

Health Ministry Announced on Sunday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to **144,757** With **One** More Iranian Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

IRAN NEWS

TEDPIX, the Main Index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Lost 17,059 Points to 1.54m on Sunday and as Reported, Over 9.551b Securities Worth 57.164 Trillion Rials (About \$143m) Were Traded at the TSE

VOL. XXVIII, No. 7705 TEHRAN Price 50,000 Rials

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Leader Pardons, Commutes Sentences of Large number of Prisoners Arrested in Riots

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei pardoned or commuted the sentences of a large number of Iranian prisoners arrested during the recent foreign-backed riots in the country.

The Leader on Sunday agreed to a request by Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei to pardon or reduce the sentences of inmates subject to mitigating circumstances.

Ayatollah Khamenei issued the approval on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution, which put an end to the ruling of the US-backed Pahlavi regime in the country in 1979, and the birthday anniversary of the first Shia Imam, Imam Ali (AS).

The prisoners, who were granted clemency, had had their verdicts issued at courts of common pleas and Islamic Revolution tribunals, the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces, and the State Discretionary Punishment Organization.

The official amnesty request was approved in line with the implementation of the 11th paragraph of the Constitution's Article 110, which grants the Leader the right to pardon or reduce the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from the head of the Judiciary.

The Leader regularly issues such verdicts on the occasion of religious festivities.

Shamkhani to Visit Moscow Next Week

TEHRAN (IP) - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) will visit Russia next week, Russian special presidential envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov told Sputnik.

"Yes, he is coming. The event will be under the auspices of the [Russian] Security Council," Kabulov said, according to Sputnik.

Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani will participate in the multilateral meeting of secretaries of the security councils on the Afghan issue, the envoy specified, adding that this is a planned event that has been long overdue.

When asked whether there are any plans to discuss the situation in Iran, after the recent drone attack in the province of Isfahan, Kabulov said that to his knowledge this issue is not on the agenda.

The last round of multilateral consultations of secretaries of the security councils on the Afghan issue took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in May 2022, with the participation of representatives from India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

U.S., Europeans Urged to Prove Commitment To JCPOA

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's chief negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani says Tehran is a claimant in talks on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the United States and the European countries have reneged on their commitments under the deal.

Bagheri Kani, who also serves as deputy foreign minister for political affairs, said it was the United States and its European allies that should prove their commitment to the agreement and make up for their mistakes as soon as possible. He made the remarks during an interview with Press TV's Insight program on Saturday.

"As of now, we are the claimant and the other sides are the Americans. They are the ones who should show their commitment in practice if they want to return to the JCPOA, as they say, and show their commitment to the agreement and the same goes for the Europeans. It is the Europeans who proved their non-adherence to our nation through various excuses during the period when the US withdrew from the JCPOA."

The senior diplomat went on to say the experience of the JCPOA has taught Iran not to rely on foreigners and move forward on its own without waiting for the deal to achieve its goals.

Bagheri Kani said the US and its European allies have proved so far that when it comes to their interests, they don't "honor their promises" and pay no attention to moral principles.

Iran has always adhered to its commitments within the framework of the JCPOA and expects the other parties to the deal to adhere to their commitments as well, he added.

Bagheri Kani said Iran will not be indifferent to the other parties' non-compliance but will not disrupt the process of reviving the agreement either. He also said Tehran is still seriously following the sanctions-removal talks and hopes the efforts will bear fruit.

Iran and the five remaining parties to the JCPOA resumed talks in Vienna on November 29, 2022 after a five-month pause, marking the first round of negotiations under President Ebrahim Raisi's administration and the seventh overall.

The Islamic Republic maintains that its presence at the talks is intended to have the US sanctions removed, which would, in turn, secure a US return to the nuclear deal.

The U.S., which is not allowed to directly participate in the talks as a result of its 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA, claims it is willing to undo the withdrawal and repeal its "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

Iran argues that the onus is on Washington to return to the nuclear deal after removing its illegal sanctions and offering guarantees that it will not exit the pact again.

Iranian Firms Sign \$900m Deal To Develop Offshore Gas Field

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company (IOEC) and Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) signed a deal worth \$900 million on Saturday to cooperate in developing the country's Kish gas field, Shana reported.

Held on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the signing ceremony was attended by senior officials including Oil Minister Javad Owji, Head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr as well as the heads of the signatory firms.

Kish gas field is one of Iran's largest gas fields whose in-place reserves are estimated at 56 trillion cubic feet; when fully developed, the field will have the capacity to produce 120 million cubic meters of gas per day.

As the biggest gas project in the country after South Pars, the Kish gas field's development plan is prepared in four phases and will take 14 months to complete.

With the implementation of this project, which includes the construction of a 200-kilometer submarine pipeline from Kish Island to Assaluyeh by Iran Marine Engineering and Construction Company and the completion of 14 wells by Iran's National Drilling Company (NIDC), over 28.3 million cubic meters per day of natural gas and 11,300 barrels per day of gas condensate will be produced and transferred from Kish Island to the refineries of South Pars Gas Complex (SPGC) in Assaluyeh.

Kish Gas Field is a giant gas field close to Kish Island in the Persian Gulf. It is one of the NIOC's recent discoveries which was discovered in 2006. The field also holds at least one billion barrels of condensate of which at least 331 million barrels are recoverable.

ViewPoint

By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

IAEA a Tool For Extortion

For decades the West has tried to increase pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran to bring it down by different tools and any means and in recent years the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has turned into a major tool of the West for putting pressure on Tehran and every now and then the issue of human rights violation is raised by the West against Tehran.

Apparently, the IAEA has turned into a tool for extortion by the West which is used against the Islamic Republic of Iran and whenever the West feels weak against Tehran in different fields, it suddenly turns to the IAEA to play in favor of them against Tehran for getting concessions but Tehran so far has responded to all tricks of the West with prudent moves and it will not let the West use the IAEA for achieving its vicious goals.

On Friday, Iran's nuclear chief once again warned that the "unprofessional and unacceptable" behavior of the UN nuclear watchdog's Director General Rafael Grossi would harm his reputation and that of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Mohammad Eslami, who heads the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), made the remarks in an interview with the Iranian state TV on Friday after the International Atomic Energy Agency's chief in a Wednesday report accused Iran of making an undeclared change to the interconnection between the two clusters of advanced machines enriching uranium to up to 60% purity at its Fordow plant. He said Iran objects to the political issues dictated by Grossi and has written a "letter to the agency that an inspector... who has inspected our facilities, has made a mistake and given an incorrect report."

"But yet again the agency's director general released this issue to the media," the AEOI chief said.

"This is an unprofessional and unacceptable attitude and we hope that this practice will not continue... because this is not acceptable for his reputation and that of the agency," Eslami said.

Back in November, Iran sent a letter to the IAEA informing it of a decision to start enriching uranium to the purity level of 60% at its Fordow nuclear facility.

Moreover, Iran has fitted and launched new centrifuges at two empty halls in Fordow and Natanz nuclear sites. The halls, under Iran's commitment to the terms of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), had been vacant but centrifuges have been installed there once again.

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Iran to Revamp Venezuela's Largest Refinery Soon

CARACAS (Dispatches) - State firms from Iran and Venezuela will start in the coming weeks a revamp of the South American nation's largest refining complex to restore its crude distillation capacity.

Reuters quoted four sources close to the plan on Friday saying that the effort by state oil firm Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) and the state-owned National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) to boost fuel output at the Paraguana Refining Center marks a step toward ending Venezuela's reliance on US refinery technology.

The two sides are expected to ink in the coming weeks a 460-million-euro contract to overhaul the 955,000-bpd Paraguana refinery complex on the coast of western Venezuela.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian arrived in Caracas on Friday and met Venezuela's oil minister Tarek El Aissami.

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U.S. Support for Israel Means Support for State Terrorism

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Member of Iran's Guardian Council Abbas Ali Kadkhodae criticized the U.S. State Department spokesman for backing the Israeli regime, saying, that means support for "state terrorism." Kadkhodae, who is a jurist at the 12-member Guardian Council made the comment on his twitter page. He said that sustainable peace and security in West Asia region will be achieved only after the US ends its support for the Israeli regime, adding

that Washington's support also means opposition to Palestinians' right to decide their fate.

"Sustainable peace and security, as the main ideal of the UN Charter, will be achieved in the region only after the U.S. ends its costly support of the terrorist regime of Israel. StateDeptSpox support of this regime means opposition to the right of the innocent Palestinian people to decide their fate and support of state terrorism," the tweet said.

FM Dismisses Unilateralism as Obsolete Doctrine on Global Stage

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has dismissed unilateralism as an obsolete doctrine in the face of unfolding developments across the globe.

Amirabdollahian made the remarks during a meeting with Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz in Havana late on Saturday.

He rejected unilateralism as an outdated and behind-the-times approach, which cannot respond to the developments and great changes that are taking place worldwide.

Also maintaining the need to enhance Tehran's relations with Cuba in various fields, Amirabdollahian said that the Islamic Republic is fairly determined to promote political relations with the Central American state, describing the economic cooperation between the two countries as extensive and outstanding.

Cabrisas Ruiz, for his part, discussed the economic relations between Cuba and Iran and called for facilitating and expanding trade interactions.

In an early Sunday meeting with his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, the two diplomats condemned the unilateral sanctions and foreign interference and exchanged viewpoints for closer interaction between the two countries in international organizations.

Amirabdollahian also rapped the United States' policy of imposing sanctions against other countries, including the Islamic Republic and several



South American countries, saying such a policy is doomed to fail.

"The United States' policy of [imposing] unilateral sanctions [on other countries] and bullying is doomed to fail," Iran's top diplomat made the remark in an early Sunday meeting with his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, in Havana.

Amirabdollahian also condemned Washington's interventions in Cuba's internal affairs and its attempt to stoke unrest in the Central American country on July 11, 2022. "The U.S. and some [other] Western countries pursue the hybrid policy of [imposing] sanctions and intervention [in other countries' affairs] through stoking and encouraging riots in independent countries of the world," Iran's foreign minister said.

Amirabdollahian said while the ties between Iran and Cuba are founded upon strong and historical pillars and both nations enjoy perfect political relations, they share common views and purposes in defending their independence and countering unilateralism.

The Iranian foreign minister went on to condemn foreign interference in Cuba's internal affairs and Washington's role in the anti-government rallies that rocked the island country in July 2021, saying, "The US and a number of Western countries are pursuing the policy of imposing sanctions and at the same time interference by creating and fueling riots in the independent states."

For his part, Rodriguez described the expansion of relations with Iran as a top priority for Cuba.

He also denounced unilateral sanctions and foreign interference in the domestic affairs of others, expressing gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for supporting Cuba.

President Urges Resolving Khoy People Problems With All Possible Means

KHOY (IP) - The president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who visited the earthquake-hit areas of Khoy, said that the problems of the earthquake-hit people should be resolved with all possible means.

An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.9 on the 28th of January shook the West Azerbaijan province of Iran; The epicenter of this earthquake was announced as 23 kilometers southeast of Khoy city with a population of 175,000.

According to the latest statistics, three people died and more than 1000 people were injured in this earthquake.

Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, upon his arrival at the Vali Asr emergency camp, expressed his sympathy with the people and said: "I have personally come to check your situation in the field so that we can solve the problems as soon as possible." »

He pointed out that he has received continuous reports on the condition of the earthquake-affected people from the first vice president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the ministers present in the region and the provincial officials, and added that the problems in the area must be solved quickly so that the people do not face more problems.

The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the people of the area should patiently put the rumors behind them and not pay attention to these rumors aimed at filling the hearts of the people with fear and stress.

Stating that the people of Khoy have always been with the revolution and the Islamic Republic system and have offered many martyrs to the revolution, Raisi said, the people of this area are sincere and friendly, and the government and officials also consider it their duty to help these people.

The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran also praised the efforts of the people of the area, IRGC, Basij (voluntary forces), Red Crescent, and all the relief and jihad forces on the sidelines of visiting the earthquake victims.



Observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day at the Embassy of Pakistan

TEHRAN - To commemorate the Kashmir Solidarity Day, the

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Kashmiri people and resolve the Kashmir Dispute as per the charter

Embassy of Pakistan in Tehran organized a seminar on Sunday to express support of Pakistani government and the nation for the Kashmiri people in their just struggle against the continued Indian illegal occupation of Jammu & Kashmir. Members of Pakistani community including students, media persons and senior officers of Embassy participated in the event.

On the occasion, the messages from the President, Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan were readout.

In his remarks, the Ambassador of Pakistan in Tehran, H.E., Rahim Hayat Qureshi, highlighted that for the past more than seven decades, Kashmiris are victims of India's state sponsored terrorism, including gross and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which have further intensified under the BJP-RSS combine "Hindu Rashtra" project, under which sinister anti-Kashmiri policies are also being pursued to change the demographic composition of the occupied territory. H.E., condemned the ongoing Indian Army's action of illegal possession of agricultural land and residential areas in any part of IIOJK, after declaring them as "strategic". H.E., Ambassador reiterated Pakistan's call to the world leaders, international community including the United Nations, and all human rights organizations to urge India to halt the brute use of force against the innocent



Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi and Syed Hassan Reza Naqvi addressing a Seminar to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day in Tehran on 05.02.2023

speeches, condemned the continuing atrocities and gross human rights violations being committed by the Indian occupation forces in IIOJK.

At the end, a special prayer was held for the alleviation of sufferings of innocent Kashmiris and for their freedom from barbaric and illegal Indian rule.

Daily Violators of Human Rights Are Fake Rights Advocates

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry has slammed the double standards of those who claim to defend human rights.

In a post on his Twitter account on Saturday, Nasser Kan'ani underscored the crimes of Israel against the Palestinians in the occupied territories in 2022.

He quoted Palestine's Health Ministry as saying that the Israeli regime, as the US strategic ally and the European Union's partner in West Asia, killed 224 Palestinians, including 53 kids and injured 10,500 while targeting aid workers and ambulances 171 times in 2022.

"Daily violators of human rights are fake rights advocates," the Iranian spokesman said.

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.

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

Health Ministry Seeking Medical Justice

TEHRAN (IP) - Deputy Health Minister says 2,300 physicians were dispatched to the deprived parts of the country to meet the people's need for medical services.

Saeed Karimi held a presser to talk about the ministry's measures and achievements so far for the medical prosperity of the Iranian people.

Karimi said: "2,300 doctors were distributed in deprived areas; if we count the different quotas, we will need 2,800 doctors, so that the people could have fair access to specialist doctors."

He exemplified the cochlear implant as one of the services saying that nearly 32,000 people were awaiting the implant, a number which now has reached Zero and for free.

Incurable patients' fund was another service Karimi referred to and said that 5 thousand billion tomans were deposited into the fund; the fund has started working and the patients who should be covered by the fund will be identified.

The fund formerly covered 4 to 5 special diseases, but now it serves 44 ones, and we are determined to increase the number to 100.

48k Non-Iranian Kids Got Measles, Polio Vaccines

ZAHEDAN (IRNA) - Iranian healthcare workers have injected non-Iranian children in Zahedan, the capital city of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, with more than 23,000 measles and rubella vaccines as well as 25,000 booster polio vaccines.

Mahmoud Fatemi, the head of the Healthcare Center of Zahedan, told IRNA on Sunday that the vaccination project was implemented by numerous healthcare personnel in 53 urban and 45 rural healthcare centers of Zahedan county from December 31, 2022, to January 31, 2023.

The vaccination project was held in cooperation with the infectious disease management center of the Ministry of Health as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Fatemi noted.

The organizers of the project also held 11 training workshops for healthcare staff and students, he added.

Imam Khomeini's Ideals Should Be Kept Alive

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Majlis Speaker stressed that the ideals of Imam Khomeini (RA) should be kept alive and put into practice.

Iran's Parliamentarians renewed their allegiance with the ideals of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran by attending the late Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum.

Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Iranian lawmakers also paid visits to the tombs of the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution and the war and renewed their allegiance with these loved ones.

In his speech delivered in the Mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Qalibaf emphasizing the continuance of the path of martyrs and Imam Khomeini (RA), said: Imam Khomeini was the Imam of all people and today he is the Imam of those who in practice, take steps to support the oppressed."

Qalibaf added: "Imam Khomeini (RA) led the revolution while he was exiled with will and support and attention to the deprived and oppressed."

He also said: "Today, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution is advancing the path of Imam Khomeini (RA) with all His Eminence's might."

Qalibaf pointed out: "Today, in the hybrid and tough military war, the enemy only pursues and targets the distance between Imam Khomeini (RA) and the Ummah."

Kyrgyzstan President, FM Due in Iran in Coming Days

TEHRAN (MNA) - President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov and the Kyrgyz Foreign Minister are set to visit to Iran in the coming days, Iranian envoy to Bishkek Saeed Kharrazi said on Sunday.



Iran is ready to interact and cooperate with Kyrgyzstan in all fields, Kharrazi said, adding that there are no limits for Tehran to cooperate with Bishkek.

Saying that the holding of the 13th Iran-Kyrgyzstan joint economic commission is on the agenda, the Iranian envoy announced that 10 documents are scheduled to be signed during the meeting.

Kharazzi also mentioned that during a phone talk between the Iranian chief of armed forces and the Kyrgyz defense minister, the Iranian side expressed its willingness to maintain military relations with Bishkek.

He also expressed hope that Tehran and Bishkek will boost their ties in the field of transportation, adding that the volume of trade between the two countries has increased in recent years.

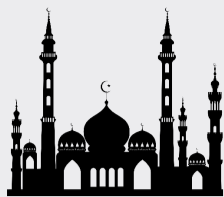
West Seeks to Eliminate Religion

TEHRAN (IP) - The representative of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Syria, explaining the causes of Islamophobia and Iranophobia in Western society, emphasized: "The West seeks to remove the effects of religion from life and society."

Hamid Safar Harandi said: "Until now, Westerners used to separate religion from politics (separation of church and state), but now, Westerners are looking to remove religion from their countries."

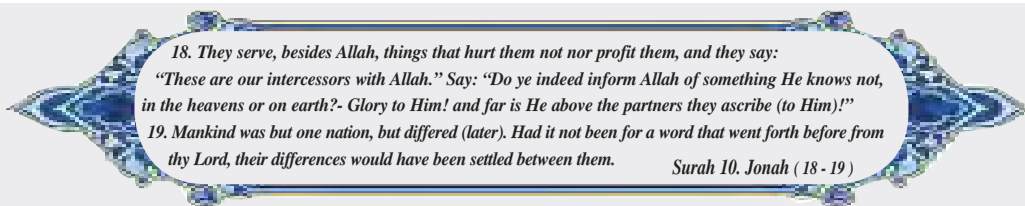
Referring to the serious clash between Western civilization and Islamic civilization in recent years, Safar Harandi added: "Western civilization is now seeking to eliminate God because its foundation is based on materialism and not on religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and other divine religions."

Safar Harandi stated: "Westerners were looking for secularism before, but now they are looking to destroy all religious monuments in their countries. In the West, now, under the pretext of freedom of speech, the Bible is insulted."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:55
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:34
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:59



Iran Joins Club of Sponge Coke Producers

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Javad Owji said Iran has joined the 6 countries that possess the know-how of producing sponge coke in the world.

Addressing reporters in the southern province of Hormuzgan on Saturday, Owji said Hormozgan Province is the country's oil product refining hub, and with the construction of Shahid Qassem Soleimani and Morvarid Makran refineries, the refining capacity of this province will reach 1,800,000 per day.

Following the inauguration of the bitumen production and storage plant of Jey Oil Company, and the start of the operation to improve the quality of heavy products of the Bandar Abbas oil refinery, Owji said: "Today, more than \$3 billion worth of oil projects will be launched in the province."

He further pointed out that in the upstream part of the development of the Esfand and Sivand oil fields, 16,000 barrels will be put into operation, and added: "With the use of this project, in which about \$110 million have been invested, the volume of oil production in the country will increase."

The oil minister pointed to the operation of Jey Oil Company's bitumen production and storage plant with an annual production capacity of 600,000 tons, and continued: "Also, the development of this company's jetty in the field of oil products export and import will also be put into operation during this visit."

Owji further underlined the capacity of 350,000 barrels of product production in Bandar Abbas oil refinery, from which 130,000 barrels of furnace oil are produced, saying: "The Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) has acquired the savvy to produce sponge coke bringing Iran to the club of the only 6 countries that enjoy the technology."

He stated that the plan to improve the quality of heavy products of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery with €2.2 billion investment as the first sponge coke unit in the country is



implemented with the technical knowledge of RIPI. This project creates jobs for 8,000 people. The minister announced signing of a contract for the first phase of the development of the Kish gas field, on which 14 wells have been drilled and will be completed, and stated: "Today, with the execution of this contract, the implementation of the construction of the 210-km pipeline from the Kish field to the Asalouye phases 6, 7 and 8 refineries will begin, and in total, this project will be implemented with an investment of \$900 million by the Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company."

He pointed to the daily processing of 800,000 barrels of crude oil in Hormozgan Province, and stated: "This province is the hub of refining oil products in the country, and with the construction of Shahid Qassem Soleimani and Marwarid Makran refineries, the refining capacity of this province will reach 1,800,000 barrels per day."

The oil minister expressed hope that the gas pipeline from Minab to Sarvak will be put into operation by the end of the current Iranian calendar year which began on March 21 and from Sarvak to Jask by the end of the next calendar year to March 2024.

Regarding the social responsibility of the Ministry of Petroleum in Hormozgan Province, Owji said: "The Ministry of Petroleum has planned Rls. 11,000 billion for the construction of a hospital and the development of roads and watersheds, and today a memorandum of understanding with the governor will be signed by the Oil Ministry to cover the costs of these projects."

Iranian, Spanish Companies To Hold Webinar

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran-Spain Joint Chamber of Commerce is to hold a webinar for Iranian and Spanish companies on Feb13-15 in the field of cosmetics and hygienic products, wireless and radio system and fertilizer.



According to the reports, in this three-day webinar, participating companies exchange views on trade in the field of wireless and radio system, cosmetics and hygienic products and fertilizers.

Iranian companies have been invited to attend this webinar which is aimed at boosting trade between Iran and Spain.

Emphasis on Providing Infrastructures Concurrent With Creating Mining, Industrial Units



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of board of directors of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company in a meeting for reviewing developmental projects of Sarmad Abarkooh Iron and Steel Complex emphasized the significance of developing steel chain projects in the country.

Dr Mahmoud Salehi said that developing industry in any region can have advantages and problems for the people that some of the consequences are inevitable but in case of proper prediction and provision of infrastructures like water, electricity, road, gas and social and cultural integrity, it will not only prevent problems but also lead to sustainable development and improvement of the business.

Salehi also said that agility in companies is of the main factors for increasing productivity and output of production, adding that improving the capability and knowledge of human forces existing in any company is logical and preferred over hiring forces and increasing the number of the personnel.

He went on to say that so employing quality forces is the most important factor for the growth of a production structure. Salehi then hailed and honored the efforts of managers, staff and workers of the company in the current year in line with improving productivity and profitability of the company.

In the meeting, the CEO of Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company Eng. Taherzadeh briefed the participants of the performance of Sarmad Abarkooh Company as one of the subsidiaries of Chadormalu Company and later the CEO of Sarmad Abarkooh Company explained the projects of the company for its development and said that fortunately, the stages of operationalization of the project for construction of a 600,000-ton steel ingot plant of the company is under way after a hiatus and it has progressed 33% physically.

He then added that the project for construction of the one-million-ton sponge iron production plant is also underway and it goes well.

Export, Import Terminal of Shahid Rajaei Port Launched

TEHRAN (IP) - Sepahan Oil Company's export and import terminal at Shahid Rajaei Port was put into operation on Saturday by video conference with the order of the Minister of Petroleum.

The export and import terminal of Sepahan Oil Company's Shahid Rajaei Port has a storage capacity of 35,400 cubic meters of the oil products of Sepahan and the export of various oils, which was implemented with an investment of \$11 million.

Increasing the possibility of bulk storage and export, creating the ability to import base oil in bulk, increasing logistics power and developing capabilities, the ability to load larger vessels, the ability to perform blending operations and tanks, the ability to produce marine oils as a product, and the ability to load flexi and iso tanks for all types of stored products are among the benefits of launching the terminal.

On Saturday, during the one-day visit of the Minister of Petroleum, Javad Owji, to Hormozgan province, southern Iran, simultaneously with the auspicious days of the Fajr decade, the production and bitumen storage plant of Jey Oil Company and the plan to maintain and increase the production of Esfand and Sivand oil fields were put into operation.

Iran, Zimbabwe Confer on Expansion of Ties

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Zimbabwe is grateful for any help and support by Iran in transferring knowledge, energy, engineering and other fields, said the Zimbabwean Foreign Minister.

Iran's Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, Sowlat Mortazavi warmly received Zimbabwe's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Frederick Musiwa Makamure Shava in Tehran.

Makamure Shava said: "To resolve the economic challenges and bring economic stability to the country, efforts have been made by Zimbabwe aiming to reach broader objectives."

He noted that Zimbabwe counts on mutual ties with Iran, stressing the country will definitely enjoy bilateral friendly ties with Iran.

He emphasized the importance of Iran-Zimbabwe cooperation when the two countries have been under cruel sanctions, noting that is necessary to confront the unilateral policies regarding the sanctions.

"Iran is experienced in neutralizing the sanctions, and we can enjoy those experiences," the African foreign minister told the Iranian minister of labor.

Cultivation, export of machinery, sale of petrochemical products and technical-engineering services are existing capacities in bilateral relations, he added.

He reiterated the importance of cooperation with Iran in the fields of agriculture, and health and facilitating imports of Iranian drugs into the Zimbabwean market and using Iran's experiences in



various fields, including the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, energy and science. Harare, Tehran emphasize eliminating dollar from economic ties

Iran's Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Minister also emphasized that the dollar should be eliminated from the economic relations between the two countries.

Sowlat Mortazavi said in his meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe: "Like Iran, Zimbabwe is affected by the U.S. imposed cruel sanctions, so we must expand all-round cooperation."

He said that the current level of commercial and economic relations is not satisfactory, and the two countries should use their capacities to reach the level of relations of at least 500 million dollars per year.

He stated that the meeting will provide a platform for developing economic cooperation and improving the level of trade exchanges between the two countries, adding that Iran is ready to share its experiences in various fields with Zimbabwe.

The 9th meeting of the Joint Economic Cooperation Commission of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Zimbabwe, hosted by the Iranian Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare, kicked off earlier on February 2, 2023, Thursday.

The closing ceremony of the Ninth Meeting of the Joint Economic Cooperation Committee of Iran and Zimbabwe will be held at Evin Hotel in the Iranian capital city of Tehran on Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023.

Exports From Mining Sector Surpassed \$9.9b in 10 Months

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran exported 35.5 million tons of minerals and mining products worth \$9.963 billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-January 20, 2023).

The Islamic Republic exported 39.148 million tons of such products during the said 10 months, registering a three-percent rise in terms of weight.

Steel and steel products were the top exported commodities in this sector, followed by copper and its byproducts, aluminum and related items, as well as other downstream products.

The exports from the mentioned sector stood at \$864 million in the 10th calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2022-January 20, 2023), 30 percent less than the figure for the previous month.

IME Posts Higher Records in Weekly Trade

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,846,645 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$972m, posting growths of 36% in volume and 20% in value of trades compared to the figures of the previous week.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 2,363,286 tons of commodities valued at more than \$693m.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,027,702 tons of cement, 720,000 tons of iron ore, 636,279 tons of steel, 28,800 tons of zinc, 10,705 tons of aluminum, 7,870 tons of copper and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 411,505 tons of commodities worth more than \$243m.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 108,813 tons of polymeric products, 99,494 tons of bitumen, 94,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 43,000 tons of lube cut, 39,453 tons of chemicals, 23,680 tons of sulfur, 4,242 tons of base oil, 604 tons of petroleum products and 200 tons of insulation.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 50,043 tons of commodities traded on it.



Thermal Power Plants' Generation Capacity Exceeds 73,500 MW

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's thermal power plants' electricity generation capacity has exceeded 73,500 megawatts (MW), an official with the country's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) announced.

Mohammad Ramezani, the head of the company's projects development department, made the remarks mentioning the inauguration of a thermal power plant unit in Ardebil Province in northwestern Iran.

Ramezani had earlier said there are currently 604 thermal units active in 134 power plants across the country.

According to the official, the private sector currently operates 396 power plants that account for 68 percent of the electricity generated by all thermal power plants in the country.

"Currently, the capacity of the country's power plants, including thermal, hydroelectric, renewable, diesel, small-scale and nuclear, has reached about 90,000 megawatts, of which 81 percent is related to thermal power plants," the official said in late December 2022.

Increasing the country's power generation capacity and preventing blackouts during peak consumption periods have been among the Energy Ministry's top priorities since the current government administration took office in August 2021.

Pakistan Blocks Wikipedia Over Blasphemous Content

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Wikipedia was blocked in Pakistan after authorities censored the website for hosting "blasphemous content" in the latest blow to digital rights in the deeply conservative nation.

Blasphemy is a sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, and social media giants Facebook and YouTube have previously been banned for publishing content deemed sacrilegious.

The online encyclopaedia had been blocked across the country on Friday "after it failed to respond to our repeated correspondence over removal of the blasphemous content and meet the deadline", Malahat Obaid, a spokesman for the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, told AFP on Saturday.



Thirteen Dead in Chile Forest Fire

SANTIAGO (Dispatches) - Chile has declared a state of disaster in several central-southern regions after a devastating heat wave sparked forest fires that left at least 13 people dead, authorities said.

More than 100 homes have been affected and 47,000 hectares of forest destroyed since the fires broke out on Wednesday. "We have to announce that there are 13 deaths in total, 11 in the Santa Juana municipality," head of the Senaprad national disaster agency Mauricio Tapia said.

Two crew members of a helicopter that was fighting the fires died in a crash Friday afternoon, Chile's agriculture minister Esteban Valenzuela said.



Ukraine, Russia Swap Prisoners



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine and Russia traded almost 200 prisoners of war in a swap announced separately by both sides, with the bodies of two British volunteers also being sent back to Ukraine.

The Ukrainian president's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said 116 Ukrainians had been returned, while Russian news agencies cited Moscow's defence ministry saying 63 Russian POWs had been freed.

"We managed to return 116 of our people, defenders of Mariupol, partisans from Kherson, snipers from the Bakhmut (front) and other heroes of ours," Yermak wrote on Telegram.

Yermak also said the bodies of British volunteer aid workers Andrew Bagshaw and Chris Parry had been sent back to Ukraine.

Bagshaw and Parry were killed during an attempted humanitarian evacuation in eastern Ukraine in January, Parry's family has previously said.

Russia's Defence Ministry said the released Russian servicemen included "sensitive category" persons, whose exchange was made possible through the mediation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to agencies.

Meanwhile former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has said the supply of more advanced US weaponry to Ukraine will only trigger more retaliatory strikes from Russia, up to the extent of Russia's nuclear doctrine.

"All of Ukraine that remains under Kyiv's rule will burn," journalist Nadana Fridrikhson quoted him as saying in a written interview with her.

Fridrikhson asked Medvedev, who as deputy chairman of the Security Council has become one of Russia's most hawkish pro-war figures since its invasion of Ukraine, whether the use of longer-range weapons might force Russia to negotiate with Kyiv.

"The result will be just the opposite," Medvedev replied, in comments that Fridrikhson posted on her Telegram channel.

"Only moral freaks, of which there are enough both in the White House and in the Capitol, can argue like that."

The Pentagon said on Friday that a new rocket that would double Ukraine's strike range was included in a US\$2.175 billion US military aid package.

With the first anniversary of the invasion approaching on February 24, Russian forces have been on the back foot for the last eight months, and do not fully control any of the four Ukrainian provinces that Moscow has unilaterally declared part of Russia.

President Vladimir Putin casts Russia's campaign in Ukraine as an existential defense against an aggressive West and has, like Medvedev, several times brandished the threat of a nuclear response, saying Russia will use all available means to protect itself and its people.

Asked what would happen if the weapons that Washington has promised Ukraine were to strike Crimea - which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014 - or deep into Russia, Medvedev said Putin had addressed the matter clearly.

"We don't set ourselves any limits and, depending on the nature of the threats, we're ready to use all types of weapons. In accordance with our doctrinal documents, including the Fundamentals of Nuclear Deterrence," he said. "I can assure you that the answer will be quick, tough and convincing."

China Balloon Soaring Over U.S. Deflates Hopes for Diplomatic Thaw

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The political uproar over a suspected Chinese spy balloon drifting over the United States did not just derail a planned visit to Beijing by the top U.S. diplomat, it also threatens to upset attempts by both countries to steady an increasingly rocky relationship.

The reaction in the United States to what appears to be an ill-timed spying mission will have lingering consequences for efforts to stabilize ties - already near historic lows. Some U.S. lawmakers are demanding that President Joe Biden, a Democrat, hold China to account for what officials are calling an unacceptable violation of U.S. sovereignty.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who postponed a trip that was to begin on Friday, said he would be prepared to visit Beijing "when conditions allow," but the administration could be hard pressed to quickly revive the trip short of China offering up serious gestures of goodwill, policy analysts said.

Daniel Russel, the top U.S. diplomat for Asia under then-President Barack Obama, said China's "laughable alibi" that the aircraft was an errant weather balloon, didn't help. "This incident has soured the atmosphere and hardened

positions and there's no guarantee the two sides can successfully resurrect the 'Bali' momentum," Russel said, referring to the November meeting between Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Indonesia where they agreed to increase communications.

Ties between the superpowers have frayed over the past few years and sank to their worst in decades last August, when then U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, prompting Beijing to conduct military drills near the Chinese-claimed island.

Since then, the Biden administration has said it hopes to build a "floor" for the relationship and ensure that rivalry does not spiral into conflict.

But Republicans who control the House are already working on ways to investigate potential threats from the United States' top geopolitical rival and have been quick to put heat on Biden about the balloon, questioning how it was allowed into U.S. airspace.



ASEAN Ministers Urge Myanmar Junta to Implement Agreed Peace Plan

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - Southeast Asian ministers at the end of two-day talks in Indonesia urged Myanmar's junta to implement a five-point peace plan agreed two years ago to create a path towards ending the country's political crisis.

Indonesia -- Southeast Asia's biggest economy -- is the chair of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2023 and will host the bloc's annual leaders' meetings later this year.

But the ministerial meeting in Jakarta has been overshadowed by the situation in Myanmar, which has been in turmoil since the army seized power in February 2021. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Jakarta proposed an implementation plan to ASEAN members for the "five-point consensus" agreed with the junta in April 2021 that called for an end to violence and dialogue between the military and rebels.

"Broad support was received from all member states to this plan," she told reporters at the end of talks, without providing details of when and how they hoped the agreement would be implemented.

"This plan is very important for ASEAN, in particular the chair, as a guidance to address the situation in Myanmar in a united manner. It shows a strong unity of ASEAN members to implement the 5PC."

The junta remains an ASEAN member but the bloc barred it from top-level summits over its failure to implement the plan that aims to achieve peace between the military and Myanmar's anti-coup movement.

Myanmar's foreign minister Than Swe -- appointed this week -- was not present at the ASEAN talks Friday, the bloc having declined to invite a junta member and only requesting a "non-political representative" -- an offer rejected by Naypyidaw.

Indonesian officials have said the lack of progress by Myanmar's junta tests the bloc's credibility and are working to find solutions to the crisis. Jakarta has announced plans to set up a special envoy's office under the foreign ministry to establish low-level dialogue with the junta.

Brazil Sinks Asbestos-Laden Warship in Atlantic

BRAZILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil sank a decommissioned aircraft carrier, the Navy announced, despite environmental groups claiming the formerly French ship was packed with toxic materials that will contaminate the ocean.

The "planned and controlled sinking occurred late in the afternoon" on Friday, some 350 kilometers (220 miles) off the Brazilian coast in the Atlantic Ocean, in an area with an "approximate depth of 5,000 meters (16,000 feet)," the Navy said in a statement.

The decision to scuttle the six-decade-old Sao Paulo, announced Thursday, came after Brazilian authorities had tried in vain to find a port willing to welcome it.

Though defense officials said they would sink the vessel in the "safest area," environmentalists criticized the decision, saying the aircraft carrier contains tons of asbestos, heavy metals and other toxic materials that could leach into the water and pollute the marine food chain.

The Basel Action Network had called on Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva -- who took office last month vowing to reverse surging environmental destruction under far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro -- to immediately halt the "dangerous" plan.

The group issued a joint statement with Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd on Friday, accusing Brazil of having violated "three international treaties" on the environment by sinking the ship, which the NGOs said could cause "incalculable" damage to marine life and coastal communities.

Ocean watchdog BAN (NGO) say sinking a boat as big and old as the São Paulo is an environmental

disaster; as well as the asbestos, the ship contains hundreds of metric tons of other toxic substances in its electrical wiring, paints, and fuel stores.

Other "environmentally responsible measures could have been adopted, but once again, the importance of protecting the oceans, which are vital for the life of the planet, was treated with negligence," said Leandro Ramos, director of programs for Greenpeace Brazil.

Brazilian authorities said it was better to sink the ship on purpose rather than allow it to sink spontaneously on its own.

The Navy insisted it had chosen a spot for sinking that considered "the security of navigation and the environment" and "the mitigation of the impacts on public health, fishing activities and ecosystems."

A judge overruled a last-minute legal bid to stop the operation, saying in his decision that an unplanned sinking could be even worse for the environment or pose a danger to crews, the G1 news outlet reported.

He called the situation "tragic and regrettable," according to G1.

Built in the late 1950s in France, whose navy sailed it for 37 years as the Foch, the aircraft carrier earned a place in 20th-century naval history.

It took part in France's first nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1960s, and deployments in Africa, the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia from the 1970s to 1990s.

Brazil bought the 266-meter (873-foot) aircraft carrier for \$12 million in 2000.



Burkina Faso's Traoré Denies Diplomatic Split With Paris

OUAGADOUGOU (Dispatches) - Burkina Faso's military leader said his country had not severed diplomatic ties with France, which he has asked to withdraw its forces, and denied Russian Wagner mercenaries were in the country.

Former colonial power France had special forces based in the capital Ouagadougou, but its presence had come under intense scrutiny as anti-French sentiment in the region grows, with Paris withdrawing its ambassador to Burkina over the junta's demands.

"The end of diplomatic agreements, no!" Captain Ibrahim Traore said in a television interview with Burkinabe journalists. "There is no break in diplomatic relations or hatred against a particular state."

Traore went on to deny that there were mercenaries from the Wagner Group deployed in Burkina Faso, even as the junta has nurtured ties with Moscow.

Wagner, an infamous Russian mercenary group founded in 2014, has been involved in conflicts in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Ukraine. "We've heard everywhere that Wagner is in Ouagadougou," he said, adding that it was a rumour "created so that everybody would distance themselves from us".

"We have our Wagner, it is the VDP that we recruit," he said, referring to the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland civilian auxiliaries. "They are our Wagner."

He said that "all the people want is their sovereignty, to live with dignity. It doesn't mean leaving one country for another."

Paris confirmed last month that its special forces troops, deployed to help fight a years-long jihadist insurgency, would leave within a month.

A landlocked country in the heart of West Africa's Sahel, Burkina Faso is one of the world's most volatile and impoverished countries.

It has been struggling with a jihadist insurgency that swept in from neighbouring Mali in 2015.

Thousands of civilians, troops and police have been killed, more than two million people have fled their homes, and around 40 percent of the country lies outside the government's control.

Anger within the military at the mounting toll sparked two coups in 2022, the most recent of which was in September, when 34-year-old Traore seized power.

He is standing by a pledge made by the preceding junta to stage elections for a civilian government by 2024.

Poor Oral Health Linked To Decline In Brain Health



LONDON (Dispatches) - Scientists suggest that people genetically prone to cavities and tooth loss may be at higher risk of declining brain health than those without oral health issues.

Preliminary research to be presented at the Feb. 8 through 10, 2023, American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference in Dallas has found that poor oral health may negatively affect brain health. But treating dental cavities, gum disease, and other symptoms of poor oral health early may help reduce the risks.

According to a press release, from 2014 to 2021, researchers examined possible links between oral health and brain health using about 40,000 adult participants from the UK Biobank. The participants did not have a history of stroke. The team screened the participants for 105 genetic variants related to poor oral health. They also looked at whether they had missing teeth or dentures later in life.

To investigate the associations between oral and brain health, the team examined the participant's brain MRI images looking for white matter and microstructural damage.

After compiling the data, the scientists found that the participants with genetic variants that predisposed them to oral health problems such as cavities and tooth loss also had a higher burden of silent cerebrovascular disease — a risk factor for future strokes. Among these participants, the research team saw a 24% increase in white matter hyper-intensities on MRI images.

In addition, the adults with genetic variant-related poor oral health also showed a 43% increase in brain microstructural damage scores.

However, the study had some limitations. Specifically, the participants were predominantly white and of European ancestry. Therefore, more investigations are needed with participants from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

"Poor oral health may cause declines in brain health, so we need to be extra careful with our oral hygiene because it has implications far beyond the mouth," study author Cyprien Rivier, M.D., M.S., a postdoctoral fellow in neurology at the Yale School of Medicine said in the press release.

"However, this study is preliminary, and more evidence needs to be gathered — ideally through clinical trials — to confirm improving oral health in the population will lead to brain health benefits," Rivier added.

According to Jessica Pharar, DMD, founder of the Pharar Foundation in Las Vegas, poor oral health can increase inflammation and bacteria in the body.

"This is associated with a myriad of diseases, including diabetes, stroke, heart attack, kidney disease, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease," Pharar told Healthnews.

"In fact, as a dentist, I have discovered my patient has diabetes before their doctor," she explained. "Changes in your body are often first seen in your mouth. If you have uncontrolled gum disease, it makes you at a higher risk for certain types of cancers and diabetes."

She went on to explain that, "Uncontrolled gum disease increases your risk of a heart [attack] from 200-400%." Pharar said. "All the bacteria that flows from your mouth deposits into your heart and creates an environment that makes you prone to a heart attack."

Pharar says that symptoms of poor oral health include bleeding during tooth brushing and mouth or tooth pain. She also noted that bleeding is a sign that bacteria are present in the gums — causing inflammation. Moreover, pain may indicate damage is already occurring.

"Those bacteria eventually cause cavities on your teeth. You don't always develop pain when you have poor oral health, [but] pain is a good sign that things are not doing well. Often, pain comes when major damage has been done to your oral health," she explained.

Microbes Are Active Engineers In Mineral Lifecycles



LONDON (Dispatches) - An open-air, living laboratory that spans parts of Arizona and New Mexico is helping researchers better understand how mineral weathering — the breaking down or dissolving of rocks and minerals over time — feeds into Earth's intricate life-support system.

The name "critical zone" may give off 1980s action thriller vibes, but it's the term scientists use to refer to the area of Earth's land surface responsible for sustaining life. A relatively small portion of the planetary structure, it spans from the bedrock below groundwater all the way up to the lower atmosphere.

"Think of it as Earth's skin," said Jon Chorover, head of the Department of Environmental Science in the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "It's sometimes termed the zone where rock meets life."

Most people — even geologists — don't typically think about rock as the foundation of life or the way life may alter rock, but that cuts to the heart of critical zone science, Chorover said.

A relatively new framework for approaching Earth sciences, the critical zone aligns researchers across disciplines to better understand how the delicate web of physical, chemical and biological processes come together to form Earth's life-support system.

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As a biogeochemist, the whole-system approach is a way of thinking that comes naturally to Chorover, who has spent much of his career working to unravel the ways in which chemical and mineral weathering drives the evolution of everything from the soil microbiome to the carbon cycle.

Together with Qian Fang, a postdoctoral researcher from Peking University in Beijing, Chorover recently published the results of nearly 10 years of data collected at the Santa Catalina-Jemez River Basin Critical Zone Observatory — which spans a gradient of elevation and climates on rock basins in northern New Mexico and Southern Arizona.

Their findings, according to Chorover, provide a "smoking gun" link between the activities of carbon-consuming microbes and the transformation of rock to life-sustaining soil in the critical zone.

In the past, measuring something like mineral weathering often wasn't that exciting — imagine researchers breaking off chunks of rock and watching it dissolve in beakers back at the lab. But viewing that process in a natural ecological system is a different story.

At the Santa Catalina-Jemez River Basin Critical Zone Observatory, towers that measure the exchange of water between the forest and atmosphere, soil probes that read the transfer of energy and gases, and a host of other in-environment instrumentation offer scientists a firsthand view of the complex systems within the critical zone.

The site is part of a larger National Science Foundation Critical Zone Observatory program, which unlike traditional brick-and-mortar observatories provides a network of regional ecological environments rigged with scientific instrumentation across the United States.

Temperature, moisture and gas sensors at the site collect measurements every 15 minutes, and after compiling and correlating the data, "What we found was a strong relationship between the rate at which the rock was weathering to form soil and the activities of the microbiome in the subsurface," said Chorover, a principal investigator at the Catalina-Jemez observatory.



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Ford Shares Fall as Q4 Profits Lag Estimates

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Ford reported an annual loss following disappointing fourth-quarter earnings that reflected what it called execution problems that marred performance.

"We should have done much better last year," said Ford Chief Executive Jim Farley. "We left about US\$2 billion in profits on the table that were within our control, and we're going to correct that with improved execution and performance."

Farley did not elaborate on the problems. Automakers have struggled with supply chain problems over the last year in the wake of pandemic-related shortages of semiconductors and other vital parts that have crimped output.



China Boosts Imports of Fuel Oil Blended From Russian Barrels

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - China's independent refineries are ramping up imports of discounted fuel oil blended from Russian barrels to use as low-cost feedstock amid a shortage of government crude oil import quotas for some of them, according to trade sources and data.

Western sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including the looming Feb. 5 embargo and price cap on refined products, have been pushing Russian fuel oil barrels eastward into Asia at attractive discounts since last year.

These have been flooding the ship-to-ship transfer hubs of Malaysia and United Arab Emirates' Fujairah since the second quarter of 2022. Traders blend these barrels with other oils to rebrand the fuel oil's country of origin, clearing the way for ship insurance and financing that would otherwise be banned under the sanctions, trade sources said. Discounts offered on these fuel oil cargoes help to improve margins at Chinese independent refiners and replace crude that some companies are unable to import without quotas, the sources said. The trade also provides a way to get Russian oil to market and bring much-needed export earnings to Moscow.

"We've been looking at Russian fuel oil since December. It is cheap and does not require (crude) import quotas," said an executive with an independent refiner in eastern Shandong province.

The refiner has not received any government crude quotas for the past year or so and buys mostly straight-run fuel oil to produce diesel and gasoline, said the executive, who declined to be identified as he was not authorized to speak to the media.

These blended fuel oil barrels were last traded at about a \$5 discount to benchmark crude ICE Brent on a delivered Shandong basis, said one source.

High-sulphur fuel oil values relative to crude have plunged into deeper discounts since the second quarter last year, with cracks hitting record lows at end-October.

China's total fuel oil imports surged to about 1.76 million tons in December, highest since September 2021, official customs data showed. The uptick was driven by a surge in shipments from Malaysia to more than a one-year high at 620,000 tons, while monthly imports from UAE rose to 471,000 tons, highest in two years.

Meanwhile, direct imports of fuel oil from Russia slipped to 187,000 tons in December after peaking at 554,000 tons in October, even as total imports from Russia more than doubled year-on-year to 3.1 million tons in 2022.

"The deep discounts offered are driving the trend as independent refiners are price sensitive. China is still recovering, with domestic demand for refined fuels uncertain," said Emril Jamil, Refinitiv's senior analyst for crude and fuel oil.

"The trend will continue with the EU ban (on Feb. 5), with all natural outlets in Europe closed. Asia will continue to soak up cheaper Russian (fuel oil) barrels on top of crude," Jamil said.

Western trading houses have been the main suppliers of these fuel oil shipments to China, said four senior trading sources, who closely track the flows, adding that the elevated December levels will extend through February and beyond.

One of the top suppliers channelling these barrels to China is Swiss-based trader Vitol, they said.

Indonesia's Economy Likely Lost Some Steam in Q4

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Indonesia's economic growth likely slowed in the fourth quarter as declining commodity and energy prices hit exports, and a widely expected global recession could accelerate the slowdown this year, a Reuters poll found.

Southeast Asia's largest economy exported a record \$292 billion in 2022, driven by high global commodity prices that boosted the value of the rupiah and improved the country's current account.

But export growth slowed in the latter part of the year as prices moderated.

After reporting its strongest annual growth in more than a year in the third quarter, the resource-rich economy expanded a weaker 4.84% in October-December compared with the same three-month period a year earlier, according to the median forecast of 21 economists in the poll.

If realized, it would be the slowest growth rate in over a year.

Forecasts for gross domestic product (GDP) growth, due to be released on Feb. 6, ranged from 4.00% to 6.20%.

On a quarterly basis, growth was expected to have eased to 0.33%, down from 1.81% in the third quarter. That was based on a smaller sample of forecasts.

"Indonesia's economic growth is going to slow in line with the ongoing global slowdown. The ongoing global recession has dampened prices and demand for commodities," Suryaputra Wijaksana, an economist at Bank Central Asia, said.

"Global decoupling also ... disrupted demand for Indonesia's exports. It contributed to slowing growth by reducing investment and domestic consumption as commodity-related sectors impacted negatively."



Economists in the poll expected a bleaker outlook as tightening monetary policy and elevated inflation globally risk derailing the world economy.

Growth was forecast to have averaged 5.3% last year, but a separate Reuters poll said that rate would slow to 4.8% this year, still well within the range of Bank Indonesia's projection of 4.50% to 5.30%.

"With commodity prices set to drop back, weaker global demand likely to weigh on exports, and tighter monetary policy dragging on the domestic economy, we think the risks are firmly to the downside," Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist at Capital Economics, said.

But some economists were hopeful China's reopening would boost the country's exports of resources such as palm oil, coal, nickel and iron.

Strong U.S. Job Growth Expected In January

WASHINGTON (dispatches) - U.S. job growth likely remained strong in January amid a persistently resilient labor market, but an anticipated further slowdown in wage gains should give the Federal Reserve some comfort in its fight against inflation.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report is also expected to show the unemployment rate ticking up to 3.6% last month from a more than 50-year low of 3.5% in December. It would allow the U.S. central bank, focused on wage inflation, to maintain a moderate pace of rate hikes and reduce the risk of a recession this year.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell told reporters on Wednesday that "the economy can return to 2% inflation without a really significant downturn or a really big increase in unemployment." With wages moderating and inflation trending lower, economists are increasingly agreeing with that sentiment.

"Wage growth is decelerating less than inflation," said Kate Bahn, chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth in Washington. "For the Fed, it really makes the case that you don't necessarily need to rely on tempering labor market growth to address inflation if the labor market is not the cause of inflation."

The survey of establishments will likely show that nonfarm payrolls increased by 185,000 last month after rising by 223,000 in December, according to a Reuters survey of economists.

Average hourly earnings are forecast rising 0.3% after a similar gain in December. That would lower the year-on-year increase in wages to 4.3% from 4.6% in December.

But great uncertainty surrounds the payrolls forecast, and estimates ranged from 125,000 to 305,000.

With January's employment report, the government will publish its annual "benchmark" revisions and update the formulas it uses to smooth the data for regular seasonal fluctuations in the establishment survey. It will also incorporate new population estimates in the household



survey, from which the unemployment rate is derived. As such January's unemployment rate will not be directly comparable to December.

Last year, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimated the economy added 462,000 more jobs in the 12 months through March 2022 than previously reported. Payrolls data from April through December will also be revised based on the new benchmark level and updated seasonal factors. The revisions will also affect average hourly earnings and the workweek.

BLS will also revise their industry classification system, which would result in about 10% of employment reclassified into different industries. It warned last month that the revisions and industry reclassification "will affect more historical data than is typical in the annual benchmark process."

Strong India Services Growth Dipped Slightly in January



BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Robust growth in India's services industry eased last month after touching a six-month high in December, with softening orders spurring caution in companies' business outlooks for the year, a private business survey showed.

The South Asian nation's economy is expected to grow 6.0% to 6.8% next fiscal year, the government said this week, slower than the 7.0% growth projected for the current year amid faltering global demand.

But Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her budget speech on Wednesday that despite challenges the Indian economy was "heading towards a bright future".

The S&P Global India services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) (INPMIS=ECI) fell to 57.2 in January from 58.5 in December, missing expectations in a Reuters poll for 58.1 but above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction for an 18th straight month.

"As seen earlier in the week from the manufacturing PMI results, growth across the service sector lost some momentum at the start of the year," noted Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"Yet, the survey showed us that service providers received high amounts of new business which helped keep the overall rate of growth historically prominent. Demand resilience in turn meant that output also continued to expand at a generally strong pace."

She also noted that after re-accelerating in December, input cost inflation in the service sector retreated to a two-year low in January, aiding a slower and only moderate upturn in selling prices.

Prices charged rose at the slowest pace since March 2022. Firms said demand resilience enabled them to pass on additional cost burdens to clients, though some refrained from hiking their fees to boost sales.

Fitch Expects \$95 Oil In 2023

LONDON (Dispatches) - Fitch Solutions has reiterated its oil price forecast for this year at \$95 per barrel of Brent crude, citing China's quicker-than-expected reversal of zero-Covid policies and slow production growth.

"On the demand side, prospects for growth have improved, following the earlier-than-expected easing of Covid-19 containment measures in Mainland China," the ratings agency said, as quoted by The Edge.

"On the supply side, uncertainties around Russia continue to cloud the outlook, but slowing production growth in the US, further delays to the Iranian nuclear deal and continued production restraint by OPEC+ will combine to significantly decrease supply growth this year," Fitch Solutions added.

That same set of factors has been cited by other bullish forecasters, too with some of them expecting Brent to top \$100 per barrel again this year. Goldman Sachs, for instance, sees Brent hitting \$105 per barrel in late 2023 on the back of strong demand growth that would push the oil market into deficit in the second half of the year.

Morgan Stanley also sees a tighter oil market in the second half of the year, which could push Brent crude to \$110 per barrel by the end of the year.

While China's rebound is already underway and expectations of stronger oil imports have a sound foundation in Beijing's recently issued import quotas, the situation with Russian oil production is less clear.

Many analysts last year expected Western sanctions to affect that dramatically and push oil prices much higher. However, the redirection of exports rather than a production cut ensured a relatively modest impact of the sanctions on global oil supply and, consequently, prices.

Pakistan Will Have to Agree to IMF Conditions for Bailout

PESHAWAR (Dispatches) - Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Friday the government would have to agree to IMF bailout conditions that are "beyond imagination".

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation landed in Pakistan on Tuesday for last-ditch talks to revive vital financial aid that has stalled for months.

The government has held out against tax rises and subsidy slashing demanded by the IMF, fearful of backlash ahead of elections due in October.

"I will not go into the details but will only say that our economic challenge is unimaginable. The conditions we will have to agree to with the IMF are beyond imagination. But we will have to agree with the conditions," Sharif said in televised comments.

Pakistan's economy is in dire straits, stricken by a balance of payments crisis as it attempts to service high levels of external debt, amid political chaos and deteriorating security.

The country's central bank said Thursday its foreign exchange reserves had dropped again to \$3.1 billion, which analysts said was enough for less than three weeks of imports.

Data on Wednesday showed year-on-year inflation had risen to a 48-year high, leaving Pakistanis struggling to afford basic food items.

Ahead of the IMF visit, Islamabad began to bow to pressure with the prospect of national bankruptcy looming.

The government loosened controls on the rupee to rein in a rampant black market in US dollars, a step that caused the currency to plunge to a record low. Artificially cheap petrol prices have also been hiked.

The world's fifth-biggest population is no longer issuing letters of credit, except for essential food and medicines, causing a backlog of thousands of shipping containers at Karachi port stuffed with stock the country can no longer afford.

"Accepting IMF conditions will definitely increase prices, but Pakistan has no other choice," analyst Abid Hasan told AFP. "Otherwise, there is a fear of a situation like Sri Lanka and Lebanon."

Rejecting conditions and pushing Pakistan to the brink would have "political consequences" for the ruling parties, but so will agreeing to IMF measures raising the cost of living, he said.

The tumbling economy mirrors Pakistan's political chaos, with former Prime Minister Imran Khan heaping pressure on the ruling coalition in his bid for early elections while his popularity remains high.

Iran Economic Growth Sees %2.9 Hike in 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) - According to the World Bank, Iranian economic growth reached 2.9 percent in 2022, equal to world economic growth, and exceeds the 1.9 percent growth of the American economy. As estimated by the international body, US economic growth in 2022 accounted for 1.9 percent, which is lower than Iran's economic growth this year. Iran economic growth sees %2.9 hike in 2022: report The US economic growth in 2021 was 5.9 percent, the source reported, adding that the decrease in the country's economic growth will continue in 2023, reaching 0.5 percent.



EU Unveils Plan to Counter U.S. Green Subsidies, China Competition

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The EU unveiled proposals including a controversial expansion of state aid rules to counter the threat to European industry from US green subsidies and unfair competition from China.

The bloc is racing to compete with the United States and China to avoid businesses relocating to Asia or North America where energy costs are cheaper, but EU member states are divided on how to respond.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen outlined the bloc's proposals, welcomed by France and Germany, but said there would be no immediate new EU funding.

"At the moment ... we need to work with what we have right now. And focus it on the clean tech industry," she said.

The majority of the EU response involves repackaging already existing funds, a stop-gap measure that has earned much criticism.

Von der Leyen left the door open to a new EU sovereignty fund being created in the future.

But that idea has already been strongly opposed by some member states including Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands which oppose throwing new money at the problem, or boosting borrowing to resolve it.

"If you have state aid, the other side of the coin has to be funding at the EU level," von der Leyen told a news conference.

The new measures give flexibility on providing aid to companies in the green and renewable energy sector and those involved in the decarbonisation of industry.

There will also tax benefits available for investments in production facilities in defined, strategic net-zero sectors.

The proposals are a response to a landmark US spending bill last year that funnels \$370 billion into subsidies for America's energy transition -- including tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries, which has left European manufacturers dismayed.

European countries are unnerved by parts of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) which offers lavish advantages for US purchasers of electric vehicles if they "Buy American".

The EU response was worked out against a backdrop of disagreement among member states on how best to protect Europe's businesses, and fears of triggering a trade war.

While countries like France support state aid expansion, others argue it would help only richer member states and fragment the single market.

The EU's competition chief Margrethe Vestager however insisted the bloc would act carefully and the relaxation of state aid rules would be "temporary, well targeted".

"Any action we take must preserve the integrity of our single market," she said.



Germany's Economy Minister Robert Habeck said the plan was "very good" and French counterpart Bruno Le Maire welcomed the "strong proposals".

The two ministers will go to Washington on February 7 to "discuss the IRA's impact on European industry," a French economy ministry source said Wednesday.

Germany and France represent respectively 53 and 24 percent of state aid notified to Brussels since March 2022 when the rules were relaxed following the war in Ukraine.

The EU is pushing the United States to make exemptions for European companies. But a special joint taskforce set up to address Brussels' concerns has yielded little fruit.

EU leaders will discuss the proposals at a summit in Brussels next week, and final decisions on the bloc's response are expected in March.

German MEP Markus Ferber described Wednesday's proposals as "old wine in new bottles" and "predictably disappointing".

Von der Leyen last month slammed "aggressive attempts" by China to persuade Europe's clean technology companies to relocate and take advantage of its cheaper labor and more lenient regulations.

Environmentalists criticized the EU's plan, saying the measures did not go far enough.

"Green subsidies are good but not enough to have a meaningful effect on climate," said Luke Haywood, head of climate policy at the European Environmental Bureau.

"Without cutting fossil fuel subsidies, pricing carbon properly and introducing measures to reduce demand, these financial efforts will be toothless."

IAEA a Tool...

FROM PAGE 1

In a joint statement on Friday, the United States and the three European parties to the JCPOA -- Britain, France and Germany -- said Iran's response to the IAEA's report was "inadequate" and accused Tehran of being inconsistent with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).



"We judge Iran's actions based on the impartial and objective reports of the IAEA, not Iran's purported intent. As stated by the Agency, this unnotified change is inconsistent with Iran's obligations under its NPT-required Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement," the statement read.

The IAEA chief told the European Parliament on January 24 that he plans to visit Tehran this month "for a much-needed political dialogue, or reestablishment thereof, with Iran."

Iran and the IAEA are currently in a dispute triggered by the agency's Israeli-influenced accusations, which were leveled against Tehran's peaceful nuclear activities just as the Islamic Republic and other parties to the Iran deal appeared close to an agreement on reviving the JCPOA.

Iran says an agreement on the revival of the nuclear deal hinges on the settlement of Safeguards issues between Tehran and the IAEA, and that without settling those issues, reviving the 2015 deal makes no sense.

The negotiations to salvage the JCPOA have been at a standstill since August 2022 due to Washington's insistence on its hard-nosed position of not removing all the sanctions that were imposed on the Islamic Republic by the previous US administration.

Iran maintains it is necessary for the other side to offer some guarantees that they will remain committed to any agreement that is reached.

For months the West has tried to get concessions from Tehran but it has failed and after recent riots and unrests in Iran, it changed its policy of extortion from using "access to nuclear bomb" to "human rights violation" and therefore imposing many human rights sanction against Iran and Iranian officials and entities, and now that it has realized all of its efforts for destabilizing the Islamic Republic by the riots have failed, it once again has turned to the nuclear issue, and who and what is better than the IAEA which has always served the West to achieve its goals.

It seems the West and its allies once again want to use nuclear issue as a tool of extortion from Iran and every day some new accusation and claim is raised by this agency while it should remain neutral and technical body than pro-West and political one.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always reiterated that it pursues peaceful nuclear program for peaceful purposes and it does not intend to make A-bomb but the West insists otherwise and it wants to demonize the Islamic Republic of Iran for its own vicious purposes but all should know that Tehran will not retreat even one inch from its rights in peaceful nuclear program as we see it has recently held an exhibition on its nuclear achievements which bespeaks of the strong determination of the country and no let-up is seen in its nuclear program, and the enemies are better to come to their senses and accept Tehran's condition if they really seek peace and good relation because Iran is determined to defend its right which has been ignored by the West.

The IAEA is also better to act based on its real mission and task rather than being the puppet of the big powers for extortion from the countries which are at odds with the big powers.

Iran to Revamp Venezuela...

FROM PAGE 1

Venezuela, which has the world's largest crude reserves, has struggled in recent years to produce enough gasoline and diesel due to refinery outages, a lack of investment and US sanctions.

At least 400 Iranian workers will work alongside between 1,000 and 1,500 local staff and contractors in this project, the sources said.

Venezuelan officials are responsible to find temporary housing and vehicles for the workers, including the possibility of building a camp close to Paraguaná.

The Islamic Republic has boosted relations with Venezuela in recent years, providing crude and condensate as well as parts and feedstock for Venezuela's aging 1.3 million barrel per day oil refining network.

Business and Consumers Hamper Climate Fight



PARIS (Dispatches) - Corporations and consumers are the main obstacle to the emissions cuts needed to keep global warming to the 1.5-degree Celsius limit, researchers said Wednesday, adding that "positive signs" in other areas are not yet enough to meet climate goals.

The report by a multidisciplinary team of researchers warned that staying within the 1.5C goal was "not plausible", but that this could change if societies stepped up their efforts to cut emissions.

"We see all kinds of positive signs, for example, the political protests, divestment decisions, climate litigation cases, transnational initiatives, this is all on the rise," said one of the study authors Anita Engels. "So you could think that we are really on a good track."

But she added: "We need to do so much more".

The report, the Hamburg Climate Futures Outlook, assessed the plausibility of achieving the emissions reductions necessary to limit temperatures in line with the Paris Agreement.

That 2015 deal saw nations agree to limit global warming to well below two degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times, preferably 1.5C.

Researchers looked at 10 societal factors that they considered to be the most important drivers of decarbonisation and found that currently none are yet at a level that would lead to the dramatic emissions reductions needed by 2050.

Using global databases and computer modelling, the authors found that seven social trends were moving tentatively in the right direction -- including United Nations climate governance, regulation, litigation, and divestment from fossil fuels.

One -- the media -- was seen as "ambivalent".

But the two heading in the wrong direction were corporate responses and consumption patterns, which the researchers said "continue to undermine the pathways to decarbonisation".

The two are closely interlinked, said Engels.

"It would be so much easier if the way the products are produced is regulated in a way that (consumers) are not forced to buy climate destructive products," she told AFP.

The report said it was still too early to assess the potential impact of recent events such as Russia's invasion on Ukraine.

Half a Million Strike in UK as Cost-of-Living Crisis Bites

LONDON (Dispatches) - Half a million people stopped work over pay in Britain leaving transport networks paralysed and thousands of classrooms empty in the largest walkout in over a decade.

As Europe battles a cost-of-living crisis, Britain's umbrella labour organisation the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called it the "biggest day of strike action since 2011".

The latest round of stoppages comes a day after more than 1.27 million took to the streets in France, increasing pressure on the French government over pension reform plans.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has called for pay rises to be "reasonable" and "affordable", warning that big pay hikes would jeopardise attempts to tame inflation.

But unions have accused millionaire Sunak of being out of touch with the challenges faced by ordinary working people struggling to make ends meet in the face of low-paid, insecure work and spiralling costs.

Teachers and train drivers were among the latest groups to act, as well as Border Force staff at UK air and seaports.

The NEU teaching union estimated 85 percent of schools in England and Wales had been hit by walkouts, adding that this indicated the "level of anger" in the profession.

"The workload is always bigger and bigger and with the inflation our salary is lower and lower," London teacher Nigel Adams, 57, told AFP as he joined thousands of teachers marching through central London.

"We're exhausted. We're paying the price and so are the children," he added as protesters held up placards reading "Pay Up" and "We can't put your kids first if you put their teachers last".

Britain has witnessed months of strikes by tens of thousands of workers -- including postal staff, lawyers, nurses and employees in the retail sector -- as UK inflation raced above 11 percent, the highest level in more than 40 years.

Job centre worker and union representative, Graham, who preferred not to give his last name, said workers had no choice but to strike faced with soaring costs.

"Some of our members, even though they are working, still have to make visits to food banks," he said.

Train stations in the capital were deserted or completely closed.



At the shuttered London Bridge Station, a major commuter hub, one train driver who gave his name as Tony, 61, said the sort of pay rises on offer were insulting, especially in the wake of the pandemic.

"We worked all through Covid. We were being praised as key workers and then there is this slap in the face," he said.

"I was leaving (home) at 3:00am to go to work. People were having barbecues, you could hear the bottles. I think we deserve a pay increase that keeps up with inflation."

Combative RMT union leader Mick Lynch, who has been representing many rail workers, told teachers who marched through London to parliament "every worker needs a pay rise, every worker needs a square deal... We are demanding change".

Joint NEU teaching union chiefs Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney meanwhile warned that schools would be hit by more strikes unless the government came up with "concrete and meaningful proposals". Government and company bosses are standing firm, however, over wage demands.

Education Minister Gillian Keegan told Times Radio she was "disappointed" teachers had walked out.

But Mark Serwotka, head of PCS, the largest trade union in the civil service, said the government's position was "unsustainable".

"It's not feasible that they can sit back with this unprecedented amount of industrial action growing, because it's half a million today," he told Sky News.

"Next week, we have paramedics, and we have nurses, then will be the firefighters," he added, warning that unions were prepared to strike throughout the summer.

Asked what Prime Minister Sunak was doing to resolve the strikes, his official spokesman said inflation remained the "biggest risk" to pay packets and that the government was ready to hold more talks with unions to avert further strike action.

But he said ministers had to balance union demands with the need not to further fuel inflation and be fair to all taxpayers.

The latest official data shows 1.6 million working days were lost from June-November last year because of strikes -- the highest six-month total in more than three decades -- according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

A total of 467,000 working days were lost to walkouts in November alone, the highest level since 2011, the ONS added.

Irving Asks Nets for Trade

MIAMI (Dispatches) - Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving has asked the team to be traded, according to a report in The Athletic, citing league sources.

The report said Irving has told the team he would like to move before Thursday's trade deadline or he will leave as a free agent in July.

Irving was selected as an NBA All Star for the eighth time this season after averaging 27.1 points, 5.1 rebounds and 5.2 assists during the regular season so far.

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Tsurenko Continues Run in Thailand

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Unseeded Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko advanced to the final four of the Thailand Open by beating German sixth seed Tatjana Maria 6-1, 6-1 in Hua Hin, Thailand.

Tsurenko, who upset No. 4 seed Anna Kalinskaya of Russia in the previous round, won a whopping 72.4 percent of her first-service points (21 of 29) and converted six break points in 10 opportunities to oust Maria.

Five Ejected in Magic-T-Wolves Brawl, Suns Shock Celtics

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Five players were tossed from Orlando's win at Minnesota as the second NBA brawl in as many days overshadowed Phoenix's upset of the league-leading Boston Celtics.

The wild scenes in Minneapolis erupted in the third quarter with an exchange between Orlando's Mo Bamba and Minnesota's Austin Rivers.

Bamba, Orlando's 2.13-meter tall center, left his seat off the bench and punches were thrown, sparking a scum that had security scrambling to separate players.

It ended with Bamba and Rivers ejected along with Orlando point guard Jalen Suggs and Minnesota's Taurean Prince and Jaden McDaniels.

"When someone gets up like that and gets in your face it can go one of two ways," Rivers said. "He threw a punch and it missed. And then Suggs, I think, grabbed me by my neck. That's a big no-no."

Rivers said he'd heard talk from a player he didn't know on Orlando's bench more than once during the game and far from trying to incite more he'd asked him to "just keep it respectful, bro."

"I feel bad that I got thrown out of a game and I feel like I let my team down and in the process, two other guys, important players for our team, got thrown out as well," Rivers said.

Minnesota coach Chris Finch was clearly irked that more Timberwolves players than Magic players were tossed.

He said he didn't see any exchanges to spark the row, but "guy coming off the bench and throwing a punch -- pretty egregious."

Orlando coach Jamahl Mosley also missed the start of the incident.

"I turned and looked back and it was just a lot of guys trying to pull guys away from each other and trying to keep our guys on the bench," he said.

One day earlier, Memphis' Dillon Brooks and Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell were tossed from a game after a shoving match that followed Brooks's blow to Mitchell's groin.

The NBA suspended Brooks for one game for sparking the confrontation and fined Mitchell \$20,000 for his incensed reaction.

Tough Decision to Leave Aubameyang out of Champions League Squad

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea manager Graham Potter said it was a "tough decision" to leave Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang out of their Champions League squad for the knockout stages but said the Gabon striker still has a role to play at the London club.

Aubameyang was absent from the 25-player list named yesterday and there was no place for £35 million January signing Benoit Badiashile, but British record transfer Enzo Fernandez was included.

Mykhailo Mudryk, who joined for an initial fee of €70 million from Shakhtar Donetsk, and loan signing Joao Felix were also included in the list.

"Pierre's a professional and I understand he will be disappointed. It was a tough decision," said Potter.

"We had three coming in and two had to go out. He was the one that has missed out. It's absolutely nothing bad against him. He has done nothing wrong at all."

Aubameyang has failed to impress since joining the club from Barcelona in September, scoring only one Premier League goal in 11 appearances.

His last Premier League start was in November and he was substituted in a 1-0 defeat by Manchester City in early January after having come off the bench.

"Pierre's just unfortunate and he will be fighting for his place for the rest of the season. He has handled it very well," Potter said. "He's been a top, top guy for us."

Chelsea, who visit Borussia Dortmund in their last-16 first leg tie on February 15, were only allowed to register a maximum of three new players for the knockout stage.

Klopp Won't Let Liverpool Flop

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jurgen Klopp has warned struggling Liverpool there is no room for "self-pity" as he fights to stop their troubled season spiralling further out of control.

Klopp's side head to relegation-threatened Wolves languishing in ninth place in the Premier League after one win in their past six games in all competitions.



The Magic, who were leading 83-73 when hostilities erupted with 1:32 left in the third, went on to win 127-120, led by 20 points from reserve point guard Cole Anthony. In Boston, the absence of injured Devin Booker and Cam Johnson was no hindrance to the Suns, who bounced back from a blowout loss to Atlanta to beat the Celtics 106-94. With Johnson and Devin Booker sidelined by injury, the Suns looked unlikely to turn the tide two days after a 32-point loss to the Atlanta Hawks. But the Celtics, the owners of the best record in the league and the second-ranked scoring team, were held to less than 100 points at home for the first time since December. Jaylen Brown scored 27 points for Boston, but Jayson Tatum scored just 20 on dismal three-for-15 shooting as the Celtics connected on just 38.7 percent of their shots from the floor. Phoenix, led by 25 points from Mikal Bridges, led by as many as 20 in the second quarter and were up 57-44 at halftime. Robert Williams's jump shot to end the third cut the deficit to one point but Phoenix, with their second unit on the floor to open the fourth, used an 8-0 scoring run to rebuild their lead. Chris Paul added 15 points for the Suns, Dario Saric and Deandre Ayton had 14 apiece, and Damion Lee added 11 off the bench. The Portland Trail Blazers shook off a slow start that saw them trailing by 20 in the first quarter to beat the Washington Wizards 124-116. Anfernee Simons scored 20 of his 33 points in the third quarter -- when he made six of his nine three-pointers to help the Blazers grab the lead. Damian Lillard added 29 points for Portland who ended the Wizards' six-game winning streak. The Indiana Pacers bounced back from a tough, one-point loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday with a 107-104 victory over the Sacramento Kings.



MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich's deadline day capture of Manchester City full back Joao Cancelo had fans scratching their heads but manager Pep Guardiola said he was allowed to leave the Premier League champions in search of more game time. Cancelo, a two-time championship winner with City who was selected twice in the Premier League Team of the Year, moved to Bayern on an initial loan deal and the Bundesliga side can sign the 28-year-old permanently in the close season. The Portugal international lost his place in City's starting lineup after the World Cup but brushed aside reports of a breakdown with Guardiola, who said he was happy with his squad even though Cancelo's departure leaves them light at the back. "Next season, I don't know what happens. (He was) an incredible figure in the last two leagues we won. After the World Cup, we had a pre-season and decided to play, in some patterns, different," Guardiola told reporters. "I liked what I watched. I gave more time to other players. His personality is he loves to play. He trains the best (but) the situation is he doesn't play much. In the last years, he was one of the players with the most minutes."



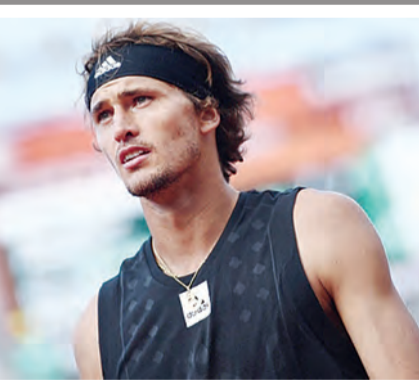
Ten Hag Satisfied With Man United's Squad Depth

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester United made fewer signings in the January transfer window compared to other top teams in the Premier League but manager Erik ten Hag said he is confident the Old Trafford club have depth in their squad. United, who are fourth in the league, signed Jack Butland, Wout Weghorst and Marcel Sabitzer all on loan, while Chelsea spent nearly £300 million on eight players, leaders Arsenal made four signings and third-placed Newcastle United signed five players. "We have formed and constructed a squad, we invest also in the summer. From that point on, it is about developing the team and it has to come on the training ground, it has to

come in the matches, that we develop the team," Ten Hag told reporters. "That is the advantage of having so many matches, that you can work on that and you don't have to wait so long (for the next one)... There is a limit to every player but we have depth in our squad. "Maybe not as far as other teams, but that has something to do with your approach to it and how you do your load management. If you do that right, I think you can go far." The Dutchman said he does not prefer having a huge squad at his disposal because "that also gives you problems". "As I said before, in the frontline until now, we have some problems in quantity. Not in quality but with the availability of the players, you definitely need numbers there if you want to cover all the games. If you want to be successful," he added. Ten Hag's side are fourth with 39 points after 20 games, behind Newcastle on goal difference.

Zverev Storms to Davis Cup Win

PARIS (Dispatches) - Alexander Zverev defeated veteran three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka in the Davis Cup as the German star returned to the courts for the first time since being cleared of domestic abuse.



The 25-year-old Zverev swept past Wawrinka 6-4, 6-1 in Trier to bring Germany level with Switzerland after the opening day of their qualifier. On Tuesday, Zverev was told by the ATP that there was "insufficient evidence" to substantiate allegations against him of abusing a former girlfriend. Former world number two Zverev always denied the claims, describing them as "baseless". Wawrinka, who helped his country win the 2014 Davis Cup, was returning to the team competition for the first time in eight years. Now ranked 135 in the world, he was comfortably beaten for the fifth time in five meetings by Zverev. "I think it's important to go into tomorrow's ties with a 1-1 scoreline," said Zverev after recording just a second match win in eight months. He missed the last six months of the 2022 season having suffered ankle ligament damage in a French Open semi-final defeat to Rafael Nadal in June. "That was the best match since my injury. It's going in a positive way and I hope to continue progressing."

Verstappen Hopes Rivals Can Raise Their Game

LONDON (Dispatches) - Red Bull's Max Verstappen shrugged off a suggestion he was favourite for a third successive Formula One championship and said the sport needed a closer battle than last year even if he intended to be better than ever. Verstappen won 15 of 22 races in a 2022 season that was his team's best yet with Mexican team mate Sergio Perez adding two to the tally. Rivals and runners-up Ferrari won four races and once-dominant Mercedes, third overall, just one. "As a driver you always try to look at yourself, what can you do better and you try to come back stronger every single year even though sometimes that's a hard task," he told reporters after the team's livery launch in New York. Asked how keen he was for Mercedes to get back into the fight, with seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton failing to win a race in a season for the first time in his career, Verstappen replied: "I think in the interests of the sport you always want the teams to be super-close. But I do think it was already quite close last year. "I think as a team we also really executed a lot of things better than the other teams and that's why I guess the points gap was also so big. I never really felt, apart from two or three races, we absolutely dominated the whole weekend. "But for the sport everybody wants to have a title battle with multiple teams involved."

