

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran Increased to **144,747** With **Three** More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

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Air Defenses Repel Drone Attack on Military Workshop

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Defense Ministry says its air defense units have repelled a drone attack on a military workshop in the central city of Isfahan.

The ministry made the announcement in an early Sunday statement, after an explosion was reported at one of Isfahan's defense industry complexes late Saturday.

The ministry said one of its workshop complexes had come under attack from a number of Micro Aerial Vehicles (MAVs), but the complex's air defenses successfully repelled the attack.

"One of the MAVs was downed by the complex's air defense fire, while the other two were caught in its defensive traps and exploded," the statement added.

The ministry noted that the unsuccessful attack did not cause any loss of life and only led to minor damage to the roof of a workshop. The complex, it added, continues its ordinary operations following the attack.

The ministry then assured the Iranian nation that such blind attacks will have no effect on the country's overall march toward progress.

Iran Receives Messages From JCPOA Parties Through Qatari FM

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Foreign Minister says that Iran received some messages from the parties involved in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations through the foreign minister of Qatar on Sunday.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remarks in a joint press conference with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.

"We thank Qatar for its efforts to lift the sanctions [imposed on Iran. Qatar is trying to return all JCPOA parties to their commitments. Today, we received messages from the other parties of the JCPOA [talks] through the Foreign Minister of Qatar. We thank Qatar for its goodwill to bring all parties to the final steps of the agreement. During the talks with Qatari FM, I pointed out the non-constructive role and interventionist actions of the United States and three European countries in the recent riots in Iran," said the Iranian foreign minister.

The Foreign Minister of Qatar who arrived in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Sunday was welcomed by Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran.

After the welcoming ceremony, the foreign ministers of Iran and Qatar held a meeting to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues.

Majlis Warns of Shocking Response To Europe's Anti-Tehran Bids



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis Vice-Speaker has warned of shocking and awakening response to European countries if they insist on pursuing hostile and aggressive policies against Tehran and fail to rectify their approach vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic.

"Over the past few months, the enemies of the Iranian nation have resorted to hybrid warfare to distort realities in the Islamic Republic. Now that they have miserably failed to achieve their objective, they are trying to exert pressure on Iran at the international level through various political scenarios," Ali Nikzad said on Sunday.

He added that "Europe should know the fact that complying completely with the United States' demands will further strip the European Union of its dignity and credibility before the world public opinion. We advise Europeans to come to their senses and not to sacrifice their interests for the sake of U.S. desires."

As to Europe's attempt to add the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) to its terror list, Nikzad stressed that the IRGC is an official military force and that Iran will definitely respond to any desperate and unwise attempt in this regard.

"The National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Majlis (the Iranian parliament) has drawn up a relevant plan. We are waiting for Europeans to alter their stance. The Islamic Republic's hands, though, would not be tied and would react to any belligerence, if they insist on their behavior," the senior Iranian legislator pointed out.

"European statesmen and women should remember the time they were haunted by the fear of Daesh terrorists, and then be thankful for the sacrifices made by the heroic IRGC forces," Nikzad said.

The European Parliament on January 18 adopted an amendment which was added to an annual foreign policy report, calling on the EU and its member states to include the IRGC on their terror list. The parliament also passed another resolution the following day, calling for more sanctions against Iranian individuals and entities and putting the IRGC on the EU terrorist list over alleged human rights violations during the recent riots.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Nikzad stated that the Friday attack on Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran was carried out with personal motives.

The attack "caused disquiet among us and we are conducting [legal] follow-ups on the matter," he said, urging people to avoid forming any snap judgment.

The assailant was arrested after killing one and injuring two others.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi ordered a thorough investigation into the attack on Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran.

Gwadar to Get 100MW More Electricity From Iran

GWADAR (Dispatches) - The coastal district of Makran division will be connected with the under-construction Pak-Iran transmission line by March this year after which it will get 100MW additional power supply from Iran.

This was disclosed by executive engineer of high transmission line Zafar Ali Chalgari at a meeting with Gwadar Development Authority Director General Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Qambrani.

He briefed GDA official about the progress on the under construction Pak-Iran transmission line and said the Iranian side transmission line was expected to be completed by March while work on Basima-Panjgur transmission line would be completed by June.

Work on the construction of grade stations in the Phalan area of Iran and Jewani on the Pakistani side was also under way, Mr Chalgari said, adding that the 30km line would also be laid.

After completion of work on the transmission line and grid stations, 100MW additional electricity from Iran would be added to the present system of power supply to Gwadar, he added.

With the availability of 100 MW additional power supply, not only the port city would get power supply round the clock but also power supply will be available for fully functioning Gwadar industrial estate, GDA Director General Qambrani said. He expressed the hope that with the additional power supply, electricity need of the entire Makran division would be fulfilled.

Mr Qambrani said water supply, education, health and provision of electricity projects were in the last phase of completion.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

West Main Supporter of Racism

There is a proverb which can be exactly used for the contradictory behavior of the West as "the West talks the talk and walks the walk" because whatever it claims about humanity and human rights are void in practice and it itself does not observe its words.

If we have a glance at the performance or claims of the West about humanity we can see a bunch of controversies between what have been said and what have been done. In recent centuries, Western countries have tried to show themselves as the true supporters of equality and human rights but they have failed to observe what they have asked other nations to do.

Racism is one of the most important issue in the world which is currently on the rise in the Western countries who claim they are opposed to it. Everyday media outlets report some incidents about racist actions and offences in Western countries and even some international bodies have decided to fight it by approving punishment for racist acts but in practice, we see racism is on the rise in the West and especially in the U.S.

In the U.S., racism is one of the top issues which are ignored by the whites as African-Americans are victims of supremacy of the whites in this country and the blacks are not safe in the country any longer and once in a while we hear some report on misbehavior and even crime against the blacks.

In recent decades the U.S. has faced with many protests because of killing of the blacks and today this country is facing another critical condition because of the crime of police officers in Memphis and the killing of a black man has enraged the blacks and other races who live in this country which claims it is the land of freedom and freedom of expression.

According to reports, the specialized police unit that included the five Memphis officers charged with the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols was disbanded as more protests took place in U.S. cities a day after harrowing video of the attack was released.

The police department said in a statement it was permanently deactivating the SCORPION unit after the police chief spoke with members of Nichols' family, community leaders and other officers. A police spokesperson confirmed all five officers were members of the unit.

Video recordings from police body-worn cameras and a camera mounted on a utility pole showed Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man, repeatedly screaming "Mom!" as officers kicked, punched and struck him with a baton in his mother's neighborhood after a Jan. 7 traffic stop. He was hospitalized and died of his injuries three days later.

Five officers involved in the beating, all Black, were charged on Thursday with murder, assault, kidnapping and other charges. All have been dismissed from the department.

Nichols' family and officials expressed outrage and sorrow but urged protesters to remain peaceful. That request was largely heeded on Friday when scattered protests broke out in Memphis - where marchers briefly blocked an interstate highway - and elsewhere.

Cities across the United States saw renewed nonviolent demonstrations on Saturday. In Memphis, protesters chanting, "Whose streets? Our streets!" angrily catcalled a police car that was monitoring the march, with several making obscene gestures. Some cheered loudly when they learned of the disbandment of SCORPION.

Hundreds of protesters gathered in New York's Washington Square Park before marching through Manhattan, as columns of police officers walked alongside them.

Taken together, the four video clips released Friday showed police pummeling Nichols even though he appeared to pose no threat. The initial traffic stop was for reckless driving, though the police chief has said the cause for the stop has not been substantiated.

This is not the first time that police forces brutally beat and kill some black man and this racist approach of the police forces is a simple example for existence of racism in this so-called land of liberty which lets the whites kill easily the other races in the country.

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Supreme Leader to Receive Group of Producers

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei is to receive a group of producers on Monday (today).

The meeting will be held in line with this year's slogan which is "Production: knowledge-Based and Job-Creating". The producers will also present their views.

The Leader on Saturday toured an exhibition showcasing Iran's manufacturing achievements. The exhibition features machinery, equipment, and products manufactured by various national factories. Iran's ministries of industry, energy, oil, and communications are represented in the exhibition.

Tehran, Baku Not to Let Ties to Be Affected By Ill-Wishers

TEHRAN (MNA) –President Ebrahim Raisi said that the governments of Iran and Azerbaijan do not allow their relations to be influenced by the insinuations of the ill-wishers of the two nations.



the insinuations of the ill-wishers of the two nations.

Aliyev, for his part, thanked Iranian President for expressing sympathy with Azerbaijan, saying that it was an unexpected crime, but the cooperation of the two countries in this field should be so strong that no one can find opportunity to disturb the friendly relations of the two countries under the pretext of such incidents.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has condemned the Friday armed attack on Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran, saying the enemies should not be allowed to take advantage of the incident, which he said was not an act of terrorism.

Following the assault, Tehran police chief Brigadier General Hossein Rahimi said the gunman, who entered the Azerbaijani embassy and started shooting with a firearm, was arrested.

Raisi made the remarks in a phone conversation with the President of the Azerbaijan Republic Ilham Aliyev on Saturday night.

He offered condolences to his Azerbaijani counterpart over the death of the head of the security service of the Azeri embassy in Tehran who was killed in an attack on the embassy on Friday morning.

Referring to the measures taken by relevant agencies to follow up on the embassy attack which killed the head of the security service of the embassy and wounded two embassy guards, the Iranian president expressed his sympathy with the people and government of Azerbaijan.

The friendly and fraternal relations between the two nations of Iran and Azerbaijan are based on unbreakable cultural and historical ties, Raeisi said, adding that the governments of Iran and Azerbaijan do not allow their relations to be influenced by

Europe to Face Iran Hard Response If Takes Anti-IRGC Moves

TEHRAN (MNA) – If Europeans take an action against IRGC and influence Iran's military sector or governing bodies, they would face Iran's hard reaction and response, the Iranian Foreign Minister said on Sunday.

Hossein Amirabdollahian made the remarks on Sunday in a meeting with 4 Iranian lawmakers who are under European sanctions.

By sanctioning Iranian lawmakers, the European Parliament showed that it does not have a correct understanding of Iran's internal atmosphere and even Iranians abroad, Amirabdollahian said in this meeting.

"It also proved that your actions, words, and your measures have been effective in defending the country's interests and national security," he told lawmakers.

"Given the fact that you (lawmakers) don't have any banking accounts in European countries, such sanctions are mostly propagandist," Amirabdollahian said.

The sanctions show that these lawmakers have been influential among Iranians in the region and in the Axis of Resistance, he noted.

Algeria Says Willing to Widen Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The speaker of the People's National Assembly of Algeria said on Sunday that his country is after strengthening relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ibrahim Boughali made the remarks in a meeting held on the sidelines of the 17th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States Conference (PUIC) with the visiting Iranian Majlis (Parliament) Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

Algerian parliament is keen on deepening cooperation with the Iranian side in various areas, in the trade field in particular, Boughali noted.

Turning to the issue of Palestine, the Algerian official described the Palestinian cause as the main question of today's world.

He went on to say that his country makes efforts to help Palestine become a member of the United Nations.

Everyone calls for the Palestinians to keep united as unity lets them be strong to stand against the Zionist regime of Israel, he stressed.

On the recent events that occurred against the Muslims, the Algerian official said the aggression against Islam and the recent desecration of the Holy Quran prove that Islam is self-evident.



Further, he underlined the importance of operating a mechanism for supporting Islam, which is the religion of reality.

The Palestinian cause always remains on the agenda of the Islamic countries, Boughali said.

For his part, the Iranian speaker expressed hope that the Tehran-Algiers relations would lead to unity among the Islamic World and the fight against the Zionist regime to defend the oppressed Palestinian people.

Qalibaf called for further bilateral ties between Iran and Algeria.

The speaker also hoped that the OIC session would be effective in thwarting the enemies' plots.

In his remarks, Qalibaf warned the Islamic countries of the Zionists' plan to shatter unity among them.

Qalibaf flew to Algeria on Saturday (January 28) to take part in the 17th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States Conference (PUIC) slated for January 29.

The session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States Conference (PUIC) is planned to review the Muslim world's challenges and threats and the Zionists' serious escalation of conflict against the Palestinian people.

OIC Parliamentary Union Meeting an Opportunity to Reinforce Muslims Unity

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf says the 17th session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Algeria provides an opportunity to reinforce unity among Muslim countries.

Speaking to reporters on Saturday before leaving Tehran for Algiers to attend the 17th session of the PU-OIC, Qalibaf said the two-day event would be among "important economic and cultural opportunities" to forge unity among African countries and the Muslim world.

He added that the conference would be held at a very sensitive juncture as Western countries make efforts to spread Islamophobia and amid the special situation of Palestinians and the Israeli regime's measures against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The conference, which will be held on Sunday and Monday and will be attended by parliamentary heads from the OIC member states, will discuss several topics on its agenda, including confronting Israeli plans and protecting al-Aqsa Mosque, in addition to combating all forms and manifestations of terrorism.

Over the past months, Israel has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested.

Most of the raids have focused on Nablus and Jenin, where Israeli forces have been

trying to stifle a growing Palestinian resistance in the occupied cities.

The United Nations marked 2022 as the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank in 16 years.

Israeli forces killed at least 171 Palestinians in the West Bank and occupied East al-Quds last year, including more than 30 children. At least 9,000 others were injured as well.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf said that during the event in Algeria, Iran would raise issues in connection with the "Muslim world and solidarity to [promote] sustainable peace and development."

The top Iranian parliamentarian added that he would also hold bilateral and multilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference.

He noted that it is a unique opportunity that the conference is held in North Africa which is mainly composed of Muslim states.

He emphasized that enemies of the Muslim world are trying to sow discord among different religions, saying the Algeria conference would prepare the ground for Muslim nations to take "serious and fundamental" steps to counter those who intend to harm Islam and portray Muslims as terrorists.

Last week, Sweden's right-wing leader Rasmus Paludan received permission from his country's government to burn the Holy Qur'an in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm. He was being protected by the Swedish police while committing the sacrilege, which has opened the floodgates of protests in the Muslim world.

Iran Calls Indigenous Children Mass Graves Genocide

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian foreign ministry spokesman called the discovery of a number of other mass graves of innocent Indigenous children in Canada as an example of a "genocide".

"These terrible crimes have taken place in a country whose government always tries to display its image as one of the claimants of defending human rights with deceitful and hypocritical shows. This country always comments on the events of other countries from the position of a claimant and interventionist country," said Nasser Kanaani on Sunday in reaction to the discovery of 66 more potential unmarked graves at a former

residential school in British Columbia.

He added that the discovery of these mass graves is a sign of the human disaster and a reminder of the crimes that occurred during the oppressive and racist rule of white people under the control of the British.

He considered the claims of the Canadian government with the motive of projecting and creating deviations in participation and assistance in this human tragedy, saying that it is an indication that the Canadian government and other allied abuse human rights as a tool to impose their politically biased views on others.

"These crimes against humanity will never be hidden from the eyes of true justice seekers and the Canadian government must take responsibility for its dark past," Kanaani said, expressing sympathy with Indigenous people in Canada.

For decades, a large number of Indigenous children in Canada who were taken from their families and forced into boarding schools never returned home.

An investigative team has found 66 more potential unmarked graves at a former residential school in British Columbia, the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) said Wednesday at a press conference.

Drone Attack Attempt

On Iran Not to Go Without Punishment

TEHRAN (MNA) - Referring to the failed drone attack in Isfahan on Saturday night, Mohammad Marandi warned that such moves will not be without consequences.

The Iranian senior political analyst and the advisor to the Iranian negotiating delegation in the nuclear talks made the remarks by publishing the following image on his Twitter page:

Drone attack attempt on Iran not to go without punishment "Not a good week for the apartheid regime either at home or abroad," Marandi wrote.

"However, even though Netanyahu and his western-backed terrorist allies in northern Iraq have failed, there will be consequences. They both need to learn that punishment comes with failure too," he stressed.

The Iranian Defense Ministry announced that its air defense units have repelled a drone attack on a military workshop in the central city of Isfahan.

Public Opinion Can't Be Distracted From Israel Dire Situation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian foreign ministry spokesman says that the crime in Jenin and the killing and wounding of dozens of innocent Palestinians cannot distract public opinion from the dire situation inside the temporary Zionist regime.

"The social and political fault-lines of the spider den of Zionists are jolting this hollow regime more than ever before, pushing it to the cusp of collapse," Nasser Kanaani wrote in a tweet on Sunday.

"The crime in #Jenin and the killing and wounding of dozens of innocent Palestinians cannot distract public opinion from the dire and shaky situation inside the temporary Zionist regime," he added.

On Thursday, the Zionist military carried out a deadly raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. Ten Palestinians were killed, including an elderly woman, following several hours of intense confrontations between dozens of Israeli soldiers and Palestinian resistance fighters.

Israeli forces launch raids on various cities of the occupied West Bank almost on a daily basis under the pretext of detaining what it calls "wanted" Palestinians. The raids usually lead to violent confrontations with residents.

GC Approves Iran's Membership in SCO Bill

TEHRAN (MNA) – The spokesman of the Guardian Council said the bill for the accession of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was reviewed and approved by the vetting legislations body.

The spokesman of the Guardian Council, Hadi Tahan Nazif said Saturday that the Islamic Republic of Iran's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) bill was approved by the Council.

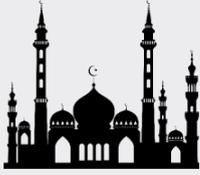
According to him, the bill had been previously approved by the lawmakers in the Iranian parliament and sent to the Guardian Council, but it faced problems and ambiguities in the previous there.

The spokesman also said that "I talked about these ambiguities and problems in detail in the past," adding, "The main problems were related to Articles 15 and 17 of the Constitution. There were also ambiguities about the annexes."

The spokesman of the Guardian Council added, "The problems and ambiguities were resolved by the parliament last Tuesday, and the members of the Guardian Council reviewed the reforms in a meeting and did not consider this bill to be against Sharia and the Constitution anymore."

"This bill includes annexes and agreements on various issues, any country that wants to cooperate with the SCO must ratify these annexes and agreements. According to Articles 77 and 125 of the Constitution, these annexes and agreements should be approved by the parliament," the spokesman explained more.

Tahan Nazif also said about the time of sending the approved bill to the parliament and the cabinet, he added "We are sending our official letter to the parliament today. The Speaker of the Parliament will also send it to the President and the President will forward it."



PRAYER TIME

- Noon (Zohr) 12:17
- Evening (Maghreb) 17:48
- Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) 05:39
- Tomorrow's Sunrise 07:05

8. Their abode is the Fire, because of the (evil) they earned.
 9. Those who believe, and work righteousness, - their Lord will guide them because of their faith: beneath them will flow rivers in gardens of bliss.

Surah 10, Jonah (8-9)

Chinese Investments In Iran to Improve

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid Reza Hariri believes the Chinese investments in Iran will improve and in upcoming months more investments from China will flood into the country.



Speaking to ILNA and reacting to dissatisfaction of Deputy Finance Minister over the low amount of investment by the Chinese, Majid Reza Hariri said that the private sector does not have exact statistics and the state sectors have more precise information about the statistics but in recent three decades the average foreign investments in Iran has been around \$2b.

He emphasized that financing and financial support is considered as indirect investment and there are two views for lack of interests for foreign investors to arrive in Iran. He added that one view is that the country should become attractive for investors to come to the country while the business climate in the recent three decades has been favorable and Iran's place in the global transparency ranking is among 10 bottom countries in the standings and some other factors like free investment and competitiveness are in the lowest level which has made Iran unattractive for foreign investors.

Hariri went on to say that factors like religion and flag are not important for foreign investors and they do not mix their feelings with their business and they seek abundant profit with lowest risks but there is not such a condition in Iran because economy is non-transparent, state-run and non-competitive and it discourages attracting investment.

He added that the second view is that if foreign investors enter the country, factors for attracting investment will improve and factors will become transparent. He went on to say that major foreign investors have entered Iran's oil, gas and petrochemical

sectors because these businesses follow the international oil market rules and not Iran's domestic rules, and foreign investors know that they should sign contracts with the governments to save themselves from the non-transparent climates.

He noted that Iran has not created attractive climate for foreign investments in three decades and sanctions have also worsened it, and small amount of remained attraction has gone. He said that Iran's economic climate is very risky and only those investors who like risks arrive in Iran and usually those who take risk usually have little interests in the healthy activities.

Hariri emphasized that investment in the sanctions era is very difficult, adding that every year around \$10b of capital exit the country or better to say that flight of capital, reiterating that as long as there is no transparency and competitiveness in the economy, we should not go for foreign investments and therefore the rate of investment in Iran is always negative.

He added that there is good capacity for joint investment between Iran and China and the Chinese are interested to bring more investments to Iran and he believes in the upcoming years this will happen especially from companies which are not private.

Hariri also criticized Iranians' behavior with the Chinese and called for fair and equal approach to all foreign investors. He reiterated that it seems managers in the middle levels do not like cooperation with the Chinese and they prefer Westerners than Easterners.

LSEZ Customs Office Accounts for 70% of Exports from Fars Province



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - 70percent of exports of Fars Province is carried out through the customs office of Lamerd Special Economic Zone (LSEZ).

The CEO of Lamerd Special Economic Zone Mr. Fattahi announced the news while addressing a ceremony honoring the board of directors, experts and staff of customs office of Lamerd Special Economic Zone concurrent with International Customs Day.

In the ceremony, Mr. Fattahi pointed to the significance and position of the customs office in the economic dynamism of the country and added that the custom office is a very important and crucial gateway and today that Iran is in an economic war, the importance of customs checkpoints and related organizations which are active has become more colorful and transparent.

He then pointed to the volume of exchanged goods from the zone to the target countries and stipulated that 70% of exports of Fars Province is carried out via this emerging mining and industrial hub and soon the volume of exports from this zone will be a considerable figure.

Fattahi then predicted a bright future for the zone as well as flood of new investors for presence in the zone which will boost the position of Lamerd Special Economic Zone.

At the end of the ceremony, Mr. Fattahi honored the staff and managers of the custom office with awarding plaques of appreciation.

Iran Reports Increased Port Activity In 10 Months

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Figures by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) show that activity in the country's sea trade gateways rose by 9% year on year in the 10 months to January 20.

PMO figures published on Saturday showed that loading and unloading activity in Iranian ports reached a total of more than 181 million metric tons (mt) between late March 2022 and January this year.

The figure included loading and unloading for over 91 million mt of crude oil and products carried by tankers, an increase of 17% compared to the 10 months to January 2022, showed the figures.

Loading of crude and related oil products at Iranian ports increased by 19% year on year between March last year and January to reach nearly 68 million mt, said the PMO.

Loading of non-crude products at Iranian ports picked up by 10% in the 10 months to January to reach 48 million mt, showed PMO figures.

Container port activity in Iran reached more than 2.1 million 20-foot equivalent units (TEU) between March last year and January this year, up 12% from the same previous period.

Iran Calls for Launching Daily Flights With Kazakhstan

TEHRAN - Minister of Agriculture Seyed Javad Sadati Nejad in meeting with Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smailov called for launching daily flights between the two countries.

Sadati Nejad in the meeting emphasized resolving banking problems in short time and before opening of the bank in Kazakhstan. He also called for resolving problems in the field of transportation and said that for transportation of red meat from Kazakhstan to Iran, the launch of direct flights between the two countries is necessary.

Meanwhile prospects for expanding cooperation in the agricultural and transport and logistics sectors were discussed by Smailov and Sadati Nejad during the joint economic commission of both countries which was held in Astana.

The Prime Minister said that in January-November 2022, trade turnover between the countries increased by more than 20 percent to nearly USD 500 million. At the same time, in order to further increase the volume of mutual trade, Kazakhstan is ready to supply the Iranian market with 75 additional commodity items worth about USD 250 million.

Particularly promising is seen the increase of turnover in agricultural products, the share of which in mutual trade is almost 80%. Our countries have an opportunity to increase the turnover of agricultural products up to \$1 billion, Smailov said.

In general, according to him, the Government of



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Kazakhstan is set to work actively to achieve the goal of increasing the total volume of trade up to \$3b, set by the two countries leaders.

Smailov emphasized that one of the key areas of cooperation is also the transport and logistics sphere. In this context, the North-South corridor is of particular importance.

Adoption of joint measures on building transport capacities of this route, in particular, signing and implementation of the Road Map on the elimination of bottlenecks, can significantly increase the volume of cargo transportation in the near future, he noted.

According to him, the implementation of the road map will make it possible to increase the corridor's traffic capacity by up to 10 million tons a year by 2025.

In his turn, Nejad noted the high productivity of the 18th meeting of the Kazakh-Iranian intergovernmental commission held the day before, following which the parties came to many mutually beneficial agreements.

In addition, he highlighted the importance of further development of the railway network and maritime infrastructure to increase trade and freight traffic, as well as stated Iran's readiness to expand the supply of citrus products to Kazakhstan.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Integration Serik Zhumangarin, Minister of Agriculture Yerbol Karashukeyev, heads of other departments, as well as representatives of diplomatic circles and the Iranian Parliament.

Iran Among World's Top 5 Turbine Manufacturers

TEHRAN (MNA) - Deputy Head of Iran Power Plant Repairs Company has said the country is currently among the world's top manufacturers of steam and gas turbines, IRIB reported.

"Currently, there are less than 10 major turbine manufacturing companies in the world, including GI, Siemens, and MAPNA that manufacture gas and steam turbines," Mohammad Gharaei said on Sunday.

The official noted that Iran is also among the world's leading countries in terms of repairing and overhauling turbines. "We have carried out many international projects and we are negotiating with Russia, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria to collaborate in new important projects," Gharaei said.

In April 2021, Iran's former President Hassan Rouhani unveiled the country's first domestically-made steam turbine rotor which was installed in a power plant near the capital Tehran. The construction of the mentioned turbine placed Iran among the world's top five steam turbine manufacturers.

The 82.5 MW turbine rotor which was manufactured by Iran Power Plant Repairs Company saved the country over \$13 million since for importing the mentioned rotor nearly \$21 million had to be spent.



Notice of tender for export sale

No. Z/1401/23

Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company
Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 140,000 metric tons of 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.gog.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 13. Feb.2023 to 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 14.Feb.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.

MPs Urged to Focus on Water Projects of Isfahan in Budget Bill



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The CEO of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company (ABFA of Isfahan) Mr. Hossein Akbarian in meeting with representatives of Flavarjan, Khomeini Shahr and Isfahan to Majlis urged lawmakers to pay attention to the water projects of Isfahan province for resolving challenges.

The brainstorming meeting was held by ABFA of Isfahan with Majlis lawmakers for reviewing the problems and water and wastewater challenges of the province and allocation of required budget in the next budget bill.

In the meeting Mr. Akbarian briefed the Majlis lawmakers of challenges, problems and projects of the province in the field of water and wastewater. He said that officials of Water and Wastewater Company of the province are fully ready to offer non-stop services to the public and the company needs timely budget and credit through the support of representatives of the province in Majlis.

He noted that sustainable supply of drinking water for the rural areas people is one of the strategic programs of Energy Ministry and ABFA of Isfahan, adding that the company has many problems for water supply for villages and currently it is pursuing a jihadi project for supply of drinking water to over 90 villages of the province and in case of allocation of more credit, the number of villages will increase next year.

Akbarian added that Isfahan is one of the early cities where the wastewater network has been carried out and now after almost half a century, major part of this network is worn out and so far about 193 kilometers of this network has been renovated through domestic sources and financing. He noted that currently some 307 kilometers of this wastewater network of the city of Isfahan needs renovation while 30 kilometers of this route is special and needs for earmarking required credit for renovation.

He reiterated that the company does its best for fair distribution of water during the year in the province.

Then representatives of city and towns of Isfahan Province to Majlis visited the dispatching center and telemetric of transmission line and water distribution network of the province and got acquainted with the existing challenges for sustainable services.

Peru's Boluarte Laments Congress' Failure to Speed Up Elections



LIMA (Dispatches) - Peruvian President Dina Boluarte expressed regret after Congress refused to speed up the timeline for a presidential election amid widespread social and political unrest, her office said.

Lawmakers had given an initial green light to moving elections from 2026 to 2024, but late on Friday evening voted down proposals hold the election this year.

Boluarte has repeatedly backed moving up elections as she struggles to quell nationwide protests demanding her resignation, which have left dozens dead. A motion to move elections up to April 2024 already passed one vote and has a second final vote in February. Congress will continue debate on Monday.

Two Indian Military Jets Crash In an Apparent Midair Collision



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Two Indian Air Force fighter jets have crashed after an apparent midair collision while on exercises about 300km (185 miles) south of the capital, New Delhi.

Both aircraft had taken off on Saturday morning from the Gwalior airbase, about 50km (30 miles) east of where they came down.

"We have located the wreckage of one of the planes and found an injured pilot in the Pahadgarh forests," officer Dharmender Gaur told AFP news agency.

"The other plane has likely fallen further away from the site and we have sent teams to locate it."

Retired NATO General Elected President of Czech Republic



PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Retired NATO general Petr Pavel beat a billionaire former prime minister in an election run-off to become the fourth president of the Czech Republic, final results showed.

Pavel, a former paratrooper, won 58.3 percent of votes while Andrej Babis scored 41.7 percent, said the Czech Statistical Office.

"I would like to thank those who voted for me and also those who did not but came to the polls, because they made it clear they honoured democracy and cared about this country," Pavel said after the results showed his victory.

"I can see that values such as truth, dignity, respect and humility have prevailed in this election," he added. The 61-year-old Pavel will in March replace President Milos Zeman, an outspoken and divisive politician who fostered close ties with Moscow before making a U-turn when Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

Turnout in the EU and NATO member country of 10.5 million people was unusually high, topping 70 percent following an acrimonious campaign marked by controversy.

Babis and his family have been targeted by death threats, while Pavel was the victim of a hoax claiming he was dead as disinformation plagued the final campaign.

"Our community is somewhat hurt by the presidential campaign, by the multiple crises we have faced and are facing, but also by the political style that has recently prevailed here," said Pavel.

"This has to change, and you have helped me to take the first step on the path towards this change."

Babis, who served as Czech prime minister from 2017-2021, congratulated Pavel after the vote and admitted defeat. "I would like to wish him to be the president of all citizens of the Czech Republic, to be sensitive to their

problems and fight for the interests of the Czech Republic," he added.

While the role is largely ceremonial, the Czech president names the government, picks the central bank governor and constitutional judges, and serves as commander of the armed forces.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said he was looking forward to "deepening the close cooperation" between the two neighbors. "I am impatiently awaiting a personal meeting and wish you a lot of strength and success," he added.

Pavel will be the fourth Czech president since the country's independence following its peaceful split with Slovakia in 1993, four years after former Czechoslovakia shed four decades of totalitarian communist rule.

His predecessors were Vaclav Havel, an anti-communist dissident playwright who led the country from 1993-2003, economist Vaclav Klaus (2003-2013) and Zeman.

Slovak President Zuzana Caputova even travelled to Prague to congratulate Pavel in person, saying she was happy that "in our region and in Europe, there is a new head of state who honours democratic values".

A graduate of a military university, Pavel was decorated as a hero in the Serbo-Croatian war when he helped free French troops from a war zone. He rose to chief of the Czech general staff and chair of NATO's military committee.

Like Babis, Pavel was a member of the Communist Party in the 1980s. But the man with a carefully trimmed beard and white hair, who has a passion for powerful motorbikes, has since become a strong advocate of EU and NATO membership.

"We have no better alternative. We should use all opportunities offered by membership and try to change that which we don't like," he said on his campaign website.

Video Shows Memphis Police Officers Kicking, Beating Tyre Nichols



MEMPHIS (Dispatches) - Tyre Nichols repeatedly cried, "Mom! Mom!" as the five Memphis police officers now charged with the Black motorist's murder pummeled him with kicks, punches and baton blows after a Jan. 7 traffic stop, video released by the city showed.

The video from police body-worn cameras and a camera mounted on a utility pole were posted online a day after the officers were charged with second-degree murder, assault, kidnapping, official misconduct and oppression in Nichols' death.

The officers, all Black, were dismissed from the police department last week. Nichols, 29, was hospitalized and died of his injuries three days after the confrontation in the city where he lived with his mother and stepfather and worked at FedEx.

The four video clips chronicle an aggressive escalation of violence directed at a motorist who police had initially said they pulled over for reckless driving. The police chief has since said the cause for the stop has not been substantiated.

The beatings appeared to continue far beyond a point where Nichols could pose any threat to police. At one stage, two officers

hold him upright as another punches him repeatedly in the face, while other officers on the scene stand by without intervening.

The ordeal captured in the video has transformed Nichols, the father of a 4-year-old, into the latest face of a U.S. racial justice movement galvanized by the 2020 killing of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis.

Nichols has been described by friends and family as an affable, accomplished skateboarder who recently enrolled in a photography class. Raised in Sacramento, California, he moved to the Memphis area before the coronavirus pandemic.

Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner said after seeing the video he had "concerns about two deputies who appeared on the scene" following Nichols' arrest. Those deputies have been relieved of duty pending the outcome of an internal investigation, he said on Twitter.

After the video's release Friday evening, several dozen demonstrators in Memphis marched along Interstate 55, shutting down traffic near a bridge that crosses the Mississippi River into Arkansas.

Syria Totally Rejects Watchdog Report on 2018 Chemical Attack

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syria has rejected a report by the global chemical weapons watchdog that blamed Damascus for a 2018 poison gas attack which killed 43 people, calling it "false".

Syria's foreign ministry said on Saturday that a report by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that found the Syrian government was responsible for a chlorine attack on the rebel-held Syrian city of Douma lacked any evidence.

"Syria totally rejects the report", the foreign ministry said in a statement carried by state news agency SANA.

"The report lacks scientific proof," it said, decrying "false conclusions". In the OPCW report, investigators said there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that at least one Syrian air force helicopter had dropped two cylinders of the toxic gas on the rebel-held town of Douma. Weaponising chlorine is prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention and international humanitarian law.

Damascus and its ally Moscow have said the April 7, 2018 attack was staged by rescue workers at the behest of the United States, which afterwards launched air raids on Syria along with the United Kingdom and France.

The OPCW dismissed claims that rebels and emergency workers had staged the attack. Its team "thoroughly pursued lines of inquiry and scenarios suggested by Syrian authorities and other state parties, but was unable to obtain any concrete information supporting them".

Emergency workers said at the time that they had treated people suffering from breathing problems, foaming at the mouth and other symptoms.

Survivors and activists described to Al Jazeera in 2018 how they struggled to breathe and continued to suffer effects after the attack.

The Douma case caused controversy after leaks from two former employees accused the Hague-based watchdog of altering its original findings to make them sound more convincing.

Russia Claims 14 Killed in Attack on Hospital in Eastern Ukraine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia has accused the Ukrainian military of deliberately attacking a hospital in a Russian-held area of eastern Ukraine in what it said was a war crime that killed 14 people and wounded 24 patients and medical staff.

There was no immediate response to the allegations from Ukraine on Saturday.

The attack hit a hospital in the Russian-held settlement of Novoaidar and was carried out using a US-supplied HIMARS rocket launch system, the Russian defense ministry said in a statement.

"A deliberate missile strike against a known functioning civilian medical facility is without doubt a serious war crime by the Kyiv regime," it said. "All those involved in the planning and execution of this crime will be found and held accountable."

Civilian and military medics had been working in the hospital for many months treating local people and soldiers, it said.

Ukraine and its Western allies have accused Russian forces of frequent war crimes in the conflict in which thousands of civilians have been killed and cities and towns reduced to rubble by artillery and air raids. Russia denies targeting civilians.

Meanwhile, three people were killed and more than a dozen others wounded following a Russian attack on the city of Konstantynivka in eastern Ukraine, the local governor said on Saturday.

"The Russians fired at a residential neighbourhood, damaged four multi-story buildings, a hotel, garages and civilian cars," Donetsk Governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said on social media. Kyrylenko said rescue workers and police were at the scene, "helping people and carefully documenting yet another crime by the Russian occupiers on our land".

Images posted on Kyrylenko's Telegram account showed apartment buildings with blown-out windows and debris scattered around the charred remains of a car.

According to Ukraine's defence ministry, Russia carried out attacks on Konstantynivka with multiple rocket launchers.

Almost a year into its invasion of Ukraine, Moscow is seeking to seize control of the entire Donetsk region, which it has already declared a part of Russia.

Ukraine said this week that Russian troops had stepped up their attacks in the east, particularly on the towns of Vuhledar and Bakhmut.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the battles near Bakhmut and Vuhledar, 200km (90 miles) to the south, as "extremely acute".

"The occupiers are not just storming our positions, they are deliberately and methodically destroying these towns and villages around them," he said.

Ukrainian troops are locked in a "fierce combat" with Russian soldiers for control of Vuhledar as the two sides battle along the southern front. Both sides claimed success in the small administrative centre of apartment blocks surrounded by flat fields.



Burkina Rally Celebrates French Troop Pull-Out Announcement



PARIS (Dispatches) - Thousands of demonstrators rallied in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou in support of the ruling junta, days after France confirmed its special forces there would withdraw, an AFP journalist saw.

Packing Nation Square in central Ouagadougou, protesters held signs bearing slogans including "Down with imperialism", "Down with French policy in Africa" and "Forwards for Burkina's sovereignty".

"We do not want any more foreign military bases on our soil," Lazare Yameogo, spokesman for the Inter-African Revolutionary Movement told the crowd. "We want respect and a win-win cooperation."

"We will remain on the lookout until Burkina Faso is liberated from Western imperialism," he added.

Former colonial power France has special forces based in Ouagadougou, but its presence has come under intense scrutiny as anti-French sentiment in the region grows.

Paris confirmed this week that the troops, deployed to help fight a years-long jihadist insurgency, would leave within a month.

It was anger within the military at the government's failure to stem a jihadist insurgency that has raged since 2015 that fuelled two coups in Burkina Faso last year.

Violence by insurgents linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group has killed thousands of people and forced around two million more to flee their homes.

Junta leader Captain Ibrahim Traore was acting for the West African state's sovereignty and "an army powerful enough to fight jihadists", said Alassane Kouanda, head of an association backing the planned transition to civilian rule.

Some commentators say the Burkinabe government's request for France to withdraw its troops is reminiscent of the ideals of former president, left-wing anti-colonial hero Thomas Sankara.

A coalition of organisations supporting Sankara's ideas welcomed "the complete liberation of our country from the yokes of FrancAfrique, imperialism and deadly capitalism", using a term to describe French influence in its former African colonies.

Mahamadou Sawadogo, leader of the Burkina-Russia association, said during Saturday's protest that there were "other opportunities for cooperation" in the fight against jihadists, notably from Moscow.

Vomiting: Why It Happens And What To Do



LONDON (Dispatches) - Gastric churning, oral salivating, and stomach rolling — unfortunately, we all know these queasy feelings of oncoming vomiting. Childhood has taught us this uncomfortable sensation, and the early days of pregnancy reinforce the knowledge. However, some may wonder if vomiting can be prevented? Or ask how should you cope with vomiting when it does happen? This article will address those questions and more.

Vomiting is the body's natural reflex, which is triggered by the immune system and brain to remove perceived toxins from the body.

Preventing vomiting is possible primarily through hand washing, eating foods rich in probiotics, and responding to feelings of queasiness.

When suffering from an episode of gastric upset, prioritize adequate fluid intake through small, frequent sips of water or an electrolyte drink.

The digestive system is dependent on good bacteria to fight viruses and other sicknesses. Restoring gut health can be achieved through nutrient dense foods and foods rich in probiotics.

This violent reversal of food and fluids in the digestive tract is often the body's way of removing perceived poisons from the body. Some causes of vomiting are:

Gastroenteritis. Also known as the stomach bug. Food poisoning. It's normally caused from improperly prepared food. Overindulgence. Often of alcohol or marijuana. Medications. Often happens during chemotherapy.

An immune response is sensed by the medulla and/or vagal nerve in the brain. The brain then sends a message to the digestive system to urgently expel the perceived toxins. The digestive system is then triggered by the nervous system, and an automatic reflex occurs.

Though preventing vomiting over a lifetime may be an overly ambitious goal, implementing certain preventive measures can definitely diminish the number of episodes.

Hand washing. Though washing your hands may seem like a basic practice, it is often incorrectly done or not performed at all. Hand washing is the most important step in preventing gastroenteritis and other illnesses. According to the CDC, one in three gastric illnesses and one in five respiratory infections can be prevented by regular hand washing for at least 20 seconds.

Probiotics. The digestive system depends on bacteria. Did you know there are good bacteria and bad bacteria, and the body can decipher the difference? To prevent gastric upset, many have found taking a probiotic capsule helps. Today in our society, we often do not ingest enough healthy bacteria. Consuming foods rich in prebiotics and probiotics can also help restore and maintain gastric health.

Fluid intake. Water is a vital nutrient for cellular health. Since water is the universal solvent, it has the amazing ability to dissolve things, even within our bodies. Water helps flush waste and toxins. Therefore, adequate water consumption is helpful in preventing vomiting and dehydration.

Ginger and acupressure wrist bands. When nausea is near or motion sickness impending, ginger capsules and acupressure wrist bands have shown to provide relief from nausea and prevention of vomiting.

The inevitable has happened. You have the stomach bug. Now what? There is no need to panic.

Though you may not feel like it, it is important to take in extra fluids. Your body can go without food longer than water. This may require you to take small, frequent sips or eat small, frequent meals.

If able to tolerate solid foods, crackers, bread, or other bland foods can be eaten in small amounts and at frequent intervals.

India's Rapid Take-Up of Electric Vehicles Prompts Rethink About Long-Term Fuel Needs



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The rapid take-up of electric vehicles in India's fledgling market has prompted a major rethink about the country's long-term fuel needs as refiners in Asia's third-largest economy hasten their shift away from oil production.

India, one of the world's fastest growing oil markets, has lagged major economic peers in Europe and Asia in the adoption of EVs but sales are now picking up and investment in the production of new autos and energy infrastructure is accelerating.

The faster-than-anticipated industry growth means India's gasoline consumption will peak sooner than previously thought, some analysts and industry participants say, forcing top oil firms to expedite transition plans to alternative business lines, notably increased petrochemical manufacturing.

"We were anticipating that peak gasoline demand will be around 2040-2045 earlier, but going by the trend and the speed with which we are developing the ecosystem around EVs, the peak demand would be mid-2030s," Debasish Mishra, Partner, energy, resources and industrials, Deloitte India told Reuters. He expects diesel demand to peak around the same time as petrol.

Slowing fuel demand will be quite visible by around 2030 as EV technologies stabilise, compared with an earlier projection of 2040s, an industry source at an India-based refinery told Reuters, adding that heavy trucking sector will see changes a little later.

"Refiners are already investing in petrochemical integration to cope with the potential loss in fuel demand," said the source who declined to be named because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Currently, around 90% of Indian petrochemical demand is met by China, he said, so a shift by Indian refiners towards domestic chemical needs could dramatically change supply dynamics.

Indian refiners are investing billions of dollars to raise petrochemical capacity. Indian Oil Corp (IOC, NS), the country's top refiner, is raising petrochemical capacity at its Panipat refinery by 13% and building new plants linked to its Paradip and Gujarat refineries.

Reliance Industries Ltd, operator of the world's biggest refining complex, plans to invest 750 billion rupees (\$9.38 billion) to expand its chemical business, while Essar Group plans to set up a 400 billion rupee petrochemical complex in east India.

Nayara Energy expects 15-20 new integrated petrochemical plants will start in the next decade.

China currently dominates global EV production and domestic adoption of new energy vehicles is well advanced. The China Passenger Car Association expects sales of new energy cars, mainly EVs, to hit 8.5 million units this year, or 36% of all new sales.

Despite new momentum in India, the question for the country is whether it will be enough to ultimately shake its fossil fuel dependency.

"Limited charging infrastructure, low domestic EV production and high EV battery costs remain some of the key hurdles in maintaining strong EV uptake in the long run," said Dylan Sim, oil market analyst at FGE.

India's progress is modest by global comparisons, however, last year registered EVs tripled to 1.01 million from 2021, most of them two- and three-wheelers.

While EVs make up just 1% of the 3 million cars sold each year, New Delhi wants to grow this to 30% by 2030 and has introduced a range of policies to get there, including tax breaks for consumers.

India's state refiners, which dominate fuel retailers, plan to set up EV charging facilities at more than 22,000 fuel stations and highways by 2024.



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Colombia Raises Interest Rate to 12.75%

BOGOTA (Dispatches) - Colombia's central bank board raised the benchmark interest rate by 75 basis points to 12.75%, a softer increase than expected by a majority of analysts as the board continues to grapple with high inflation.

The interest rate is at its highest since November 1999.

"Both total inflation (13.1%) and core inflation - excluding food and regulated items - (9.5%) continued their upward trend in December, reaching records higher than those estimated by the bank's technical team and market analysts," board chief Leonardo Villar said, reading from a statement.

The two board members who voted for a 25 basis point increase think it would be enough to rein in inflation, Villar said.



U.S. Appeals WTO Verdicts on Steel Tariffs

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Washington announced yesterday that it had appealed against four World Trade Organization (WTO) panel rulings faulting it for punitive tariffs imposed on steel imports from China and other countries.

It also appealed a ruling that it was flouting international trade rules by labelling imports from Hong Kong as being from China.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump's administration introduced the tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from China, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. Marking a departure from a decades-long U.S.-led drive for free trade, Trump justified the steep tariffs with claims that massive flows of imports to the United States threatened national security.

The administration of his successor, President Joe Biden, has taken a less combative tone but has stuck with the tariffs.

The expert panels the WTO set up in 2018 to settle complaints filed over the tariffs ruled last month that they were inconsistent with various articles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The panels also determined that these inconsistencies were not justified by the security exceptions provided for in the GATT, as they were not applied in a time of war or during a case of serious international tension.

U.S. Ambassador Maria Pagan criticized the rulings during a meeting of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB).

"The United States will not cede decision-making over its essential security to WTO panels," she said.

"For over 70 years, the United States has held the clear and unequivocal position that issues of national security cannot be reviewed in WTO dispute settlement," she said.

"The United States cannot support adoption of these fundamentally flawed and damaging reports," she said, announcing the U.S. decision to appeal.

Washington has also appealed a separate ruling issued last month faulting it for another decision under Trump to stop stamping products as "Made in Hong Kong", and instead labelling them as Chinese-made.

After Hong Kong filed a complaint arguing that the move ignored its status as a separate WTO member, a DSB panel ruled the U.S. shift in origins markings was "not justified" under global trade rules.

In the past, the WTO Appellate Body would have had three months to rule on any appeals filed. But the appeals tribunal — also known as the supreme court of world trade — has been frozen since late 2019, after the United States under Trump blocked the appointment of new judges and demanded a dramatic overhaul.

By filing appeals into a void, Washington has in effect blocked China's ability to move forward and request financial compensation for the US activities deemed illegal by the DSB. The issue of U.S. tariffs on Spanish olives also came up during yesterday's meeting.

In late 2021, a WTO panel ruled the steep import duties slapped on Spain's iconic agricultural export by the Trump administration in 2018 violated international trade laws and demanded that Washington rectify the situation.

The United States said yesterday it had done so, but the European Union disagreed and said it was considering the next steps to make sure the WTO ruling is respected.

U.S. Economy Logs 2.9% Growth in Q4

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The U.S. economy expanded at a faster-than-expected clip in the last quarter of 2022, driven by a solid pace of spending. Yet, momentum had slowed significantly, with higher interest rates eroding demand and widespread fears of a looming recession.

The Commerce Department's advanced fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) report on Thursday also showed growth getting a big boost from a sharp rise in inventory accumulation, some of which is likely unwanted. Business spending on equipment contracted in the fourth quarter.

It could be the last quarter of solid growth before the lagged effects of the Federal Reserve's (Fed) fastest monetary policy tightening cycle since the 1980s are fully felt. Most economists expect a recession by the second half of the year, though mild compared to previous downturns, because of extraordinary labor market strength.

Retail sales have weakened sharply over the last two months, and manufacturing looks to have joined the housing market in a recession. While the labor market remains strong, business sentiment continues to sour, which could eventually hurt hiring.

"The U.S. economy isn't falling off a cliff, but it is losing stamina and risks contracting early this year," said Sal Guatieri, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto. "That should limit the Fed to two more small rate increases in coming months."

The government said in its estimate on Thursday that GDP increased at a 2.9% annualized rate last quarter. The economy grew at a 3.2% pace in the third quarter. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast GDP would rise at a 2.6% rate.

Robust second-half growth erased the 1.1% contraction in the year's first six months. For 2022, the economy expanded by 2.1%, down from 5.9% in 2021. Last year, the Fed raised its policy rate by 425 basis points from near zero to a 4.25%-4.50% range, the highest since late 2007.

Consumer spending, which accounts for over two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, helped power growth, mainly reflecting a rebound in goods spending at the start of the quarter, mainly on motor vehicles. Consumers also spend on healthcare, housing, utilities, and personal care.

Spending has been underpinned by labor market resilience as well as excess savings accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic. After accounting for inflation, income at the disposal of households increased at a 3.3% rate after rising at a 1.0% pace in the third quarter. The saving rate rose to 2.9% from 2.7%.



U.S. to Warn Mideast Countries Over Sanctions Evasion

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. Treasury Department's top sanctions official on a trip to the Middle East next week will warn countries and businesses that they could lose U.S. market access if they do business with entities subject to U.S. curbs as Washington cracks down on Russian attempts to evade sanctions imposed over its war in Ukraine.

Brian Nelson, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, will travel to Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey from Jan. 29 to Feb. 3 and meet with government officials as well as businesses and financial institutions to reiterate that Washington will continue to aggressively enforce its sanctions, a Treasury spokesperson told Reuters.

"Individuals and institutions operating in permissive jurisdictions risk potentially losing access to U.S. markets on account of doing business with sanctioned entities or not conducting appropriate due diligence," the spokesperson said.

While in the region, Nelson will discuss Treasury's efforts to crack down on Russian efforts to evade sanctions and export controls imposed over its brutal war against Ukraine, Iran's destabilizing activity in the region, illicit finance risks undermining economic growth, and foreign investment.

The trip marks the latest visit to Turkey by a senior Treasury official to discuss sanctions, following a string of warnings last year by Treasury and Commerce Department officials, as Washington ramped up pressure on Ankara to ensure enforcement of U.S. curbs on Russia. Nelson's trip coincides with a period of strained ties between the United States and Turkey as the two NATO allies disagree over a host of issues.

Jet Fuel Prices up as Demand Jumps

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jet fuel prices have risen to levels never recorded in January as demand from China's lifting of COVID-19 travel restrictions and U.S. refinery outages, with the surge likely to continue, analysts and refining executives say.

Chinese flight activity has more than tripled



since early December to more than an average of 10,700 flights per day, according to data from flight tracking firm Airportia. Jet fuel this year will be the largest source of oil demand

growth, says the International Energy Agency, which monitors energy consumption.

This month's demand should hit 6.6 million barrels per day, the highest reading since February 2020, said Viktor Katona, an analyst at data firm Kpler.

Prices are climbing in Asia, Europe and the United States. In Singapore, jet fuel is trading around \$122.30 per barrel, up 14% in the last two weeks. Europe's price for the fuel has climbed to \$115 per tonne, the highest since June. New York spot prices were quoted on Thursday at \$2.45 above U.S. ultra-low sulfur diesel, a premium not seen at this time of the year since at least 2011.

Refining outages in the United States are feeding the price run-up. Cold weather along the U.S. Gulf Coast recently knocked out some processing plants and pushed up the premium for jet fuel, said Gary Simmons, chief commercial officer at Valero Energy.

"Overall, we expect jet demand to increase significantly this year," he told an earnings call on Thursday, as air travel continues to rise. U.S. East Coast supplies are likely to remain scarce until mid-February, he said.

A Feb. 5 European Union embargo on imports of seaborne Russian refined products will also pressure European supplies and will increase the call on U.S. refiners to fill the gap, analysts said.

U.S. jet fuel inventories ended last year at 34 million barrels, the lowest since 1990, according to U.S. government data. Total jet fuel supplied, a proxy for demand, stood at 1.56 million barrels per day in 2022, the highest since 2019.

Rising Interest Rates Have a Sting in the Tail For Europe's Banks

LONDON (Dispatches) - Rising borrowing costs are giving a long-awaited lift to Europe's beleaguered banks, but they come with a sting in the tail.

Last year central banks ended a decade of rock-bottom interest rates as the U.S. Federal Reserve and then the European Central Bank moved towards tightening.

Two of Europe's big corporate and mortgage lenders, Sweden's SEB and Spain's Sabadell, recently unveiled strong profits for 2022 as that trend helped lending lift earnings.

But while rising rates are good news for bank profits, they herald a slowdown in an economy hit by war and runaway prices that squeeze borrowers and could prick pricing bubbles, most notably in property.

"On the one hand, interest rates are going up, which is good and helps banks," said Jerome Legras of Axiom Alternative Investments. "But the economic outlook is uncertain, and risk of credit losses high."

"Investors will pay close attention to what banks say about the future because they want them to continue making payouts."

Europe's top lenders, including Switzerland's UBS, Italy's UniCredit and Dutch bank ING, will reveal how that trend is affecting them as they outline their 2022 results in the coming days.

Britain, one of the region's biggest credit markets where rates have risen the fastest in Western Europe, is a bellwether for the market.

British banks have signalled they expect profits to grow in 2023 despite the precarious economy - NatWest, one of its biggest retail lenders, expects to boost its returns on equity, a key profitability measure.

Other leading British banks HSBC, Standard Chartered and Barclays unveil their results later in February.

In the background, trouble looms.

There were 23,885 court judgments against UK businesses owing money in the last quarter of 2022, a year-on-year increase of more than half and a sign of growing distress among small firms, according to business recovery firm Begbies Traynor Group.

"It's a bit of a paradox for the banks because... they're serving customers who are struggling day to day," said Tom Merry, banking strategy consultant at Accenture.

The British property market is also wobbling. House prices slid 2.5% in the fourth quarter of last year, the biggest three-month drop since the financial crisis.

IBM to Cut 3,900 Jobs as It Reorganizes Business



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - IBM will slash some 3,900 jobs, slightly more than one per cent of its workforce, related to businesses it has divested, a source close to the matter told AFP.

The computing company based in New York state did not talk of job cuts in its quarterly earnings report published yesterday, however, nor in a call with analysts to discuss the financial results.

IBM said it would take a one-time \$300 million charge in its first quarter this year, which the source said was related to the layoffs.

This cost is "entirely related" to the spin-off of Kyndryl and the disposal of health data and analysis businesses, an IBM spokesperson told AFP.

"It is not an action based on 2022 performance or 2023 expectations," the spokesperson added.

The more than century old technology firm reported profit of US\$2.9 billion in the final three months of last year, some 17 per cent higher than the same period in 2021 despite revenue remaining flat at \$16.7 billion.

"Clients in all geographies increasingly embraced our hybrid cloud and AI solutions as technology remains a differentiating force in today's business environment," IBM chief executive officer Arvind Krishna said in an earnings release.

The company founded in 1911 announced late last year that it will invest \$20 billion in semiconductors, quantum computing and other cutting-edge technology in New York state.

Krishna unveiled the spending, which will take place over a decade, in a speech alongside U.S. President Joe Biden in the tech giant's Poughkeepsie facility.

Biden hailed the pledge from the "iconic American company" as another sign that his strategy of rebuilding the U.S. innovative edge is working.

The Democratic president has made a priority of encouraging growth in high-tech manufacturing, hoping to rebuild domestic supply chains in crucial components such as microchips that for years have been left to foreign companies based as far away as Taiwan.

17th Fajr International Poetry Festival underway

TEHRAN (IP) - The 17th Fajr International Poetry Festival is underway and will continue until Friday.

The 17th Fajr International Poetry Festival started on January 17 in a ceremony in the city of Shiraz, the birthplace of famous poets Hafez and Saadi. Reza Esmaeli, the secretary of the 17th Fajr International Poetry Festival, at the press conference on Sunday stated that the number of works was 2700 last year,

but this year it has reached 3125, which shows a 20% increase.

Esmaeli added that the festival is being held in three sections: adult poetry (classic, new, dialogue), children and teenagers, and criticism and research.

Pointing out that the judging of this festival has been done with high precision, he said: This year, the opening ceremony of this festival was held in Shiraz province, and meetings were also held in Khorasan and Lorestan.



France's Shrinking Footprint in Africa

PARIS (Dispatches) - With anti-France feelings running high in many of its former colonies in West Africa, Paris is being forced to retreat ever further from the increasingly unstable region and re-think its presence, experts say.

After the ruling junta in Mali forced French troops out last year, the army officers running neighboring Burkina Faso followed suit this week, asking Paris to empty its garrison in the next month.

Under President Emmanuel Macron, France was already drawing down its troops across the Sahel region, who just a few years ago numbered more than 5,000, backed up with fighter jets, helicopters and infantry fighting vehicles.

Around 3,000 remain, but the forced departures from Mali and Burkina Faso -- as well as the Central African Republic to the south last year -- underline how anti-French winds are gathering force.

"France is paying for its desire to maintain a very significant political and military presence in its former dominions," said Jean-Herve Jezequel, a region specialist from the International Crisis Group (ICG), a conflict-focused think tank.

After the independence movement in the 1950s and 60s, Paris still intervened regularly in the domestic affairs of its former colonies and for decades retained sway through business and political ties under an unofficial policy known as "Francafrique".

Today its influence has shrunk and it faces growing competition from Russia, but its permanent military presence and the existence of common regional currencies underpinned by the French central bank are targets for populist politicians.

"The idea that the former colonial power can retain such a strong military presence is hard to stomach for many people," Jezequel told AFP, adding that there remained a "post-colonial hangover that has not been resolved".

Gilles Yabi, founder of the Senegal-based WATHI think-tank, told AFP there was a "desire from some sections of society to enter a new phase, to grasp a 'new independence'".

The biggest source of anti-French feeling is Paris's military intervention in Mali in 2013 to beat back jihadists who were advancing from the north and threatening to overrun the government in the capital Bamako.

Though the operation was a success and the elected government saved, any credit has long since disappeared.

A heavy French presence afterwards failed to stop the insurgency spreading, with the violence spilling over into neighboring countries and now threatening communities all over the Sahel region beneath the Sahara desert.

"It is clear that it (France) has not managed to stop the continued worsening of the security crisis, which has many, many different causes," said Paul Melly, an expert on the Sahel and consulting fellow at the Chatham House, a London-based think tank.

"People say 'if they're here, what use are they?'" he said.

Social media posts and deliberate disinformation campaigns -- for which Paris blames Russia -- have also fanned exaggerated or false stories about



French exploitation of minerals and gold in the region, or even French support for jihadist groups.

Politicians, particularly army figures with no democratic legitimacy, are quick to see an opportunity.

"When you're a fragile military regime that has taken power quite recently, standing up to the French or telling them to get out is one way of keeping a bit of the base on side," Melly added.

But France-bashing is not limited to coup leaders in Mali or Burkina Faso.

In Senegal, President Macky Sall is regularly accused by his opponents of taking instructions from his "master" in Paris ahead of elections next year, with top rival Ousmane Sonko backing a reset in relations.

For the time being, France can still count on support in the region -- in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger and Chad -- where leaders still welcome the low-key presence of French troops and their firepower.

Poverty-wracked and centrally located Niger, where the United States also has a major base for special forces and drones, is likely to play an increasingly important role in hosting French troops for anti-terror operations.

But Niger President Mohamed Bazoum faces a delicate balancing act, needing to sell the benefits of French support to his sometimes sceptical population.

Melly from Chatham House said Bazoum and his ministers were "constantly giving media interviews and making local visits to say to people 'just to the northwest is Mali and to the west is Burkina Faso and both of these are bandit country now'".

"Mohamed Bazoum is taking a political risk," said Amadou Bouny Diallo, a professor at the University of Niamey in Niger's capital.

"You have to be extremely careful when people are very concerned about their own sovereignty. They won't accept everything."

West Main... FROM PAGE 1

We have not yet forgotten what happened for George Floyd, a 45-year old black man, who was beaten to death by the police force in the city of Minneapolis in the U.S. as the incident led to massive protests in the U.S. and now the story is repeated for Tyler but the question is when racism will end in this country and in the West, claiming they are pioneers of liberty and considering themselves as role models for other nations.



As long as political systems in those states and especially among the statesmen fan the flame of racist acts, one cannot expect people in the society to stop racist acts because they follow what their statesmen and establishment promotes.

So Tyler is not the last victim of racism in the U.S. and in the West, and this cycle will be repeated every now and then as long as those countries continue their racist policies and bullies of the weaker persons. Of course racism is not limited to the U.S. and some Western European states are also cradle of racist acts that sometimes we see some signs of it mostly in the streets and in the sports events.

The West claims equality of man and woman and races but when it should act they pursue the proverb of "talks the talk and walks the walk."

Boeing to Hire 10,000 Workers in 2023

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Boeing expects to hire 10,000 workers in 2023 as it recovers from the pandemic and increases jetliner production, but will trim some support jobs, the U.S. planemaker said.

The Arlington, Virginia-based company boosted overall employment by about 14,000 workers in 2022 to 156,000 as of Dec. 31, up from about 142,000 in 2021. Boeing employs about 136,000 workers in the United States.

Boeing acknowledged it will "lower staffing within some support functions" - a move meant to enable it to better align resources to support current products and technology development. It declined to comment on how many jobs it will cut in 2023.

Most of the growth will occur in Boeing's business units, as well as engineering and manufacturing, to meet airlines' growing demand.

The company plans to increase deliveries of the 737 MAX from 374 aircraft in 2022 to between 400 to 450 planes this year, with deliveries of the 787 expected to hit between 70 and 80 aircraft.

European rival Airbus (AIR.PA) said this week it plans to add 13,000 employees this year. About 7,000 of those jobs are set to be newly created positions, with about 9,000 of the new hires based in Europe.

Boeing did not comment on how many net new jobs would be created in the United States in 2023.

The U.S. planemaker is nearing pre-pandemic workforce levels, which stood at 161,000 people at the end of 2019. During 2020, the workforce fell to about 141,000 employees after Boeing announced job reductions.

China Domestic Tourism Picks Up Over Lunar New Year

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Almost a quarter more domestic Chinese tourism trips have been made during this year's Lunar New Year holiday, while cross-border travel more than doubled in the first six days of the week-long break following the end of strict COVID-19 curbs.

A total of 308 million tourism trips within China have been made during the current holiday period, up 23.1% from 2022's Lunar New Year break and marking a recovery to 88.6% of the number in 2019, data from the culture and tourism ministry showed on Friday.

China in December began dismantling its stringent zero-COVID measures after nearly three years that saw intermittent citywide lockdowns, slower economic growth and a disrupted tourism and hospitality sector. Revenue generated from domestic tourism during this year's holiday stands at 375.84 billion yuan (\$55.41 billion), or 73.1% of that in 2019, according to the tourism ministry data.

From Jan. 21 to Jan. 26, the first six days of the holiday, a total of 2.39 million trips were made out of and into China, up 123.9% compared with the Jan. 31 to Feb. 5 period last year, the National Immigration Administration (NIA) said on Friday, citing data on trips made by various means of transport.

Authorities in early January ended a requirement that inbound travellers had to undergo hotel quarantine upon arrival, a policy that had crippled international travel.

Despite the jump, international travel over the holiday period has yet to rebound to pre-COVID levels.

Israeli Forces Kill Palestinian Youth

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Israeli forces have shot and killed a young Palestinian man over an alleged shooting attempt in the northern part of the occupied West Bank, amid occupying regime's new round of violence resulting in significant escalations across the occupied territories.

The Israeli military, in a statement released before midnight on Saturday, alleged that a Palestinian man armed with a handgun was killed near the illegal Kedumim settlement.

Karam Ali Ahmad Salman, 18, was shot dead by "the Israeli occupation near the settlement of Kedumim," the Palestinian health ministry reported.

According to local Israeli officials, he was spotted on the settlement's surveillance cameras approaching Kedumim's northern neighborhood at around 11:50 p.m. local time (2150 GMT).

The security coordinator for the settlement and another guard reached the scene and purportedly spotted that the Palestinian man had pulled out a handgun.

"The guard then engaged him and shot at him, and killed him," the settlement said in a statement to residents.

There were no reports of Israeli injuries in the purported incident.

Earlier on Saturday, two illegal settlers were wounded in a shooting attack in occupied East al-Quds, a day after seven people were killed in an attack near a synagogue on the outskirts of the city.

A father, 47, and son, 23, were in serious condition with "gunshot wounds to their upper body", a spokesperson for Israel's rescue emergency response service Magen David Adom (MDA) said, after the shooting in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, near the Old City of the al-Quds.

On Thursday, the Israeli military carried out a deadly raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. Ten Palestinians were killed, including an elderly woman, following several hours of intense confrontations between dozens of Israeli soldiers and Palestinian resistance fighters.

Israeli forces launch raids on various cities of the occupied West Bank almost on a daily basis under the pretext of detaining what it calls "wanted" Palestinians. The raids usually lead to violent confrontations with residents.

Over the past months, Israel has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested.

Why Biden Pushes an Assault Weapons Ban Despite the Political Odds

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Flags are lowered, sorrowful statements are issued, pleas to lawmakers are made, again.

In the wake of two mass shootings in California this week, President Joe Biden has followed a heartfelt and familiar script of outrage and grief over gun violence in America, coupled with a renewed call for Congress to pass legislation banning assault-style weapons.

Such a ban has little chance of passing the Republican-controlled House of Representatives or the Senate, which is narrowly controlled by Democrats, political experts say.

But Biden's stubborn strategy continues: make a ban the focus of public discourse whenever a mass shooting occurs and put pressure on lawmakers who oppose one. The White House hopes to build on already strong public support for stricter gun safety laws overall, and ultimately try to pressure Republicans in Congress into changing their thinking.

Biden personally added mentions of an assault weapons ban to his planned public remarks, a White House official said.

This week, after 18 people were killed over two days in California, the president asked lawmakers to send a bill to his desk as quickly as possible.

"It's really needed badly," he told Democratic leaders at a meeting on Tuesday. "We're going to ban assault weapons again," he said on Thursday at a Lunar New Year reception at the White House, to applause.

Republican opposition has not changed.

Senator John Cornyn, a senior Republican member of the Senate Judiciary Committee who has been prominent during past gun control debates, said the California shootings had not altered the situation on Capitol Hill. "There's not going to be any further legislative action there. We pretty much exhausted the possibilities a few months ago," he told Reuters.

The White House says Biden will not give up.

"The president's strategy has been to make an assault weapons ban a winning issue so we can build a pro-gun safety Congress, and we're making progress on that," a second White House official said.

Biden's strategy may have longer-term political benefits going into the 2024 presidential election.

"I do suspect part of Biden's re-election plans over the next year is to try to contrast himself as a moderate,



centrist, pragmatic figure versus the extremes," said Dante Scala, a political science professor at the University of New Hampshire.

A decade after 20 first-graders and six adults were killed in the Sandy Hook elementary school massacre, the U.S. federal government has put few limits on weapons like the high-capacity AR-15

used in the attack, or on the estimated 400 million guns in the country. Over 150 rounds were fired in just five minutes at the school, investigators said.

The recent shootings in California, which killed 18 people, show how even the strictest state laws can be ineffective thanks to a patchwork of federal regulation.

Biden has railed against assault-style weapons for years and repeatedly throughout his presidency. He was instrumental in getting a decade-long ban passed in 1994.

As vice president, he spearheaded a set of gun control proposals for Barack Obama after Sandy Hook that included a recommendation for a new assault weapons ban. None passed Congress, opposed by Republicans and the then-powerful National Rifle Association lobby.

Last year, however, Biden signed into law the first major federal gun reform in three decades. It cracks down on overall gun sales to perpetrators of domestic violence and expands some background checks to juveniles.

These and even stricter measures have strong public support. A June Quinnipiac poll showed nearly three out of four Americans support raising the age at which a person can buy a gun to 21, and 92 percent supported background checks for all gun buyers.

However the Quinnipiac and other polls show that just about half of Americans support an assault weapons ban.

To pass one, the president would need 60 votes in the Senate - nine Republicans and all 51 Democrats and independents - and a simple majority of 218 votes in the House, which has 222 Republicans and a Republican speaker, who would have to consent to bringing a bill to the floor for a vote.

The June law won support from 14 Republicans in the House and 15 in the Senate, after mass shootings in Texas and New York killed more than 30 people, including 19 children at an elementary school.

The U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms, and that issue is a hot button one for many Republicans, and backed by millions in donations from gun rights groups and manufacturers.

Bland Shares Dubai Lead

DUBAI (Dispatches) - England's Richard Bland moved into a share of the lead at the Dubai Desert Classic on Saturday as Rory McIlroy headed to the driving range after an inconsistent round.

With heavy rain forcing a Monday finish Bland, who lost in a play-off last year, added a second straight five-under-par 67 to top the midway leaderboard with Belgium's Thomas Pieters (67) and American amateur Michael Thorbjornsen (64).

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James Jersey Sells for Whopping \$3.7m

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A game-worn jersey of basketball superstar LeBron James sold for \$3.7 million at auction, five times more than the previous record for one of his shirts.

The sale comes with interest even higher than usual in the 38-year-old LA Lakers icon as he nears the NBA's all-time scoring record.

Sotheby's in New York sold the jersey, which James wore while playing for the Miami Heat in their 2013 NBA finals game seven victory against the San Antonio Spurs.

Antetokounmpo's 41 Points Power Bucks

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo celebrated his confirmation as an NBA All-Star team captain by pouring in 41 points to propel the Bucks to a 141-131 NBA victory over the Indiana Pacers as the Memphis Grizzlies' slide continued. The Bucks scored a season-high 85 first-half points and led by as many as 33 before fending off a late Pacers rally in Indianapolis, notching a third straight victory.

Indiana had sliced the deficit to eight points with just over four minutes remaining, trying to make the most of Antetokounmpo's troubles at the free-throw line by fouling him repeatedly.

The Milwaukee star, who pulled down 12 rebounds and handed out six assists, helped fend them off by making five free throws in the space of a minute and while the Pacers got the gap to seven points with 2:06 to play they would get no closer.

Jrue Holiday scored 23 points and handed out nine assists for the Bucks.

Myles Turner led the Pacers with 24 points.

Antetokounmpo's dominant performance, including a breathtaking fourth-quarter dunk over Oshae Brissett, came a day after he was confirmed as a starter and team captain for next month's All-Star game, as the top vote-getter from the Eastern Conference.

It will be the third time the two-time NBA Most Valuable Player has had the honor, after leading teams in the mid-season exhibition in 2019 and 2020.

The Grizzlies fell 111-100 to the Minnesota Timberwolves in Minneapolis, where the game was preceded by a moment of silence to honour the memory of Tyre Nichols — the Memphis man whose fatal beating has led to murder charges against five police officers.

Anthony Edwards scored 25 points to lead the Timberwolves.

Ja Morant had a triple-double of 27 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds for Memphis, but the Grizzlies finished their road trip 0-5 on the heels of an 11-game winning streak.

Grizzlies coach Taylor Jenkins said before the game his team had been saddened by the "devastating" news emerging from Memphis about Nichols during their weeklong road trip.

"It's been hard to process," Jenkins said. "There's a lot of emotion. We can't wait to get back home to



put our arms around everyone in Memphis as they struggle with the senseless loss of life."

The death of Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man, after he was beaten by five Black officers after he was stopped on suspicion of reckless driving, sparked concern around the NBA.

The league and multiple teams as well as individual players posted statements offering condolences to Nichols's family and urging calm protest as police in Memphis released video footage yesterday of the beating.

Memphis forward Jaren Jackson Jr. addressed a tweet before the game to Nichols's family saying "my teammates and I are and have been paying attention. We are with you."

The NBA said in a statement it remained "committed to partnering with advocates, policymakers and law enforcement to work toward solutions to the issues we continue to face," the league said.

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry scored 35 points and Klay Thompson added 29 as the NBA champion Golden State Warriors pulled away late to polish off the Toronto Raptors 129-117.

Curry also handed out 11 of the Warriors' 40 assists in an entertaining shoot-out that saw the hosts finally pull away with a 31-point fourth quarter.

Jonathan Kuminga scored 15 points to lead Golden State's reserves — who outscored their Raptors counterparts 39-26.



Home Wildcards Win Australian Open Doubles Title

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Wildcard home duo Rinky Hijikata and Jason Kubler won a first Grand Slam crown with victory in the men's doubles final at the Australian Open.

The Australians did a celebratory chest bump and hugged tightly after defeating duo Hugo Nys of Monaco and Poland's Jan Zielinski 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), to the delight of the home crowd at Rod Laver Arena.

It was Hijikata and Kubler's first event as a doubles pairing and ensures that the trophy stays in home hands, having been won last year by Australians Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis.

"Rinky and I definitely didn't think this was happening two weeks ago. Bit of a pleasant surprise," said Kubler on court.

"I've got to thank Rinky, he was the reason we teamed up for this tournament. Two weeks later we've got this trophy."

Odermatt Edges Kilde in Cortina Clash of Titans

ROME (Dispatches) - Switzerland's Marco Odermatt got the better of his great Norwegian rival Aleksander Aamodt Kilde with a narrow triumph at the World Cup super-G at Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The defending World Cup crystal globe holder Odermatt had missed the past two events with a knee injury but 10 days ahead of the World Championships in France showed fearsome form.

With the mercury at minus 7 and no wind it was a fast course and Odermatt timed 1min 25.57sec over the 2.2km run, with Norway's Kilde just 0.35sec slower and local outsider Mattia Casse in third at 0.49sec.

"I really didn't expect it like that. I wasn't sure how much I could go to the limit today... I just tried to ski clean and gain confidence gate-by-gate and it worked," he said.

"I think it was a difficult course setting, and with bib 14 I could see some guys racing and that helped me really have a line in my head and to gain some confidence from watching the other guys."

Odermatt's seventh win of the season extended his lead over Kilde in both the super-G and overall standings to 48 and 213 points respectively.

The 25-year-old is also 507 points in front of Kilde's compatriot Henrik Kristoffersen in the general rankings as he attempts to retain his World Cup crown.

"It doesn't matter if he was out for a couple of days or not, as long as he can kind of get ready for those two minutes, one-and-a-half-minutes you have to go then everything is possible," said Kilde.

"And with the skiing Marco is doing now I knew he was going to be there."

Union Draw Level With Bayern

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Union Berlin climbed level on points with Bayern Munich at the top of the Bundesliga, with a 2-0 away win at derby rivals Hertha Berlin.

Union took the lead late in the first half through Dutch defender Danilho Doekhi, who headed in a free-kick from captain Christopher Trimmel.

Shiffrin One Away From Stenmark's All-Time Record



PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Mikaela Shiffrin scooped up her 85th World Cup success to leave the US ski sensation just one shy of the overall wins record held by Ingemar Stenmark.

Forging into the lead in the first leg of the slalom at Spindleruv Mlyn, Shiffrin nailed the second leg to beat German Lena Duerr by over half a second.

The Colorado-born skier is in such irrepressible form she will be favoured to draw level with Swedish icon Stenmark's tally that has stood for over 30 years in Sunday's second slalom at the Czech ski resort.

Shiffrin arrived at Spindleruv Mlyn, where she made her World Cup debut in 2011, on the back of two giant slalom wins in the space of 24 hours this week in Kronplatz.

That quick-fire double in Italy pushed the 27-year-old to within touching distance of the overall wins record of 86 held by Stenmark.

Tuesday's 83rd victory had given her the women's record for most wins on the elite circuit she had shared with retired fellow American Lindsey Vonn.

Atletico Hit out at Real Madrid Influence On Referees

MADRID (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid CEO Miguel Angel Gil Marin complained that Real Madrid's "huge influence" exerts pressure on Spanish referees after his side's Copa del Rey defeat, a suggestion dismissed by the victors.

Los Blancos beat Atletico in the cup quarter-final derby clash on Thursday night and Atletico were convinced that Dani Ceballos should have been sent off at the Santiago Bernabeu.

"I have full respect for all the officials and I am convinced they always have the best of intentions, but anyone looking in from the outside can see that for decades the same thing almost always happens," said Gil Marin in a statement.

"Unfortunately, it doesn't surprise anybody anymore, it isn't news. It's very clear and you just have to look back at history."

"Madrid are a club with a huge influence, with a lot of interests around them. They create so much pressure that it's normal that it affects the people who have to take decisions."

The officials are "aware of what awaits them if they harm them with a mistake, or even if they get something right. We often see a campaign against whoever they believe has hurt them," Gil Marin added

The Atletico boss said his club cannot change the "system" alone and that the colour of a team's shirt should not have an impact on fair decision making.

Atletico had Stefan Savic sent off in extra-time in the 3-1 defeat but were angry that Ceballos was not shown a second yellow card in the second half of the regulation 90 minutes.

"The second yellow was obvious, undoubtable," Marin insisted.



Sabalenka Wins Australian Open as Her First Grand Slam Title

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - An emotional Aryna Sabalenka said it will take a "few more days" to sink in after battling from a set down to win a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open.

The hard-hitting Belarusian collapsed to the court in tears after winning 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 against Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in a high-quality 2hr 28min arm-wrestle at Rod Laver Arena.

The 24-year-old Sabalenka wiped away tears before getting a warm hug from Moscow-born Rybakina, who played a full part in a thrilling match between two of the most powerful hitters in the women's game.

Sabalenka, the fifth seed and form player in 2023, then ran to her player's box to celebrate with her team.

"Thank you, my team, the craziest team on the tour. We've been through a lot of, I would say, downs last year," Sabalenka said, addressing her team after receiving the trophy.

Turning to beaten 22nd seed Rybakina, she added: "You're such a great player and of course we are going to have many more battles, hopefully in finals of the Grand Slams."

Asked by reporters if it was the greatest match she had ever played, Sabalenka said: "I would say it was. She played unbelievable tennis."

"I fought so hard to win this one. I think the tennis was great... I really enjoyed this battle."

Sabalenka will now rise to second in the world rankings behind Poland's Iga Swiatek, equalling her career high, having triumphed in her first Grand Slam final.

The finale was a captivating match of brutal groundstrokes, precision serving and wonderful rallies from two players at the top of their game.

It was a fitting end to two weeks of drama and shocks at Melbourne Park.

"I need a few more days to realise what just happened," Sabalenka told Australia's Channel Nine.

"Oh my god, I'm speechless, to be honest."

