of its supply.

But since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, gas supplies to Germany have been throttled and Berlin has been forced to rely on LNG processed by Belgian, French and Dutch ports, paying a premium for transport costs.

The government decided to invest in building its own LNG terminals as quickly as possible and has spent billions of euros (dollars) on hiring FSRUs to service them.

However, Germany has not yet signed a single major long-term contract to begin filling the terminals from January.

"The import capacity is there. But what worries me are the deliveries," Johan Lilliestam, a researcher at the University of Potsdam, told AFP.

A contract has been signed with Qatar for LNG to supply the Wilhelmshaven terminal but deliveries are not set to begin until 2026.

Suppliers want long-term contracts, while the German government is not keen to be locked into multi-year gas deals as it wants the country to become climate-neutral by 2045.

"Companies need to know that the purchasing side in Germany will eventually diminish if we want to meet climate protection targets," economy minister Robert Habeck has said.

Environmental campaigners have criticised the LNG project, with the DUH association announcing it will take legal action. A handful of protestors turned out in Wilhelmshaven with placards demanding an "End to gas".

Germany could initially be forced to buy LNG from the expensive spot markets, which would lead to higher prices for consumers.

The market could also be squeezed next year by renewed demand in China as it emerges from strict Covid-19 curbs, Andreas Schroeder, an expert at the ICIS energy research institute, told AFP.

Global Cholera Surge Likely Accelerated By Climate Change



GENEVA (Dispatches) - Climate change has driven an "unprecedented" number of larger and more deadly cholera outbreaks around the world this year, the UN health agency, WHO, said.

"The map is under threat (from cholera) everywhere," said Dr. Philippe Barboza, from the World Health Organization, speaking in Geneva, via Zoom.

Available data points to cases of infection in around 30 countries, whereas in the previous five years, fewer than 20 countries reported infections, on average.

"The situation is quite unprecedented, for not only we are seeing more outbreaks, but these outbreaks are larger and more deadly than the ones we have seen in past years," said Dr. Barboza, WHO Team Lead for Cholera and Epidemic Diarrhoeal Diseases.

"This increasing number of cholera outbreaks is occurring after several years of regular reduction in the number of cases and deaths."

Dr. Barboza explained that all the "usual factors" had played their part in the global uptick of cholera in 2022, not least conflict and mass displacement.

Added to this was the "very visible impact" of climate change, he insisted.

"Most of these larger outbreaks and the fact that they are simultaneously occurring - which makes the situation much more complex - is a direct impact of the increase in adverse climate troubles."

The cholera crisis has been playing out across the Horn of Africa and the Sahel accompanied by "major floods, unprecedented monsoons (and) a succession of cyclones", the WHO cholera expert said.

Many other countries have also been affected, including Haiti, Lebanon, Malawi and Syria, where there are large outbreaks.

In Pakistan, where previous years have seen only sporadic cases of cholera, there have been more than 500,000 reported cases of watery diarrhoea this year after devastating summer floods, but "less than a few thousand" laboratory-confirmed cases of cholera.

Equally worrying is the WHO assessment that the situation is "not going to change quickly" in 2023, because meteorologists have forecast that the La Nina climatic phenomenon is likely to persist for a third successive year.

Natural disasters associated with La Nina are prolonged droughts and rains and an increase in cyclones, "so we are very likely to see (a) similar situation that we saw at the beginning of 2022", Dr. Barboza said, indicating that the worst-hit areas were likely to be in Eastern and Southern Africa, the Caribbean and Asia.

Under WHO emergency response to the Cholera outbreak in Lebanon, the first shipment of Cholera (medicines & supplies) kits arrived over the weekend from WHO Dubai hub in an effort to support the Ministry of Public Health's efforts to control the Cholera ...

Under WHO emergency response to the Cholera outbreak in Lebanon, the first shipment of Cholera (medicines & supplies) kits arrived over the weekend from WHO Dubai hub in an effort to support the Ministry of Public Health's efforts to control the Cholera outbreak.

Although cholera is preventable, a global shortage of vaccines persists, with sole producers South Korea and India, already at "maximum production" of a reported 36 million shots per year.

A South African initiative to produce the vaccines there is underway, but this could take "a few years" to materialize, Dr. Barboza said. He explained that vaccines are so scarce, the International Coordinating Group (ICG) had to decide in October to reduce its global vaccination strategy from two doses to one, to tackle cholera outbreaks.



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MacNeil Shatters 100m Fly Record

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Canada's Maggie MacNeil destroyed the 100m butterfly world record Sunday and the United States shattered the women's 4x100m medley relay mark to wrap up the six-day World Short Course Championships. A third record tumbled in the final race at Melbourne with Australia and the United States finishing in a dead heat to jointly set a new best time in the men's 4x100m medley.

Team Thomas Lead PNC Championship

MIAMI (dispatches) - Tiger Woods and son Charlie, trying to improve on their runner-up finish of last year, were chasing Justin Thomas and his dad, Mike, in the PNC Championship family golf tournament. The Thomases, who won the light-hearted 36-hole scramble at the Ritz-Carlton in Orlando, Florida, in 2020, were atop the leaderboard after combining for two eagles and 11 birdies in a 15-under par 57. The Woods family shared second on 13-under with former Masters champion Vijay Singh and his son, Qass Singh.

Messi and Argentina Beat France on Penalties To Win World Cup

DOHA (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi crowned his glittering career with victory in the World Cup as Argentina beat France on penalties in a final for the ages, triumphing 4-2 after Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick ensured the game ended level following extra time. Gonzalo Montiel rolled in the deciding penalty to give Argentina their third World Cup and prevent France becoming the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy. But a truly remarkable game saw Messi and Mbappe both live up to their billing, with Messi scoring twice and Mbappe becoming the first player since England's Geoff Hurst in 1966 to net a World Cup final hat-trick in a game that ended 3-3 after extra time. Messi had opened the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the first half before Angel Di Maria doubled Argentina's lead at the end of a brilliant counter-attack in the 36th minute. But the astonishing Mbappe breathed life into the holders as he pulled one back from the penalty spot with 10 minutes to go before equalizing in stunning fashion just 60 seconds later to force extra time. Messi then seemed to have decided the contest in Argentina's favor once and for all when he converted a rebound in the 109th minute, only for Mbappe to net from another spot-kick, bringing the game level at 3-3 and forcing a shoot-out. The third World Cup final penalty shoot-out started with Messi and Mbappe both scoring, but Kingsley Coman's next kick for France was saved and Aurelien Tchouameni then crucially missed the target.



It is the second time in five World Cups that France have lost the final on penalties after they were beaten by Italy in 2006, and it is Argentina who are champions for the first time since 1986. The win allows Messi, at 35, to complete his glorious career by emulating Diego Maradona, and this will be remembered as his tournament despite the best efforts of Mbappe, who finished as the tournament's top scorer on eight goals, one more than his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Messi. France's quest for history had been threatened by a virus in the days leading up to the final and they appeared sluggish before Argentina went ahead. France conceded a penalty for the fourth time this tournament when Di Maria was clipped by Ousmane Dembele, and Messi stepped up to score from the spot for the fourth time in Qatar, his 12th World Cup goal allowing him to equal Pele's tally. The expected response from the defending champions was not forthcoming and Argentina increased their lead in the 36th minute. Messi and Julian Alvarez combined to release Alexis Mac Allister bursting through the middle, and he played a first-time ball to the back post for Di Maria to finish. Having hardly featured in the knockout rounds due to injury, Di Maria had returned here and appeared tearful as he celebrated his goal, which was a World Cup final classic. France had not even mustered a shot and Deschamps moved before the interval to replace Olivier Giroud and the struggling Dembele. On came Randal Kolo Muani and Marcus Thuram, as Mbappe moved into the middle of the attack. Argentina had famously blown a two-goal lead before eventually emerging victorious in their last World Cup final triumph 36 years ago, but there appeared little prospect of a repeat of that scenario. However, the French were suddenly given hope when they won a penalty 10 minutes from time as Kolo Muani was brought down by Nicolas Otamendi. Mbappe smashed the spot-kick into the net and the watching French President Emmanuel Macron rose to his feet. France had hope, and within another minute they were level. Messi was robbed of possession by Coman in the lead-up, before Mbappe found Thuram and then met his partner's knockdown with a stunning volley. It will go down as one of the most dramatic moments in World Cup history, and the French players on the bench raced across the pitch to celebrate with their teammate. Argentina, who lost the 2014 final in extra time, looked shattered, and yet it seemed again that they had won it when Messi followed up to score early in the second extra period after Lautaro Martinez's shot was saved. But France were again saved by Mbappe as he converted another penalty following a Montiel handball. It was end to end, and Argentina needed a brilliant Martinez save from Kolo Muani to take it to penalties and Montiel's kick proved decisive to spark wild Argentinians celebrations.

Southgate To Stay on As England Manager

LONDON (Dispatches) - Gareth Southgate will remain as England manager despite the crushing disappointment of their quarter-final exit at the World Cup, the English Football Association confirmed. The 52-year-old said after last week's defeat to defending champions France in Qatar that he would take his time before making a decision over his future. But he is now set to stay at the helm until after the 2024 European Championship. "We are delighted to confirm that Gareth Southgate is continuing as England manager and will lead our Euro 2024 campaign," said FA chief executive Mark Bullingham. "Gareth and (assistant coach) Steve Holland have always had our full support and our planning for the Euros starts now." England have not won a major trophy since their World Cup victory in 1966 but under Southgate they reached the semi-finals of the 2018 tournament and the final of last year's European Championship. His current deal runs until December 2024. England's latest bid to end their long wait for a major trophy ended in last Saturday's 2-1 defeat to France, who went on to reach the final against Argentina. Harry Kane blazed over from the penalty spot when handed a chance to equalize late in the game, having earlier scored from the spot. England's first Euro 2024 qualifier is against Italy on March 23. Ukraine, North Macedonia and Malta are also in the same group.



Alcaraz Confident of Hitting top Form For Australian Open

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - World number one Carlos Alcaraz is confident he will be ready to compete at his best level at next month's Australian Open, despite an abdominal injury that shortened his preseason training block. The 19-year-old Spaniard recovered from a muscle tear in his left abdomen that ruled him out of the ATP Finals and Davis Cup Finals at the end of his last campaign and only started practicing fully a week ago. Two defeats to Andrey Rublev and Casper Ruud at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship in Abu Dhabi this weekend helped Alcaraz dip his toes back into action and he believes he has enough time to train and find his game before the first Grand Slam of 2023 comes along on January 16. "I would say the key is to practice a lot, spend a lot of hours on court. With that, you're going to reach your best level and be ready for the season," the reigning US Open champion told reporters in the UAE capital. "I have one month before the Australian Open, so I have time to keep training, trying to reach my level and I would say I will be ready and 100 per cent heading into Australia." The Spanish teenager, who is the youngest world No.1 in ATP history, will not contest any official tournaments prior to the Australian Open, but will participate in an exhibition at the Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club in Melbourne between January 10 and 12. Alcaraz is aware 2023 will come with new experiences for him now that he is a Grand Slam winner and is at the summit of the rankings. "I have to be prepared for that, the pressure. The people, the players as well, are going to have all their eyes on me and I'm going to have to be prepared for that," he explained. But he also believes the fact that he is coming off an injury and has not had much time to train could relieve some of the pressure entering Australia. "Probably it's going to help me a little bit to try not to think about the people, the expectations, and the ranking, and that kind of stuff," he said on Sunday.



Braathen Claims Alta Badia Giant Slalom

ALTA BADIA (Dispatches) - Lucas Braathen won the World Cup giant slalom at Alta Badia as reigning champion Marco Odermatt extended his lead at the top of the discipline and overall standings. Braathen clocked a combined time of two minutes, 36.35 seconds to pip fellow Norwegian Henrik Kristoffersen by just 0.02sec and claim his second win of the World Cup season after taking the slalom honours in Val d'Isere last weekend. "It's incredible, I'm going to remember this day forever. Winning is like a drug, you always need more of it," said Braathen. The 22-year-old will be competing in another giant slalom on Monday as the world's best stay in Alta Badia.

"I'm so happy that I'm further along than I thought I could be in GS. I'm going to enjoy this for as long as I can and it's going to be a battle tomorrow... I'd better be ready." Braathen now sits fourth in the men's giant slalom standings on 179 points, 81 behind Odermatt who bounced back from a poor first run to finish third, 0.10sec off the pace. Swiss Odermatt increased his lead after chopping over three seconds off his first run time, which had left him in ninth ahead of his second charge down the piste. "I wasn't sure if it was going to happen today after the first run, it was difficult for me to find the right speed. I didn't think it would be so tight for first place," said Odermatt. Olympic giant slalom champion Odermatt is now 75 points ahead of Zan Kranjec, who led after the first run but finished 0.69sec back in fifth, and Kristoffersen. Odermatt's impressive recovery means he is 171 points ahead of Aleksander Aamodt Kilde in the overall World Cup table after the Norwegian failed to finish his first run following his downhill win in Val Gardena on Saturday.

Norrie Wants Russians Back At Wimbledon

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) - British number one Cameron Norrie wants Russian players like Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev back playing at Wimbledon next year after a "tough year" being banned from the Grand Slam. "For me, I want the best players in the world to be playing," 14th-ranked Norrie told reporters at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. "I felt last year was tough for those guys, especially for Daniil and for Andrey, who have a chance of winning Wimbledon; especially I know how much those guys sacrificed with their careers and their goals are obviously very high to be winning Slams. "So I really did feel bad for those guys." Russian and Belarusian players were banned from the third Grand Slam of the year in response to the invasion of Ukraine with the tournament stripped of ranking points as a result.



Shiffrin Wins Super-G to Close in On World Cup Record

ST. MORITZ (Dispatches) - Mikaela Shiffrin claimed her 77th World Cup victory in the Super-G race in St. Moritz to close in on the record for overall women's victories of fellow American Lindsey Vonn. The two-time Olympic gold medalist and reigning overall World Cup champion edged Italian Elena Curtoni by 0.12sec with France's Romane Miradoli third at 0.40sec. The 27-year-old from Colorado has returned to success in Super-G, nearly three years after her last victory in the discipline, claiming her third win of the season after Levi's two slaloms. She is approaching the women's record of 82 World Cup victories set by Vonn, who retired in 2019, and is also on track for the 86 World Cup victories of Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark. "That was the best run I could possibly have," said Shiffrin, who claimed her fifth Super-G victory and first since January 2020. "I don't know if it felt perfect, but what I've learned over the years in super-G is that you can't really do it perfect."

