

Health Ministry Announced on Monday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **144,710** With **Two** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

Elite Scholars Center in a Statement Held the French Gov't Responsible for the Heinous Move of Charlie Hebdo Magazine For Allowing a "Worthless Publication" to Repeatedly Insult The Sanctities of Others

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Man City Hammer Chelsea to Cruise Into FA Cup Fourth Round



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Iran to Roll Out 400 New 5G Sites by Early February

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran will expand the deployment of fifth-generation (5G) mobile internet services by rolling out 400 new sites in the country by early February, according to the Iranian telecoms minister Issa Zarepour.

Zarepour said that the launch of new 5G sites will be in line with Iranian government's efforts to cope with growing demand in the country for higher speeds of internet.

He said that new frequencies had been assigned to mobile operators in Iran to help them boost services under the current 4G systems.

However, the minister said that in addition to efforts to boost internet speed, Iran is racing against time to complete its domestic intranet network to expand the coverage of reliable and high-speed online services to more people in the country.

Zarepour said Iran's National Information Network (NIN) is nearly 60% complete, adding that progress on the project was nearly half the current figures when the current Iranian administration took office in August 2021.

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Arms Smuggled Into Iran For Violent Riots

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Describing the recent riots in Iran as a hostile plot in retaliation for the mortal blows that the Islamic Republic has delivered to the arrogant powers, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces said the enemies smuggled arms into the country to fuel violence.

The recent riots in Iran and the activities of the enemies during the past 115 days illustrate that the Islamic Republic has dealt a fatal blow to the interests of the arrogant powers and jeopardized all that they had invested for several centuries to conquer the world, Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said at a cultural event in Tehran on Monday.

"That is why they (enemies) mobilized all of their facilities and capabilities against the Iranian nation in order to obstruct the Islamic Revolution's progress," the top general stated, adding that such brazen stances by the leaders of the arrogant powers against a nation and their open support for the riots in Iran have been unprecedented.

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Leader Says Enemies Sought to Destroy Iran's Progress Through Recent Riots



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei says the enemies sought to destroy Iran's progress and strengths through the recent violent riots in the country.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in the Iranian capital Tehran on Monday in an address to a group of people from Qom on the anniversary of the popular uprising in the holy city against the former US-backed Pahlavi regime in 1978.

The Leader said the rioters did not actually take to the streets to protest against the economic hardships that the Iranian nation is going through as a result of Western sanctions.

"There is no doubt that we are beset with economic and livelihood problems now. But, can these problems be solved by setting trash cans on fire, taking to the streets, and instigating riots? They did not want to remedy the shortcomings, but rather, sought to obliterate the Iranian nation's strengths," the Leader noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that foreign enemies were overtly involved in the nationwide riots in the country while the United States and European countries openly fueled the unrest in one way or another.

The Leader added that the media hype against the Islamic Republic was aimed at creating the impression that rioters were discontent with economic problems and shortcomings in economic and other sectors of the country.

"They, however, did not want weaknesses to go away. The objective was rather to wipe out the country's strengths," he said.

The Leader pointed to attempts aimed at undermining Iran's national security, stopping the country's scientific progress through closure of educational and scientific centers, impeding the growth of domestic production, and harming booming sectors such as tourism as clear examples that back up his argument.

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that the enemies pushed their involvement in recent riots through cyber-based propaganda and via Western and certain regional media outlets.

The Leader underlined that what the rioters did amounted to treason, calling on relevant institutions and state officials to seriously deal with any act of betrayal.

He also said that the January 1978 Qom uprising was the beginning of a big Jihad that took out the "dear Iran" from the West's stomach.

The Supreme Leader made the remarks in a meeting held in Tehran on Monday morning with the people of Qom to mark the province uprising that took place on the 19th of Dey, 1356 (January 9, 1978), to protest an article against Imam Khomeini published on 7 January 1978 in Ettela'at newspaper.

The Qom uprising could revive the historical identity of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

He went on to say that the 1978 uprising could pull out Iran from the wrong culture of the West and let the country become independent.

Qom uprising is the historical identity of Iran, Islam, and Islamic Iran, the Supreme Leader underlined.

The demonstration in Qom started on January 8 and lasted for three days, with its peak on the second day.

Israeli Military Understaffed, Unprepared for War With Hezbollah

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israeli military officials have expressed concerns over the "tragic" situation inside the Israeli military, saying the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah remains Israel's greatest threat at a time when the occupation army suffers a shrinking reserve system.

An article published by the Jerusalem Post said most Israeli occupation military officials "still emphasize - behind closed doors and sometimes publicly" - that Hezbollah, with its approximately 150,000 rockets and Radwan special forces, poses the greatest threat to the occupation.

The Post quoted an Israeli occupation commander introduced as Maj. O. as saying "Hezbollah is on the fence, so we get ready for everything. It is very real."

"Any unpredictable hit in the 'war between the wars' campaign [with Syria] could lead to a giant Lebanon conflict," Maj. O. noted.

"Hezbollah soldiers gained experience in Syria. They are more independent operators, have heavier firepower, use lookouts, battle formations," he added.

Elaborating on what he called the current Hezbollah threats, he said, "We know they are here, the Radwan commandos, and if there are rockets, there is no time to evacuate to a bomb shelter," because the town of Metulla is so close to Lebanon.

He said that Hezbollah started building new positions a few months ago, which they are using as lookouts, adding, "There is a feeling that they are coming back," in terms of actively patrolling the Lebanon border and studying Israeli military activities there.

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Persian Gulf to Remain Persian Gulf Regardless of Claims

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the Persian Gulf will remain the Persian Gulf, regardless of claims and falsifications.

Speaking in his weekly press conference on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani briefed on the latest Iranian foreign policy developments and answered a number of questions put forward by the journalists.

Answering a question about Iraq's use of the fake phrase instead of the Persian Gulf, Kanaani said, "The Islamic Republic has reacted in this regard. The Persian Gulf is the Persian Gulf and nothing in this regard will change this historical fact in any way. After being informed [using the term Arab Gulf instead of Persian Gulf], we officially protested the Iraqi government in this regard."

The 25th edition of the Persian Gulf Cup kicked off Friday in Basra with the participation of teams from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. Contrary to historical documents, recently some regional countries try to use the fake title of the Arab Gulf instead of the historical title of the Persian Gulf.

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Iran, Russia Discuss Completing Rasht-Astara Railway

TEHRAN (MNA) -Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Transportation Affairs Shahriar Afandizadeh says that Tehran and Moscow have held negotiations on completing the Rasht-Astara railway project.

Iran has presented its proposed memorandum with 16 articles to determine how Russia will participate and invest in the Rasht-Astara railway project, Afandizadeh said.

The Russian government is interested in participating in the completion of the Rasht-Astara railway by providing financial assistance, according to Afandizadeh.

In this regard, a bilateral memorandum between Iran and Russia has been proposed and a tripartite memorandum has been concluded between Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan, which follows the joint statement signed by the ministers of the three countries, according to the Iranian deputy road minister.

Although Iran has held negotiations with Russia as well as Azerbaijan in order to participate in the completion of the Rasht-Astara railway, the country will complete the project whether Russia participates in it or not, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Afandizadeh added that in the 13th joint meeting between Iran and Russia, an understanding was reached regarding the transfer of 10 million tons of goods until 2023. The three countries of Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan also agreed on transferring 15 million tons of goods as well.

UN Chief Calls for Massive Investments to Help Pakistan Flood Recovery

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The UN chief has called for "massive investments" to help Pakistan recover from last year's devastating floods and better resist climate change, as financial pledges poured in.

"No country deserves to endure what happened to Pakistan," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told an international conference in Geneva, which is seeking billions of dollars to support recovery from the disaster, on Monday.

Guterres opened the one-day event appealing to the world to help Pakistan bounce back from floods that submerged a third of the country, killing more than 1,700 people and affecting more than 33 million others.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told the conference his country was "racing against time" to deal with towering needs.

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406km of New Railways to Go Operational in Iran

TEHRAN (IRIB) - Kheirollah Khademi, the managing director of Iran’s Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), has said 406 kilometers (km) of railway projects will go operational across the country by March 2024. Mentioning the recent inauguration of the 155km Zahedan-Khash railroad in southeastern Iran, Khademi said: “Another 406 kilometers of railway projects will go operational by the end of this [Iranian calendar] year (March 20) and during the next year (ends in March 2024).” According to the official, the mentioned railways include five prioritized projects that all have reached physical progress between 75 percent and 90 percent.

Recent Events in Iran Tantamount to World War

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the recent foreign-backed riots in Iran were a “world war,” but Iranian youths dealt a mortal blow to Western-hatched plots to destabilize the country.

“In a sedition and world war, our enemies, in the past few months, wanted to close schools, universities and economic centers and create chaos in the country, but Iran’s youths, women and girls did not go along with them and defeated their schemes,” Major General Hossein Salami said on Monday, referring to the nationwide riots that erupted in Iran in mid-September last year. He noted that those who echo Western calls for more riots in Iran seek to “ruin the country and hamper its progress.” Salami also noted that arrogant powers seek to destabilize regional countries, referring to Western plots hatched against some Muslim countries such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan that destroyed those countries. “The upshot of the presence of arrogant powers in the region is poverty, hunger, displacement ... In Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, we see the impacts of the enemies’ presence in Muslim countries.”



Highlighting the failure of the enemies to defeat the “powerful” Islamic Republic, the IRGC chief said “the war is still raging, and the enemy is not calm, but we will calm him down and defeat him.” He said Iranian warriors are fully ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the country, adding, “They are not afraid of the enemy and are ready to defeat the enemy in various fields.” The European Union and some western countries have imposed sanctions on Iran over its approach toward the recent riots.

Iran Envoy Talks With Kuwait Parliament Speaker

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran’s ambassador to Kuwait met and conferred with Kuwaiti Parliament speaker and exchanged viewpoints on bilateral ties and international developments with him. Islamic Republic of Iran Ambassador Mohammad Irani and Kuwait Parliament Speaker Ahmed Abdulaziz al-Sadoun reviewed the parliamentary bilateral ties while focusing on comprehensive cooperation between the two countries and the most important regional developments. Ambassador Irani referred to the excellent historical relations between the two countries, especially in the political and cultural fields, and asked for broader bilateral parliamentary relations and consultations within the framework of international and Islamic organizations and conferences. The Iranian envoy also announced the Iranian Parliament’s readiness for deepening and broadening relations with the Kuwaiti National Parliament, including the establishment of parliamentary friendship groups as a basis for broader ties. Ahmed Abdulaziz al-Sadoun, for his part, referred to the important and highly influential role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, and welcomed the Iranian ambassador’s proposal for broadening bilateral parliamentary relations and broader cooperation in international and Islamic organizations and conferences.

President Reacts to Nonsense Words of Biden

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said on Sunday that recent remarks by U.S. President Joe Biden where he had said that the world is a “patch on our jeans” is reflective of a return to the U.S. colonial culture and a evidence of the country’s hidden pharaonic nature. The president said that the American officials hide this wild nature behind deceptive gestures in defense of human rights and women’s rights. President Raisi, who was speaking at a cabinet session, said that such nonsense remarks by the American officials are not said for the first time and have also been said in the past. Elsewhere in his remarks, the president referred to the heinous act move by a French publication in insulting the religious leadership and human and religious values of the Iranian people, noting that resorting to insults under the pretext of freedom is a clear evidence of the absurdity of the insulters’ logic and their despair at the fruition of the conspiracy of chaos and insecurity in Iran.

Asian Miracle to Inspire New World Order

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has said that the recent development of the ancient continent is an “Asian Miracle,” which is the root cause of new and fair world order based on multilateralism. Qalibaf made the remarks in the opening ceremony of the 13th APA [Asian Parliamentary Assembly] Plenary Session in Antalya, Turkey, on Monday. The world is going through a challenging era, which does not relate to only a country, a region or a continent, but it affects all human beings, the speaker said, noting that today’s Asia enjoys a special position in the world, which can play a key and serious role in resolving international woes. In order to have a new international order based on justice, states should respect multilateralism as a pattern based on Asian cooperation, he said, adding that principles such as territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries should be observed by all states. He urged Asian countries to play a more active role in international politics by the use of joint plans and common objectives at regional and



international organizations. Condemning the United States’ unilateralism, he noted that Western states try to introduce their own cultural values as the best values, including the French magazine of Charlie Hebdo, which insulted the Prophet of Islam and Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Touching upon the martyrdom anniversary of General Qasem Soleimani, Qalibaf said that the Trump administration’s order for the assassination of the Iranian commander and his entourages in Baghdad on January 3, 2020 is a quintessential example of state terrorism. He further called for international attention to the plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, noting that Iran believes the final resolution for the Palestinian cause comes out of the people’s vote in the occupied territories. The 13th APA Plenary Session is being held in Antalya from January 8 to 10. In the event, 7 parliament speakers and four deputy speakers take part along with other high-ranking parliament officials from 25 Asian countries.

Tehran to Host 1st Economic Community of West African States

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The First Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will be hosted by Iran in Tehran in February. Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari announced the news at the 16th Session of Foreign Economic Relations Coordination in the presence of the headquarters’ members and the managers of concerned organizations. Cuba’s role, as a traditional and strategic partner of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was referred to and the details of a roadmap for bartered transactions with that country and the defined goals in bilateral trade were identified. Thirteen official memoranda of understanding (MOUs) have been signed between the two countries in scientific, health and medical, agricultural, energy, technological, nano, engineering, naval, trade, higher education, sports, banking relation and judiciary fields, in all those fields the initial

preparations have been made and their full implementation is scheduled for near future. The session’s 2nd surveyed issue was Iran’s relations with the West African countries, keeping in mind the good mining, agricultural, development, population, and market, which provide good opportunities as sales markets for the Iranian products, investments and technological and engineering services. Two bilateral economic commissions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Senegal and the Ivory Coast Republic in near future, and the First Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will be hosted by Iran in Tehran in February, are the harbingers of blossoming economic ties with African countries relying on proper and wise goal-oriented planning.

Syrian FM Hails Iran’s Constructive Role in Fight Against Terror

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad appreciated Iran’s constructive and effective role in the fight against terrorism, and in the political settlement of the foreign-sponsored crisis in the Arab country. In a phone call with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian, Mekdad demanded that Iran continue to play an active role in any political initiative to end the Syrian crisis through the Astana format. Iran and Russia, as the allies of the Syrian government,

as well as Turkey, which sides with the opposition, set up the Astana peace process in January 2017 to put an end to the Syrian conflict through the involvement of the Syrian government and the opposition. During their phone conversation, the two foreign ministers also discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in Syria and the Middle East and expressed their countries’ determination to further develop mutual ties in various spheres. The top Iranian and Syrian diplomats reaffirmed

their countries’ commitment to supporting Palestinians’ legitimate struggle to safeguard their sanctities and historical rights, and strongly condemned the apartheid Israeli regime’s crimes against Palestinians. Amirabdollahian underscored Iran’s support for Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, saying the Islamic Republic will continue to assist the war-ravaged Arab country in the war against terrorism and in the face of Western sanctions.

Envoy Describes Damascus-Tehran Ties as Strategic

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador in Damascus Mehdi Sobhani has described the relationship between Syria and Iran as strategic and progressing. Sobhani made the remarks in an interview with the Syrian newspaper of al-Watan on the sidelines of a ceremony of marking the third martyrdom anniversary of Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani and his entourage at the Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020. The envoy said in the commemoration ceremony in Damascus that Syria and Iran enjoy good and strategic ties despite sanctions imposed on both nations, adding that the amicable relations grow and improve day by day.



Iran, UAE To Develop Ties On Environment

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Islamic Republic and the United Arab Emirates are to further bolster the bilateral relations in the field of environment. The chief of Iran’s Department of Environment Ali Salajegheh held a meeting with the United Arab Emirates

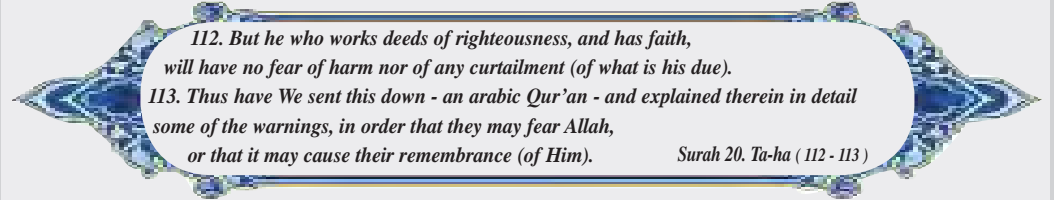
(UAE) ambassador to Tehran Saif Mohamed Obaid Al-Zaabi. The Iranian official called for managing the regional challenges in the environment via collective cooperation of the regional states. Iran and the UAE have many commonalities, Salajegheh said, adding that the common foes are seeking to disrupt the fraternity between the two countries. Commenting on recent dust storms, he said that the phenomenon has caused a

problem for the regional residents but the incident could be managed through regional cooperation. The Emirati envoy, for his part, invited the Iranian official to pay a visit to the United Arab Emirates.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:11
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:29
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:45
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	07:14



Sanctions Have Increased Cost of Exports at Least by 20%

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (TCCIMA) says sanctions have increased the costs of exporters by 10 to 20 percent because they have to circumvent the sanctions.

Speaking in a ceremony for honoring the top exporters of Tehran Province, Masoud Khansari said that Iran can be the exporter number one of the region as the country has good resources and required potentials to this end, but flight of capitals and elites from the country due to the rigidity in the business environment has deprived the country of this opportunity.

He said that exporters are facing currently with many problems and although the statistics show that the amount of exports has increased this year comparing to last year, the growth in exports has fallen behind in competition with the regional rivals.

He admitted that the country is falling behind day in day in competition with the regional states, stipulating that sanctions have had considerable impact on the exports and exporters are competing in an unfair condition.

Khansari added that sanctions have deprived exporters of providing cheap transportation and financial exchanges and Iranian exporters face at least 10 to 20 percent rise in their costs for rounding the sanctions.

He then pointed to the problem of different rates of forex in the national economy, and said that the difference between the price of dollar in the NIMA system and the free market has created many problems for the economic activists and this difference disrupts exports.



Khansari reiterated that the single rate of forex in the country is one of the main requirements of the national economy, adding that something which happened for the forex rate for years ago seems to be repeated now and that time the official rate of dollar was 4200 toman and it was 10,000 toman in the free market and today NIMA system dollar is 22,000 toman and in the free market it is around 42,000 toman.

He reiterated he wonders why once and for all the officials do not make a serious decision on unification of forex rate.

Addressing the Majlis representatives who were present in the event and said that economic activists were unable to convince the government to unify the forex rate and expressed hope lawmakers could pressure the government in this field.

Khansari said that exporters buy their raw materials forex with free market rate and they have return their forex to the country with NIMA system rate and in this condition exporters suffer losses and in such a condition if the exports do not decrease, they will definitely not increase.

He went on to say that in this condition exporters of big industries like steel and petrochemicals since they are state or semi-state run can survive but small exporters cannot survive and they should be let trade their money.

He then pointed to some problems for exporters and the serious challenges that they are facing.

MSC Producing Crude Steel, Economic Value Added With Using Domestic Scrap Metal

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of Waste Affairs of Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) says due to depreciation and end of service life of different equipment, parts and different iron structures in the company and impossibility for using these materials in the related sectors, considerable amount of scrap metal from different units of the company are always sent to the recycling site of the urban management.



Majid Ghiasvand said that these scraps are actually some kind of valuable waste and it is also considered as one of the raw materials in the process of steelmaking, and therefore the waste affairs unit of the company plans and implement the project for preparing the mentioned scraps based on the standards of the quality control unit after specialized assortment of these scraps with using portable analyzing machine are sent to the recycling site where over 15,000 tons annual requirement to the scrap for production are provided this way.

He added that with obtained experiences and predicted required infrastructures for operation in this site, in the future the amount of input and output to the site will be equal.

Ghiasvand then elaborated the details of this project which helps the company in the process of production and economic value added by using the scraps.

New Iron Ore Reserves Discovered in Central Iran

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Director-general of planning at Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration of Iran (GSI) has announced the discovery of new iron ore reserves in central Iran, IRIB reported.

"Recently, in parts of central Iran, including the provinces of Isfahan, Yazd, Kerman, and Semnan, preliminary exploration operations have been carried out and good iron ore reserves have been discovered," Reza Jadidi said.

Jadidi put the country's current discovered iron ore reserves at approximately 3.3 billion tons, saying: "Considering that Iranian steel industries consume about 100 million tons of crude iron ore annually we have serious limitations on the amount of iron ore reserves in the country." According to the official, the country's current iron ore reserves can only meet the domestic demand only for 15 years, which is not a good situation.

"This calls the need for strict planning for the exploration of new iron ore reserves in the country," he stressed.

Earlier this month, Head of the IRON ORE ASSOCIATION OF IRAN (IROPEX) Mehrdad Akbarian said the country's current iron ore reserves are theoretically about 2.8 billion tons, however, the real figure is expected to be much more than that.

According to Akbarian, the country's iron ore reserves are estimated to be about five billion tons.

The official noted that, so far 500,000 tons of the country's total iron ore reserves have been consumed and processed.

Having 81 different types of minerals, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe. In this regard, the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major contributor to the country's economic growth.

Direct Shipping Line Launched Between Iran, Cuba

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said a direct shipping line has been launched between Iran and Cuba which is expected to significantly improve the economic relations between the two countries.

"[A] Direct shipping [line] has been established between Iran and Cuba since the last 20 days, which will increase the trade between the two countries," Safari told IRIB on Monday.

"Based on the conducted research, our country has also the potential to cooperate with Cuba in carrying out various projects, especially in the field of energy," the official said.

Last May, Iran and Cuba finalized a roadmap for barter trade between the two countries and signed a document in this regard during the 18th meeting of their joint economic committee in Tehran.

As reported, the document was signed by Iran's Deputy Industry Minister for Commercial and Trade Affairs Mohammad-Sadegh Mofatteh and Cuba's Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz.



During the meeting, the officials explored the existing capacities and market needs of the other side in various fields and good agreements were reached for long-term cooperation in order to improve the level of trade exchanges.

The two countries also stressed the need for developing industrial, mining, and trade cooperation between the two countries during the mentioned event.

Attended by senior officials and representatives of various economic sectors from both sides, the 18th meeting of the Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Committee was held in Tehran during May 15-17, 2022.

As the special envoy of the Cuban president, Cabrisas Ruiz headed a high-ranking delegation to Iran with the aim of meeting with the officials of the Islamic Republic and attending the meeting of the two countries' joint economic committee.

During his stay in Tehran, Cabrisas Ruiz also met with Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, during which he stressed the expansion of economic ties between the two countries.

Transport Index Increases by 4.6% in Railway Sector

TEHRAN (MNA) - The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) said the transport index (TI), which refers to the total number of person-kilometers and ton-kilometers, and is a kind of indicator of the total performance of the country's railways, has grown by 4.6 percent in the country in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2022), as compared to the same period of the previous year.

Making the remarks in a meeting with the board of directors of the Union of Rail Transport Companies on Sunday, Miad Salehi said, "Despite the country's economic difficulties, the railway sector has taken important steps forward in the first nine months of this year."

One of the very important matters that was followed up seriously and very good successes have been achieved, is the amendment of the Article 12 implementation procedure. In this regard, the new procedure document has been signed by Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash and Oil Minister Javad Oji, the RAI head announced.

7th NDP Urged to Focus on Expanding Economic Diplomacy

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has called on the authorities in charge of developing the country's seventh five-year National Development Plan (NDP) to focus more on expanding economic diplomacy.

Speaking in a meeting with the chamber's board of representatives on Sunday, Gholam-Hosein Shafei referred to the preparation of the seventh National Development Plan (2022-2026) by the government and suggested the formation of a special institution for planning and implementation of the mentioned plan, free from short-term political fluctuations and governments shifts.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, Shafei emphasized the necessity of paying attention to the seventh NDP as a tool of economic diplomacy to solve crises and rebuild Iran's role in the global economic value chain.

Technical Glitch Blamed for Restricted Gas Supply in North

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has reported a technical glitch in one of its natural gas installations amid reports suggesting that supply of gas to Turkey has dropped significantly since earlier this month.

The Iranian Oil Ministry's news service Shana said in a Sunday report that it had put an unidentified gas distribution station in north of the country out of service because of operational problems.

"The consumption and distribution of gas for customers inside and outside of the country will be managed until the problem is completely solved," said the report.

The statement came a day after Turkish state energy company BOTAS said that the supply of natural gas to Turkey from an Iranian pipeline had declined by 70% from the start of 2023.

BOTAS said that it was taking necessary measures to compensate for the reduced supply of gas from Iran, including by using its gas storage facilities to meet additional demand.

The report by Shana said that repair works were being carried out to fix the technical problem in the northern Iranian gas facility to restore the situation to normal as soon as possible.

It warned, however, that demand for natural gas in Iran would experience a major jump within the next few days with the arrival of a new cold snap in the country that would be much stronger than a last one reported in late December.

Iran-Made Gas Lift Equipment Unveiled

TEHRAN (Shana) - Iranian-made gas lift equipment has been unveiled with the support of the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC).

According to NISOC, the head of research and technology and the first production working group of NISOC, Mohammad Golestanbagh, said for the maximum production and productivity of the oil reserves in low-pressure reservoirs, artificial lift methods are used as a medium-term solution; Among these methods is gas lift.

Appreciating the knowledge-oriented leadership of the company's technical affairs management and especially the participation of the processing engineering and gas injection projects staff of NISOC, announced that gas lift valves in oil wells that were domestically manufactured by an Iranian knowledge-based company have been unveiled.

Speaking on the sidelines of the unveiling of gas lift valves, he said: With the aim of supporting technological projects and creating a favorable platform for cooperation with domestic knowledge-based companies, effective steps can be taken in the field of meeting technological, strategic and sanctions needs."



Notice of tender for export sale No. 20/1401/Z

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export **140,000 metric tons of Iron Ore Pellet (%Fe:65.00)** on basis of F.O.B at Barco Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 16th Jan. 2023 to the Golgohar complex in Sirjan. (50 km in Shiraz road) Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 17th Jan. 2023 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Min	65.00	Fe
Ave	1.0	FeO
Max	0.05	P
Max	0.01	S
Max	3.5	SiO2
Max	0.7	Al2O3
Max	0.9	CaO
Max	2.5	MgO
Ave 250		CCS(kg/p)
Min 90		8-16 mm%
Ave 5		-6 mm%
Max 4.0		A.1%
Min 94		T.1%
19-24		Prosity%
Min 90		Reducibility%

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

Thailand Introduces New Entry Regulations

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Thailand will require international travelers to show proof they are fully vaccinated for COVID before flying to Thailand, according to the country's aviation regulator, as it prepares for more tourists after China reopened its border.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) said in a statement on Saturday that starting early Monday, all foreign arrivals starting early on Monday must prove they are vaccinated or provide a letter certifying that they have recovered from COVID within six months.

Unvaccinated travelers must show a medical certificate explaining why they have not received the vaccine.



German Not to Rule Out Deliveries of Leopard Tanks to Ukraine

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Germany cannot rule out the delivery of Leopard tanks, heavier fighting vehicles than the Marders, to support Ukrainian military forces in the future, the country's economy minister told German broadcaster ARD.

"Of course it can't be ruled out," Robert Habeck said.

His comments come two days after Germany said it wants to deliver around 40 Marder infantry fighting vehicles to Ukraine before the end of March, a decision Habeck said was good and long overdue.



Russia Says Killed Hundreds of Ukrainian Soldiers in Rocket Attack



KRAMATORSK (Dispatches) - A Russian rocket strike on the Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk caused damage but did not destroy buildings and there were no obvious signs of casualties, a Reuters witness said, after Russia said the attack killed 600 Ukrainian soldiers.

Reuters reporters visited the two college dormitories Russia's defense ministry said had been temporarily housing Ukrainian servicemen close to the front line of the war at the time of the overnight strike. Neither appeared to have been directly hit by missiles or seriously damaged. There were no obvious signs that soldiers had been living there and no sign of bodies or traces of blood.

Some of the windows were broken at Hostel No. 47, which stood by a courtyard that had a big crater in it.

The other building named by Russia's defense ministry, Hostel No. 28, was entirely intact. A crater lay about 50 metres away closer to some garages.

Authorities in Kyiv did not immediately comment on the strike or on Russia's claim of hundreds of casualties. Kramatorsk's mayor earlier said there had been no casualties.

Russia's defense ministry, in a statement, said the strike on the buildings in Kramatorsk was a revenge operation for a deadly Ukrainian attack last week on a Russian barracks in Makiivka, in part of the Donetsk region controlled by Moscow's forces, in which at least 89 servicemen were killed.

It said Moscow had used what it called reliable intelligence to target the Ukrainian troops. More than 700 Ukrainian troops had been housed in one hostel and more than 600 in another, it said.

"As a result of a massive missile strike on these temporary deployment points of Ukrainian army units, more than 600 Ukrainian servicemen were destroyed," the defense ministry said.

If true, it would be the single largest loss of Ukrainian troops since Russia invaded on Feb. 24 last year. Neither side in the grinding war, now in its eleventh month, usually disclose losses.

Pavlo Kyrylenko, Ukraine's governor of Donetsk, had said earlier that Russia had launched seven missile strikes on Kramatorsk.

And Oleksandr Honcharenko, Kramatorsk's mayor, said earlier on Sunday that the attack had damaged two educational facilities and eight apartment buildings and garages but that there had been no casualties.

Ukraine was believed to have stopped housing troops close together in single facilities after a deadly Russian missile strike on a base in western Ukraine in March which killed dozens.

The practice of housing soldiers all together came into focus too after the Ukrainian strike on Makiivka this month with Russian military commanders subject to fierce criticism inside Russia for not dispersing their forces.

Russia has repeatedly shelled Kramatorsk, which is also in the Donetsk region, one of four regions Moscow claims to have formally incorporated into Russia, something Ukraine and most countries in the world do not recognize.

Sweden Says Cannot Fulfill Turkey's Demands For NATO Application

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) - Sweden is confident that Turkey will approve its application to join the NATO military alliance, but it will not meet all the conditions that Ankara has set for its support, Sweden's prime minister has said.

"Turkey both confirms that we have done what we said we would do, but they also say that they want things that we cannot or do not want to give them," Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on Sunday during a security conference.

Finland and Sweden signed a three-way agreement with Turkey in 2022 aimed at overcoming Ankara's objections to their membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The two Nordic countries applied to join the military alliance in May as a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year. But Turkey has shared its objections to their membership and accused the countries of harbouring Kurdish rebels.

It refused to approve their membership until both countries take the requested steps, including joining Turkey to fight against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is designated as a "terrorist" group by the United States and the European Union.

Sweden has robust ties with the Kurdish diaspora, which has been a clashing point between the countries. Turkey is also requesting the extradition of people that Turkey regards as "terrorists".

In December, Sweden's Supreme Court blocked the extradition of exiled Turkish journalist Bulent Kenes, which is a key demand by Ankara to ratify Stockholm's NATO membership. Turkey has accused Kenes of being involved in a 2016 attempt to topple President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a coup.

Turkey is also seeking to extradite 33 alleged Kurdish fighters and coup plot suspects from Sweden and Finland.

In late December, Turkey praised Sweden for responding to its security concerns but stressed more was needed to win Ankara's full backing for Stockholm's stalled NATO membership bid.



Protest at German Village to Block Coal Mine Expansion

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Protesters gathered in the west German village of Luetzerath to challenge the extension of an open-air coal mine they say runs counter to the country's climate commitments.

"Around 2,000" people rallied in Luetzerath, which has become a symbol of resistance to fossil fuels, police in Aachen said.

Protesters participated in a walk around the village, which is slated for destruction to allow for the extension of a neighbouring open-air coal mine.

Activists have camped out in the abandoned settlement and plan to resist efforts by police to clear them out, with the operation set to start in the next week.

Energy giant RWE has permission for the expansion under a compromise agreement signed with the federal government, led by Social Democrat Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Under the terms of the deal, five nearby villages will be spared, but Luetzerath is set to be demolished to make way for excavation works.

RWE also agreed to stop producing electricity with coal in western Germany by 2030, eight years earlier than previously planned.

Police forces from across Germany have offered reinforcements for the task of clearing out the activists, according to Der Spiegel magazine.

Regional authorities want to deploy "between 10 to 15" units of around a hundred police officers at the site from this week, according to an internal memo seen by the magazine.

Another large-scale protest is planned for January 14 in the village.

The struggle over Luetzerath comes as Germany has restarted mothballed coal power plants amid an energy crisis triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Despite resorting to coal to ease the pressure on gas-powered plants, Germany says it is not wavering from its aim of exiting coal power in 2030.

California Braces for More Storms

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - California braced for more stormy weather with rain sweeping into the northern part of the state and the San Francisco Bay area, preceding a series of powerful incoming Pacific storms and raising the potential for road flooding, rising rivers and mudslides on soils already saturated after days of rain.

The National Weather Service warned of a "relentless parade of atmospheric rivers" over the coming week, producing heavy rain and mountain snow. Atmospheric river storms are long plumes of moisture stretching out into the Pacific and are capable of dropping staggering amounts of rain and snow.

The agency's Sacramento office tweeted early Sunday that parts of the Sacramento Valley were experiencing "strong winds with gusts up to 60 mph," as well as "numerous trees and power lines down with power outages."

More than 300,000 customers had their electricity knocked out in and around the state's capital, according to a Sacramento Municipal Utility District online map of outages overnight.

The wet weather comes after days of rain in California from Pacific storms. A series of recent weather systems have knocked out power to thousands, flooded streets, battered the coastline and

caused at least six deaths.

The first of the heavier storms was due to arrive Monday, and the weather service issued a flood watch for a large swath of Northern and Central California with 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of rain expected through Wednesday in the Sacramento-area foothills.

In the Los Angeles area, light rain was forecast for the weekend with stormy conditions expected to return Monday with the potential for up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) of rain in the foothills. High surf was expected through Tuesday, with large waves on west-facing beaches, the National Weather Service said.

Since December 26, San Francisco received more than 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain, while Mammoth Mountain, a popular ski area in the Eastern Sierra, received nearly 10 feet (3 meters) of snow, the National Weather Service reported.

The storms won't be enough to officially end California's ongoing drought but they have helped.

State climatologist Michael Anderson told a news briefing late Saturday that officials were closely monitoring Monday's incoming storm and another behind it and were keeping an eye on three other systems farther out in the Pacific.



NATO Declines Serbia's Request to Deploy Its Troops in Kosovo

SHTERPCE (Dispatches) - NATO's mission in Kosovo, KFOR, has declined a Serbian government request to send up to 1,000 police and army personnel to Kosovo after clashes between Serbs and the Kosovo authorities, President Aleksandar Vucic said. Serbia's former province of Kosovo declared independence in 2008 following the 1998-1999 war during which NATO bombed rump-Yugoslavia, comprising Serbia and Montenegro, to protect Albanian-majority Kosovo.

"They (KFOR) replied they consider that there is no need for the return of the Serbian army to Kosovo ... citing the United Nations resolution approving their mandate in Kosovo," Serbia's Vucic said in an interview with the private Pink television.

Last month, for the first time since the end of the war, Serbia requested to deploy troops in Kosovo in response to clashes between Kosovo authorities and Serbs in the northern region where they constitute a majority.

The U. N. Security Council resolution says Serbia may be allowed, if approved by KFOR, to station its personnel at border crossings, Orthodox Christian religious sites and areas with Serb majorities.

Vucic criticised KFOR for informing Serbia of its decision on the eve of the Christian Orthodox Christmas, after Kosovo police arrested an off-duty soldier suspected of shooting and wounding two young Serbs near the southern town of Shterpce.

Police said both victims, aged 11 and 21, were taken to hospital and their injuries were not life threatening.

Kosovo authorities condemned the incident, which has inflamed tensions.

On Sunday, a few thousands Serbs protested peacefully in Shterpce against what they called "violence against Serbs".

Goran Rakic, the head of the Serb List, which is the main Serb party in Kosovo, accused Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti of trying to drive out Serbs.

"His goal is to create such conditions so that Serbs leave their homes," Rakic told the crowd. "My message is that we must not surrender."



Honey as an Alternative to Sugar?

LONDON (Dispatches) - Consuming raw honey from a single floral source may improve blood sugar control and lower cholesterol levels when taken within the context of a healthy diet, according to a recent study published in Nutrition Reviews.

“These results are surprising because honey is about 80% sugar,” said Tauseef Khan, a senior researcher on the study and a research associate in nutritional sciences at the University of Toronto’s Temerty Faculty of Medicine, in a press release.

“We’re not saying you should start having honey if you currently avoid sugar,” added Khan.

“The takeaway is more about replacement,” he said.

“If you’re using table sugar, syrup or another sweetener, switching those sugars for honey might lower cardio-metabolic risks,” he said in the same release.



“In our study, we combined results from all human trials performed on honey that looked at metabolic diseases,” Khan told Fox News Digital.

“There is no harm [in taking honey] and a small reduction can also be beneficial in the long term,” said one senior researcher.

“We were able to assess studies that reported [on] clover, robinia floral honeys and types of processing, which showed benefit for several metabolic outcomes for these floral types and also for raw honey,” Khan added.

Honey consumption was associated with lower levels of fasting blood glucose, total cholesterol and triglycerides. There is a difference, said senior researcher Khan, between processed and raw honey in terms of health benefits.

Khan told Fox News Digital the size of reduction of glucose and cholesterol was “clinically very small.”

“Glucose reduction was 0.2 mmol/L, which is pretty small — though not trivial,” he added.

“Same with cholesterol, which was reduced by 0.18 mmol/L.” He said, “This reduction is also trivial compared to medications.” “However, it does show that there is no harm [in taking honey] and a small reduction can also be beneficial in the long term.”

What is honey, exactly?

“Honey is a complex composition of sugars (common and rare), organic acids, enzymes, proteins, amino acids, minerals, vitamins and bioactive substances made by honeybees from the nectar of flowers,” the study’s authors noted.

Honey and sugar are both carbohydrates. They’re made of glucose and fructose, but each has different nutrient, texture and flavor profiles.

Honey and sugar are both carbohydrates. This means they’re made of glucose and fructose, but each has different nutrient, texture and flavor profiles, Emma Laing, PhD, RDN, told Fox News Digital.

She’s the director of dietetics at the University of Georgia and a national spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Some people may have an allergic reaction to certain components of honey — and honey is not safe for infants younger than 12 months of age.

“Honey is touted as ‘healthier’ in some nutritional respects,” she said. “However, sugar might be preferred based on taste and affordability.”

“Sweeteners in general are often considered unhealthy, but consuming small amounts should not cause ill effects among most people — so they should not be feared,” she said.

When people consume too much of these ingredients, however, they may experience significant changes in blood sugar, feelings of gastrointestinal discomfort or an increased risk of tooth decay.

Laing also said that some people may have an allergic reaction to certain components of honey — and that honey is not safe for infants younger than 12 months of age.

Honey consumption, according to a new study, was associated with lower levels of fasting blood glucose, total cholesterol and triglycerides.

A high intake of free sugars has contributed to an increase in obesity, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease, according to previous research.

“The dietary guidelines for Americans recommend that no more than 10% of total daily calories come from sugar — and this includes honey,” Laing told Fox News Digital.

Honey may lower blood sugar, cholesterol

Researchers from Toronto conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 18 clinical trials that included over 1,100 participants to determine the effect of honey on heart and metabolic risk factors, per the study’s press release.

Raw vs. processed honey

Khan noted there is a difference between processed and raw honey in health benefits.

“Conventional processing of honey involves straining and filtering and then heating for a short period of time to reduce moisture and yeast,” Khan told Fox News Digital.

“More studies from unique single flower sources are needed.” This allows for easier manipulation of honey, he said, but actually damages the honey — and many of its bioactive compounds lose their effect.

“Raw honey is strained and filtered but not heated,” he said.

Study’s limitations

Khan noted one major limitation of the study was that the results were limited by availability of data.

“There are many honey varieties for which no human studies have been done, so we could not assess them,” he added. People might consider adding honey to their diets if they “enjoy the flavor and are seeking to add variety to an overall nutritious eating pattern,” said one registered dietitian nutritionist.

“Another limitation was that many studies used polyfloral honey, which is a mixed honey — and one cannot know what flower source it is from.”

He noted that “more studies from unique single flower sources are needed.”

‘Overall nutritious eating pattern’

Laing recommended that people consider adding honey to their diets if they “enjoy the flavor and are seeking to add variety to an overall nutritious eating pattern.”

She also noted that people might experiment “with replacing [a] sugar sweetener with honey, keeping in mind that honey has a sweeter taste — so smaller amounts would be needed.”

“We are in need of more studies before we can prove more broadly that there is an impact of honey consumption on glycemic control and lipid levels.”

Khan suggested obtaining raw honey from local beekeepers or bee farms.

Any floral honey, such as those from clover plants, as well as robinia, can be purchased, he added.

“Robinia honey is usually sold by the name of Acacia Honey,” he said.



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Pakistan's Finance Minister to Meet IMF in Geneva

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - An International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation will meet Pakistan's finance minister on the sidelines of a conference in Geneva, a spokesperson of the lender said on Sunday, as Pakistan struggles to restart its bailout program.

The lender is yet to approve the release of \$1.1 billion originally due to be disbursed in November last year, leaving Pakistan with only enough foreign exchange reserves to cover one month's imports.

"The IMF delegation is expected to meet with Finance Minister (Ishaq) Dar on the sidelines of the Geneva conference to discuss outstanding issues and the path forward," a spokesperson of the IMF said in a message to Reuters.



Turkish Defense Industry Sets \$6b Export Target for 2023

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey's defense industry has exceeded its export target in 2022 and is looking forward to reaching \$6 billion (TL 112.53 billion) in 2023, which "can also be much higher," Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) head Ismail Demir said while speaking at the "Defense Industry 2023 Goals" news conference held in Teknopark Istanbul.

"Today, the Turkish defense industry continues its efforts to meet the needs of our security units with domestic resources, with project activities carried out under the supervision of our Presidency, from design to mass production, from R&D and innovation to industrialization policies, and various ecosystem coordination studies that will ensure financing and sustainability," said Demir, noting that the upright stance and determination in the defense industry accelerated domestic projects against embargoes.

Noting that there are nearly 2,000 companies that operate within the industry today, Demir said: "This is an ecosystem that makes the biggest contribution to our country in terms of economics and added values. We have more than 750 successful projects. As a result, we have reached a turnover of over \$10 billion, and exported \$4.4 billion worth of products."

"While domestic products are successfully used in the domestic and international operations of our security forces, we also carry out important activities to meet the needs of friendly and allied countries," Demir added.

As per information shared by the SSB, the defense industry's 2023 targets diversified from aviation and space to land vehicles or missiles. Under the aviation and space category, the National Combat Aircraft (MMU), will be taken out of the hangar. The Jet Training and Light Attack Aircraft Hürjet will also make maiden flights. Various flight maneuver tests and ammunition integrations of Bayraktar Kızılelma, Turkey's first unmanned fighter jet, will be carried out.

Within the scope of the Özgür project, avionics modernization of current F-16 fighter jets in the country's inventory will be completed and the aircraft will be delivered to the air forces. The deliveries of the first batch of the Gökbeý helicopter will be made to the Gendarmerie General Command. The Bayraktar TB3 unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV), with vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) feature scheduled for deployment with the flagship-to-be Anadolu, will undergo its maiden flight.

With the delivery of the sixth and last P-72 Marine Patrol Aircraft, the Meltem-3 project will be completed.

The KILIÇSAT Cube Satellite, which will enable the domestic LNA module production to make history in space aviation and gather position and route information of ships, will be launched into space.

For naval projects, Turkey will launch the landing helicopter dock (LHD)-type Multi-Purpose Amphibious Assault Ship Anadolu, the largest military ship in the inventory. The Marine Supply Combat Support Ship (DIMDEG) Derya will be delivered to the naval forces.

Azerbaijan Sees Oil And Gas Revenues Grow Significantly in 2022

BAKU (Dispatches) - Azerbaijan has been enjoying a huge boost in revenues from its oil and gas exports, thanks to a deal it made with the European Union last year amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting sanctions.

According to the latest data from Azerbaijan's State Customs Committee, the country earned \$33.6 billion solely from oil and gas exports in the first 11 months of 2022, which is 2.2 times greater than revenues for the same period of 2021.

The same data reaffirmed the Azerbaijani economy's overwhelming dependence on oil and gas revenues, which amounted to 92.6 percent of the country's total revenues in that period.

Azerbaijan is apparently reaping the benefits of the energy deal it inked with the EU in July. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU sought to reduce its reliance on Russian gas and signed an agreement with Azerbaijan that was to see the latter eventually double the flow of its gas to Europe. According to the document, Azerbaijan is expected to ramp up exports to Europe via the Southern Gas Corridor to 20 billion cubic meters annually by 2027.

"The EU is opening a new chapter in our energy cooperation with Azerbaijan, a key partner in our efforts to move away from Russian fossil fuels," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in Baku at the time. (This political intention was later undercut, however, by Azerbaijan's purchase of Russian gas to cover its own domestic needs this winter.)

Meanwhile, the list of buyers of Azerbaijani gas keeps growing. Serbia last year started building a pipeline for Azerbaijani gas under a cooperation agreement signed in June. Construction is set to finish in the last quarter of 2023.

Additionally, Azerbaijan's state oil company SOCAR signed an agreement with a Romania's Romgaz S.A. in December, which stipulated the export of 300 million cubic meters of Azerbaijani gas to Romania from January 1.



Azerbaijan's political opposition and civil society have long argued that the oil and gas wealth does not translate into higher social welfare for ordinary Azerbaijanis and provides fodder for corruption.

Consumer prices rose 13.8 percent in the first 11 months of 2022, according to the State Statistics Committee. That is a sharp uptick from the 6.2 percent registered the year before.

Venezuela Owes Over \$20m to Law Firms on Guarding Overseas Assets

CARACAS (Dispatches) - Venezuela owes \$20.7 million to U.S. law firms handling litigation against creditors seeking to collect unpaid debts from bond defaults and nationalizations carried out more than 15 years ago, according to a document seen by Reuters.

The South American nation owes bondholders and companies more than \$60 billion over companies nationalized under then-President Hugo Chavez as well as over defaulted bonds from the country and state oil firm PDVSA.

Some U.S. courts have granted creditors rights to negotiate the sale of Venezuelan assets abroad in order to collect debts, such as the Citgo refinery, the crown jewel of Venezuela's overseas assets, and a subsidiary of PDVSA.

However, some assets are protected by the U.S. Treasury Department.

The interim government of former opposition leader Juan Guaido, who was removed at the end of last year by assembly vote, had hired some eight law firms to handle litigation with companies and bondholders, including one seeking to nullify PVDSA's 2020 bonds, which had offered Citgo as collateral.

Between October 2020 and October 2022, Venezuela's opposition parliament authorized payments of nearly \$30 million to the lawyers, but according to the document, they have yet to be paid \$20.7 million.

In the document, a report from the interim government's prosecution team, the lawyers say failure to pursue the lawsuits would risk losing the overseas assets.

Opposition groups maintain that control of overseas assets is not at risk, despite last month's removal of the interim government, though they have not given details of what will happen with ongoing litigation.

Taiwan Exports Fall for Fourth Month

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - Taiwan's exports fell for a fourth straight month in December due to the worsening state of the global economy, as inflation and rising interest rates weighed on demand, and benefits from China's relaxation of its COVID controls had still to emerge.

Exports dropped 12.1% by value last month from a year earlier to \$35.75 billion, the lowest in 20 months, the Ministry of Finance said on Saturday.

That followed a 13.1% drop in November, and was slightly better than Reuters poll forecast for a 13.3% contraction. [read more](#)

For December, the ministry said global demand was slowing gradually, due to inflationary pressures and interest rate rises in major economies, as well as disruptions to factory production in China amid a spike of COVID-19 cases after Beijing dismantled its zero-COVID regime.

The ministry saw Taiwan's exports continuing to decline in the first quarter as it expected the global economy to "slow significantly", with major uncertainties posed by both the war in Ukraine and the spread of COVID-19 in China. "The positive demand driven by new technologies and rising silicon content in end products would not be able to offset these negative impacts," the ministry said in a statement.

Taiwan's total exports of electronics components in December fell 1.4% to \$16.04 billion, with semiconductor exports up 0.8% from a year earlier.

Firms such as TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, are major suppliers to Apple Inc and other global tech giants, as well as providers of chips for auto companies and lower-end consumer goods.

At \$14.28 billion in December, Taiwan's exports to China, the island's largest trading partner, were down 16.4% from a year ago, after suffering a 20.9% drop in November.

Taiwan's finance ministry said risks ahead included uncertainty the U.S.-China tech war, adding that January exports could contract in a range of 20% to 24% from a year earlier.

The ministry's Tsai said fourth quarter exports -traditionally a busy season ahead of Christmas - dropped 8.6% year-on-year.

December's exports to the United States were down 2.6%, compared with an 11.3% contraction recorded the previous month.

Taiwan's December imports, often seen as a leading indicator of re-exports of finished products, fell 11.4% to \$30.96 billion, compared with economists' expectations of a 10.2% fall and after a drop of 8.6% in November.

Indian Economic Growth To Slow to 7% in 2022/23

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's government expects economic growth to slow in the financial year ending March, as pandemic-related distortions ease and pent-up demand for goods levels out going into 2023.

Gross domestic product (GDP) will likely rise 7% this fiscal year, compared with 8.7% the previous year, the Ministry of Statistics said in its first estimate for the period that put manufacturing growth at just 1.6%.

The preliminary overall projection is lower than the government's earlier forecast of 8%-8.5%, but above the central bank's 6.8%.

The government uses the estimates as a basis for its growth and fiscal projections for the next budget due on Feb. 1. That will be the last full budget before Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to run for a rare third term in elections due in summer 2024.

India's economy rebounded after COVID-19 restrictions were eased around mid-2022, but the war in Ukraine has spurred inflationary pressures, prompting the central bank to reverse the ultra-loose monetary policy it adopted during the pandemic.

It has raised key interest rates by 225 basis points since May to 6.25%, the highest in three years, and another modest hike is expected early this year.

Since September, economists have been cutting their 2022/23 growth projections to around 7% due to slowing exports and risks of high inflation crimping purchasing power.

Construction growth was projected at 9.1%, electricity at 9% and agriculture at 3.5%. Manufacturing and mining growth were forecast at 1.6% and 2.4%.

Growth in manufacturing was disappointing as corporate profits in the second quarter shrunk, said Madan Sabnavis, an economist at Bank of Baroda.

India's nominal growth, which includes inflation, is projected to be at 15.4% for 2022/23, up from an earlier 11.1% estimate.

"The nominal GDP growth is higher, implying that the government's fiscal deficit target will be achieved," said Sabnavis.

India remains a relative "bright spot" in the world economy, but needs to leverage its existing strength in services exports and extend it to job-rich manufacturing exports, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) official said.

It is expected to remain the second-fastest growing economy — lagging only Saudi Arabia — among G20 countries, according to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). India's growth potential is likely to be dented in the fiscal year starting on April 1, due to weak exports among other factors, Pranjal Bhandari economist at HSBC Securities and Capital Markets said in a note to clients.

"Buoyant albeit mixed domestic consumption should help to stave off some of the pain arising from weak exports during this period," Aditi Nayar, economist at ICRA.

Samsung Electronics Says Quarterly Profits to Plunge to Eight-Year Low



SEOUL (Dispatches) - Samsung Electronics said it expected its fourth-quarter operating profits to plunge 69 percent to an eight-year low as the global downturn hammers demand for memory chips and smartphones.

The South Korean tech giant said operating profits for the October-December period had likely slumped to 4.3 trillion won (US\$3.4 billion), a stinging year-on-year drop from 13.87 trillion won.

It would be the company's worst decline in quarterly profits since the third quarter of 2014.

In a statement, Samsung said fourth-quarter profits were "well below current market expectations", blaming the performance on macroeconomic issues, spurred by central banks around the world raising interest rates.

Weak demand for memory chips was "greater than expected as customers adjusted inventories... to further tighten finances," it said.

It added that this was "spurred by concerns over deteriorating consumer sentiment caused [by] continued high global interest rates and weak economic outlooks".

Against that backdrop, the Galaxy smartphone maker also "saw a significant drop in the memory business results due to lackluster demand and also weaker sales of smartphones," it added.

It was the first time in four years that Samsung issued an explanatory statement alongside their earnings predictions.

The firm is the flagship subsidiary of the giant Samsung Group, by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates that dominate business in Asia's fourth-largest economy and one that is crucial to South Korea's economy.

"Samsung Electronics is extremely crucial to the South Korean economy," Kim Dae-jong, professor of business at Sejong University in Seoul, told AFP.

Iranian Snooker Star Beats the World No. 2

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iran’s Hossein Vafaei has defeated the top player Mark Selby from England who is the second-best snooker in the world.

While all eyes were on Mark Selby at the Masters 2023, Iran’s sportsman beat his rival from England 6-2. The tournament, which is the first major snooker event of 2023, is taking place in London at Alexandra Palace. Some 16 of the world’s top players are competing in the non-ranking tournament.

The Masters, one of snooker’s triple crown events, kicked off on Sunday and will wrap up on January 14.



Metal Markets Hold Their Breath as China Reopens



LONDON (Dispatches) - Could China’s economy resume its normal growth trajectory in 2023 after recording one of its lowest growth rates ever in 2022? Recently, the country introduced some more financial stimuli and eased its rather draconian COVID-19 countermeasures. This has left the world waiting for the resurgence of Chinese manufacturing and the economy at large. But will the New Year bring the results they want?

Unfortunately, it remains unclear whether all these wishes for a better 2023 will evaporate into “wishful thinking.” Most global economists feel that any recovery in China could be more U-shaped than V-shaped. The same forecast applies to the metals and minerals sectors. If all goes according to plan, there could be a gradual recovery towards the end of the new year or even later. However, that, too, is conditional. Specifically, there would need to be no further COVID-19 outbreaks in China.

In the past two months or so, metal prices and demand showed signs of resurgence. This largely stemmed from the loosening of COVID-19 regulations across China. But while it resulted in raised hopes, many industry experts worry this may only be temporary.

Obviously, with recessions predicted in most countries around the world, a rise in Chinese demand would help boost global metals demand and prices. But analysts noted that while relaxing China’s COVID limitations could have favorable effects, gains might take time to materialize. In fact, many predict that Chinese manufacturing and other economic activities won’t pick up until mid-year. That said, the country’s steel manufacturers are sure to benefit from a drop in energy costs. This would be mainly due to declining coal prices. Indeed, the commodity saw a 20% drop in December to US \$250 a ton, primarily due to weak global demand.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted that 2023 will prove a tough year economically, as the organization pointed out that the main engines of global growth – the US, Europe, and China – were experiencing weakening economic activity. On CBS’s “Face the Nation,” IMF managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said that the new year will be “tougher than the year we leave behind.”

Back in October, the IMF cut its outlook for global economic growth in 2023 significantly. At the time, they cited factors such as the Ukraine invasion, high inflation pressures, etc.

The 2022 Chinese economy can best be described as a spluttering car engine. For much of the year, the batteries remained dead because of COVID-19. When the government announced more financial stimulus in November, imports of copper and aluminum increased. But soon, aluminum prices experienced significant corrections. Steel exports also went up, but this is not necessarily a good thing. To many, it simply showed an increased output despite decreased domestic demand. The Chinese “mantra” for growth was to both increase the former and expand the latter, which is now at a standstill.

This “touch and go” situation regarding Chinese manufacturing has taken the metals markets on a roller coaster ride. This was evident in the decline of metal prices in Shanghai on January 2, 2022. The drop was due to concerns over tepid demand – due to a coronavirus resurgence and contracting factory activities.

A recent Reuters report provided some insight into the Chinese manufacturing problem. It explained how China’s official purchasing managers’ index (PMI) showed factory activity shrank for the third straight month in December. What’s more, it shrank at the sharpest pace in nearly three years as COVID-19 infections swept through production lines across the country.

The report also predicted that extended shutdowns would lead to a built-up in stocks of primary metals used to make finished goods. This would, in turn, pressure prices of various raw materials well into 2023.

Other reports say that shrinking orders (both domestic and from abroad) forced metal goods factories in China’s southern Guangdong province to initiate their Lunar New Year shutdowns early. Other plants recently revealed they would cut production plans for next year, adding to the Chinese manufacturing woes.

Europe Imports Of U.S. Diesel, Gasoline To Hit 2-Year High



LONDON (Dispatches) - Europe’s imports of diesel and gasoil from the United States is on track to reach a two-year high this month, data from Vortexa shows.

In December, Europe’s U.S. loadings for diesel and gasoil reached 660,000t, according to Vortexa data cited by Argus. It was the highest amount headed to Europe in any month since September 2020—and a strikingly high 70% increase over cargos loaded in November. The rush for Europe to stock up on diesel and gasoil comes just a couple of months ahead of the European Union’s full ban on crude oil products set to begin on February 5.

For the United States, which is already battling falling diesel supplies that are 14% below their five-year average, the increasing European imports have collided with refinery outages over the Christmas holidays due to cold weather, further depressing U.S. distillate and gasoline inventories. Phillips 66 predicted earlier this week that the gasoline and diesel markets will be tight this summer, with refiners running at or near full capacity for months.

Europe has also looked to the UAE for additional diesel imports.

Russia is gearing up to increase its diesel shipments this month before the EU’s ban kicks in, with fuel shipments from Russian ports set to reach 2.68 million tonnes in January—an 8% increase over last month and the highest rate since January 2020, Bloomberg reported last month. Those export figures only include pipeline and rail shipments.

In the first ten days of December, about half of Europe’s diesel imports came from Russian shipping facilities, highlighting the still-strong reliance that Europe has on Russian diesel as recently as a month ago. Europe was also importing a healthy amount of diesel from the Middle East and Asia.

Gardening May Help Reduce Cancer Risk and Boost Mental Health

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A new study reveals community gardening helps lower stress and anxiety, and reduces cancer risks. Researchers found those who gardened had elevated fiber intake and increased physical activity.

As we compile our lists of resolutions aimed at improving physical and mental health in 2023, new CU Boulder research suggests one addition could have a powerful impact: Gardening.

Funded by the American Cancer Society, the first-ever, randomized, controlled trial of community gardening found that those who started gardening ate more fiber and got more physical activity—two known ways to reduce risk of cancer and chronic diseases.

They also saw their levels of stress and anxiety significantly decrease.

The findings were published Jan. 4 in the journal Lancet Planetary Health.

“These findings provide concrete evidence that community gardening could play an important role in preventing cancer, chronic diseases and mental health disorders,” said senior author Jill Litt, a professor in the Department of Environmental Studies at CU Boulder.

Litt has spent much of her career seeking to identify affordable, scalable and sustainable ways to reduce disease risk, especially among low-income communities. Gardening seemed an ideal place to start.

UN Chief Calls for...

FROM PAGE 1

“This is the greatest climate disaster in our country’s history,” agreed Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, decrying a “colossal calamity.”

According to Pakistan’s so-called Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework, which it will officially present during Monday’s conference, it will need \$16.3 billion over the next three years.

Pakistan’s government has said the country should be able to cover half the cost but is urging the international community to fund the rest.

“I am asking for a sustained international support plan. I am asking for a new lifeline,” Sharif said.

Countries appeared to heed that call, with hundreds of millions of dollars promised even before the pledging part of the conference had begun.

Speaking via video-link, French President Emmanuel Macron told the conference that his country would contribute 360 million euros (\$384 million).

He also said France was prepared to join an international support group being created to help Pakistan implement its plan, and said it would also provide an additional 10 million euros in emergency aid.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said the European Union was contributing 500 million euros towards Pakistan’s reconstruction, as she announced a fresh injection of 10 million euros in humanitarian assistance.

Months after the rains stopped, the situation in Pakistan remains dire.

Israeli Military Understaffed...

FROM PAGE 1

On Sunday, the Hezbollah resistance movement released a video conveying a direct message to the Israeli occupation.

The video simulates a scenario in which the resistance fighters cross into the occupied Palestinian territories, depicting how the fighters succeeded in infiltrating the occupied territories, where confrontations with Israeli occupation soldiers break out.

Israel launched two wars against Lebanon in the 2000s. In both cases, it was forced to retreat after suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of Hezbollah. Also, Israel violates Lebanon’s airspace on an almost daily basis, claiming the flights serve surveillance purposes.

On a related note, a senior military official censured the outgoing occupation forces Chief of Staff, Aviv Kochavi, and his plan to transform the Israeli occupation forces into a so-called “deadly, effective and innovative army,” saying that Kochavi would only cause “severe damage to the ground forces, number of forces, and the army reserves.”

Israeli officials think Israeli faces an existential threat as Palestinians form a network among themselves across occupied Palestine, a general says.

According to Israeli media reports, the military official pointed out that the occupation forces currently have the minimum number of forces while facing more “complex threats.”

He added that Israel may face a heavy battle accompanied by internal challenges that may make every fighter suffer due to prevailing weaknesses.

The officer criticized Kochavi for an attack carried out by the Air Force in Syria, adding, “Doesn’t the enemy know we attacked the eighth truck? They (Israeli Occupation Forces) decided to maintain ambiguity regarding the important attacks in Syria. We are heroes there, but in Lebanon, they quietly manufacture and build precision missiles and long-range missiles, and we fail to respond.”

He said that Hezbollah’s possession of accurate missiles will force a different outcome during the war, highlighting “the importance of having additional reserve forces, as it is an illusion to believe that the war will end in a quick victory.”

Iran to Roll...

FROM PAGE 1

“Seven mega projects and 200 small and large-scale projects have been defined in the (Iranian) telecoms ministry for the NIN to be take shape,” the minister said in a speech in Tehran’s University of Science & Technology.

He said nearly 2,500 more villages across Iran had been connected to the NIN over the past 14 months.

The minister also confirmed that satellite internet has been activated in Iran, but says the number of active devices in the country is now unclear.

Zarepour was commenting on reports that nearly 1,000 receivers of Starlink satellite internet have been activated in Iran.

The minister said Iran welcomes operation of such internet companies in the country provided that they respect Iranian national regulations.

Starlink satellite constellation is operated by US-based company Space X. It has recently announced that a number of its receivers have been activated in Iran, without providing further details.

Arms Smuggled...

FROM PAGE 1

The senior commander said the arrogance employed all of its legal and international tools, mobilized espionage and intelligence capabilities, utilized its media empire to foment riots in Iran, and even smuggled arms into Iran to support the terrorists, steer the riots towards violence and kill innocent people.

The general also noted that the enemies, all of whose wars, plots and seditions against the Iranian nation have ended in failure, have now resorted to a hybrid of various threats.

The small number of rioters that were deceived and came to the streets in Iran amounted to less than 0.3 percent of Iran’s population, meaning that people have very well drawn a distinction between the protests and riots, he concluded.

Persian Gulf to...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran’s Football Federation (FFIRI) also announced that it will complain to FIFA over the use of a fake title by Arab states for the Persian Gulf.

Referring to the fake title used for the Arab cup hosted by Iraq in the city of Basra, FFIRI in a statement expressed the official objection of the Iranian football community and nation to FIFA.

The Iranian diplomat also spoke about the implementation of the comprehensive cooperation program between Iran and China, saying that Iran and China will develop bilateral relations based on a 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement which was signed as the result of the political will of the two countries’ leaders.

The program is part of the basic plan of the two countries to develop relations, and good initial measures have been taken in this regard, and bilateral negotiations continue.

Speaking about the U.S.-Venezuela relations and their impact on Iran-Venezuela relations, Kan’ani said, “Bilateral interactions between states and governments are shaped based on the two sides’ own interests and considerations. The bilateral relations between Iran and Venezuela are at the highest level, and the two countries have strategic cooperation. The bilateral economic cooperation documents of the two countries are a very good road map for strengthening relations.”

Elsewhere, the foreign ministry spokesman pointed to the US State Department spokesperson’s remarks on the JCPOA and the upcoming visit of American officials to the occupied territories, saying, “It is not a new issue that the American and the Zionist authorities talk about Iran. The Zionist regime has taken hostage the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran.”

“The country that violated the JCPOA is the American regime. The country that should be accountable is the US government. Iran’s policy regarding the nuclear issue is clear. Iran will not withdraw from its red lines and inalienable rights,” he added.

Davis Retains Regular WBA Lightweight World Title

WASHINGTON (AFP) – American Gervonta Davis took his record to 28-0 with 26 knockouts when he stopped previously unbeaten Hector Luis Garcia in a World Boxing Association lightweight fight.

Davis retained his WBA “regular” world title in the division, in which American Devin Haney is recognized as the WBA’s “super” world champion. Unbeaten Haney also holds the WBC, IBF and WBO belts, which he defended with a dominant victory over Australian George Kamposos in Melbourne in October.

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Brazilian Strike Ace Dynamite Dies Aged 68

RIO DE JANEIRO (Dispatches) - Ex-Brazil international Roberto Dynamite, the top scorer in the history of the Brazilian league, has died aged 68 of intestinal cancer, his former club Vasco da Gama confirmed.

“It was with the deepest regret that Vasco da Gama learned that the greatest of all has left us this Sunday. Carlos Roberto de Oliveira, alias Dynamite, dedicated 29 of his 68 years to the club, as player and president. Rest in peace,” the Rio de Janeiro club tweeted.

Man City Hammer Chelsea to Cruise Into FA Cup Fourth Round

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City cruised into the FA Cup fourth round with a routine victory over a desperately poor Chelsea at Etihad Stadium.

This was a far cry from what has traditionally been a hugely competitive meeting between two Premier League giants as City wrapped up a tie with either Oxford United or Arsenal in the next round by the interval.

City’s win over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Thursday was hard-fought but this was a stroll, Riyad Mahrez setting them on their way with a brilliant 23rd-minute free-kick before World Cup winner Julian Alvarez scored a second from the spot seven minutes later following Kai Havertz’s handball. Phil Foden scored City’s third after 38 minutes, turning in Kyle Walker’s cross after he had been played in by Thursday’s match-winner Mahrez, who got his second from the spot late on after Kalidou Koulibaly clumsily bundled Foden to the floor.

It was a chastening day for Chelsea, boss Graham Potter and their travelling support, who chanted the name of Thomas Tuchel, the Champions League-winning manager sacked by new owner Todd Boehly in September.

Chelsea’s supporters gave their team a sympathetic reception at the end of Thursday’s narrow Premier League defeat by City at Stamford Bridge but this was not the case here.

Potter’s team were roundly booed at half-time and again by those who stayed until the end, with the manager hearing the uncomfortable sound of his own fans singing the name of his popular predecessor Tuchel.

Sabalenka Sends Warning With Adelaide Triumph

ADELAIDE (Dispatches) - Aryna Sabalenka fired an Australian Open warning shot by winning her first title since 2021 at the Adelaide International, beating rising Czech teenager Linda Noskova 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

The world number five ended a slump of three consecutive defeats in WTA finals with victory in 1hr 43min in torrid 36 Celsius (96.8 Fahrenheit) conditions at Memorial Drive.

The Belarusian double-faulted on the first of three match points but sent over a serve winner on the second to wrap up the afternoon.

World number 102 Noskova, the 2021 Roland Garros junior champion, will rise towards the top 50 with her run to the final.

Second seed Sabalenka, a holder of 10 titles, added one more to her career total as she put her veteran’s experience to good use, ending the week without the loss of a set.

She had last lifted a trophy at the Madrid Masters in May, 2021.

Osaka Pulls out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka pulled out of the opening Grand Slam of the year just over a week before it starts, organizers said.

“Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from the Australian Open. We will miss her at AO2023,” the tournament said on Twitter. No reason for the Japanese star’s withdrawal was given.

It was another big blow for the tournament after U.S. Open champion and world number one Carlos Alcaraz also withdrew on Friday with a right leg problem.

Veteran American Venus Williams will also be a no-show after picking an injury at last week’s Auckland Classic.

The champion in Melbourne in 2019 and 2021, Osaka has not played a competitive match since pulling out of a tournament in Tokyo in September with abdominal pain and has slumped to 42 in the world rankings.

Chelsea’s lack of threat was also reflected in ironic shouts of “shoot” every time they got near goal and chants of “we’ve had a shot” on the rare occasions they did. This may be a club in transition once again but this display was abject under any circumstances.

Meanwhile earlier Leeds narrowly avoided an embarrassing FA Cup third round exit against second tier Cardiff as Sonny Perkins’ stoppage-time equalizer capped a stirring fightback from two goals down to force a 2-2 draw.

After Premier League sides Newcastle, Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth crashed out against lower-league opposition on Saturday, Leeds were in danger of becoming the latest victims of the FA Cup’s famed ability to produce memorable giant-killings.



Jesse Marsch’s team were rocked by first-half goals from Jayden Philogene-Bidace and Sheyi Ojo in rain-lashed south Wales.

But Cardiff, languishing just above the Championship relegation zone, were unable to hold on to their lead as Rodrigo got one back, then missed a penalty, before Perkins netted with seconds left to force a replay.

Losing to supposedly inferior teams in the FA Cup has become something of an unwanted habit for Leeds since then, with Crawley, Newport, Sutton, Rochdale, Histon and Hereford enjoying memorable upsets against them.

It looked like being another chastening exit for Leeds after a costly blunder from the visitors in the 24th minute.

Pascal Struijk waited for Leeds keeper Joel Robles to claim a long pass, but the ball ran through to Mark Harris.

Although Harris’s effort was saved by Robles, Philogene-Bidace was on hand to slot into the empty net.

Cardiff are the lowest scorers in the Championship this season with 20 goals from 26 games, but they ran Leeds ragged again in the 31st minute.

Former Liverpool winger Ojo collected Andy Rinomhota’s chipped pass into Leeds area, chesting the ball down as he evaded Diego Llorente before driving a rising shot high into the net.

But Marsch sent on Rodrigo in the second half and the Spanish striker reduced the deficit in the 65th minute with a powerful header from Sam Greenwood’s cross.

Leeds wasted a golden opportunity to level after Cardiff’s Joel Bagan was sent off for handling Junior Firpo’s shot on the goal-line in the 80th minute.

Rodrigo took the resulting penalty but Jak Alnwick dived to his left to make a fine save.

Leeds refused to surrender and the 18-year-old Perkins flicked in the equaliser from close-range deep into stoppage-time despite Cardiff appeals for offside.



Medvedev Confident He Can Beat Djokovic, Nadal

ADELAIDE (Dispatches) - Daniil Medvedev heads to Melbourne and the Australian Open still believing he has the weapons to beat “best in the world” Novak Djokovic despite being outplayed by the Serbian star in Adelaide.

The Russian, a losing finalist at the last two Australian Opens, crashed 6-3, 6-4 to a dominant Djokovic in the Adelaide International semi-finals.

Despite the defeat, he said he felt “really great” and was in a good place heading into the opening Grand Slam of the year after an under-performing 2022, where he dropped to seventh in the world rankings.

“Novak is different league — 21 Slams. That’s all we have to say. But generally positive and I need to stay positive because the first Slam is coming,” he said after the defeat.

“You have to believe in yourself,” he added. “I honestly say that before every match.

“Every time I play them (Djokovic and Rafael Nadal), before the match the only thought

is I have to win, I have to try my best to win.

“I managed to do it. Rafa I think I beat only once, but still I managed to do it. I had some tough matches against him. Against Novak I won a Slam.”

Since defeating Djokovic for the 2021 US Open title, Medvedev has been beaten three times by the Serb, who is back in Australia after missing last year’s Australian Open because of his vaccination status.

Medvedev almost beat Nadal at Melbourne Park last year in an epic final before going down in five sets.

While Djokovic and Nadal pose a serious threat to Medvedev’s quest for a second Grand Slam title, he got a boost last week when world number one Carlos Alcaraz pulled out injured.

The Russian said it was shame, but he was sure the young Spaniard would bounce back.

“It’s a pity. He’s one of the best players in the world,” he said.

“The way he played at 18 years old, he could be a little bit kind of Rafa, Novak, Roger (Federer) kind of guy. But he still has 19 slams to win.

“I’m sure he’s going to come back stronger.”

Djokovic Wins Adelaide Crown

ADELAIDE (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic dug deep to save a match point on the way to a 6-7(8) 7-6(3) 6-4 victory over Sebastian Korda in the Adelaide International 1 final today ahead of this month’s Australian Open.

A day after he overwhelmed Daniil Medvedev in the semi-final despite sustaining a hamstring injury, Djokovic moved freely on court but was pushed hard by Korda before the Serb made a late charge to deny his opponent a potentially career-defining win.

Korda broke for a 5-4 lead in a tense first set and was 40-0 up on serve when Djokovic hit back to level the scores, but the world number five came undone in the tiebreak as the American soaked up the pressure to convert his seventh set point. A fuming Djokovic yelled at and banished two members of his entourage from their courtside seats before the second set, in which he uncharacteristically struggled with his returns to allow Korda to dominate the rallies.



Shiffrin Equals Women’s World Cup Victory Record

KRANJSKA GORA (Dispatches) - Mikaela Shiffrin produced a skiing masterclass as she equaled Lindsey Vonn’s women’s record of 82 World Cup victories with a superb win in the giant slalom at Kranjska Gora.

The 27-year-old American produced two dominant runs to beat the Italian Federica Brignone by 0.77 seconds. The Swiss Lara Gut-Behrami was third, 0.97sec behind Shiffrin.

“I was so nervous on this run, I even had a rash on my face, maybe a bit of that was because of ‘82,” a tearful Shiffrin told broadcaster Eurosport.

“I wanted to ski well and I did it. I can’t believe it.

“It was a fight but it was pretty amazing conditions. I got a report from the coaches that everything is fully attackable and you have to go for it. I have been in this position and given it away. Today I wanted to fight for it.”



U.S. Win Inaugural United Cup Crown



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Taylor Fritz edged Matteo Berrettini 7-6(4) 7-6(6) as the United States justified their status as favorites to outclass Italy in a one-sided final at the inaugural United Cup mixed team tournament.

Coming into the third rubber with his team 2-0 up and needing one more victory to win the \$15 million event, world number nine Fritz took the opening set when his big-hitting opponent found the net in a tight tiebreak.

Indian Wells champion Fritz squandered five chances to break in the next set but held his nerve in another tiebreak, sparking wild American celebrations on the side of the court and in the stands.

“It’s great. It’s amazing for the team to win this event. We came in with really high hopes, or at least I did,” Fritz said. “I was really happy to be in that position to clinch the match.

“Just the emotions when you win and everyone comes running at you, it’s amazing. I don’t know if you saw the replay but Frances Tiafoe basically headbutted me.”

Madison Keys made it 4-0 by beating Lucia Bronzetti 6-3 6-2 to kick off another round of celebrations as her team mates swapped the champagne for water and drenched the world number 11.

Earlier, Lorenzo Musetti’s withdrawal from his match with Tiafoe handed the U.S. a 2-0 lead after Jessica Pegula downed Martina Trevisan 6-4 6-2 at Ken Rosewall Arena.