

Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid in Meeting With Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari Hailed Iran's Efforts in Standing by Iraq' in the Dictatorship Era as Well as the Country's Struggle Against ISIL

IRAN NEWS

Iran Greco-Roman wrestling Team by Winning Four Gold, Four Silver and Five Bronze and Scoring 195 Points Was Crowned as the Champion in the 2023 Zagreb Open Ranking Series Event Which Ended on Sunday

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Enemy Resorted To Hybrid War After All Plots Failed

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Army chief says the enemy has resorted to hybrid war against the Islamic establishment after it was dealt heavy blows by the Iranian nation and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

In a message issued on Monday ahead of the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi hailed the perseverance of the 1979 revolution, which put an end to the ruling of Iran's US-backed Pahlavi regime.

"By adopting different plots and strategies in recent years, the enemy has been trying to block the path of the Islamic Revolution and deal a blow to the Islamic Republic," General Mousavi said.

"However, with people's resistance and the Leader's wise leadership, the enemy's plots have failed one after another. Therefore, relying on psychological and media operations, the enemy has organized an extensive hybrid war against the [Iranian] nation and the Islamic establishment." He described the Islamic Revolution as "a major global phenomenon in the final decades of the 20th century" with wide-ranging regional and international effects.

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Russia Turns to Iranian Tractors to Plow Its Farms

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Russia has begun test imports of Iran-made tractors as Moscow expands sourcing some of its needs previously reliant on Europe from the Islamic Republic amid Western sanctions.

The first group of Russian technicians, consisting of 13 people from St. Petersburg and Krasnoyarsk oblasts, has completed training courses on service and maintenance of Iranian tractors at Iran Tractor Manufacturing Industrial Company (ITMCO) in Tabriz.

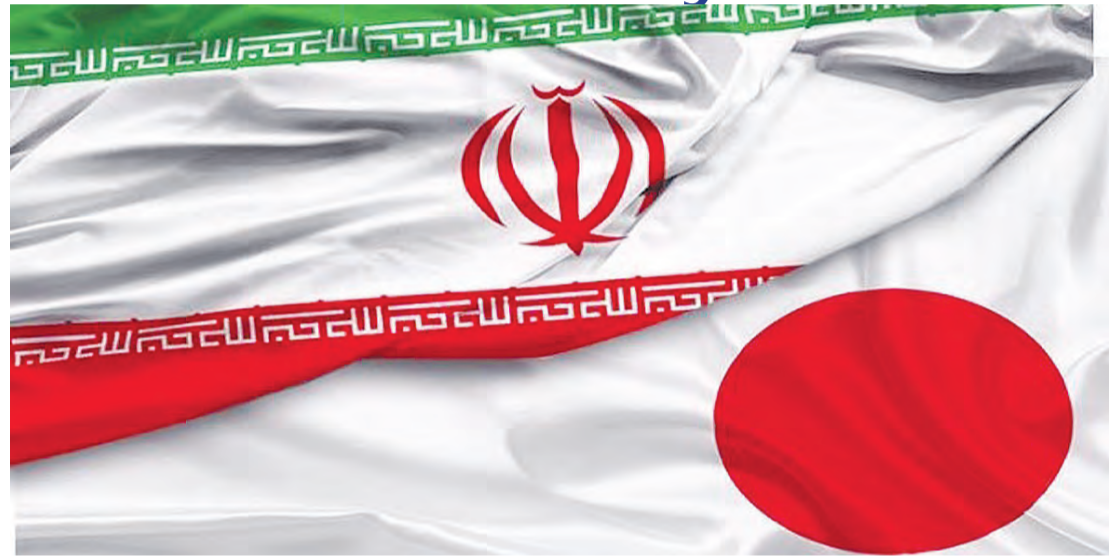
The course included engine, hydraulic and electronic systems, gearbox, cabin and other parts of Iranian tractors, ITMCO Chief Executive Mostafa Vahidzadeh told Fars news agency.

Russia has already issued standard certificate for ITMCO products and imported the first batch of Iranian tractors, he said.

"Given the reception the Iranian tractors got in Russia, the training courses will continue in line with the plans for sales networks and after-sales services in more than 80 oblasts of Russia," Vahidzadeh said, stating that other groups of Russian experts will travel to Iran in the coming months to participate in training courses.

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Official Trade Between Tehran and Tokyo Zeroed



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Head of Iran-Japan Joint Committee says currently official trade between Iran and Japan has been almost zeroed and trade with Tokyo is currently done unofficially and through intermediary.

Speaking to ILNA, Bahram Shakouri said that currently Iran trades with China, Russia, Turkey, the UAE and Oman directly and trade with other countries is done through intermediary and there is no more direct trade with other states.

Touching upon the trade between Iran and Japan, Bahram Shakouri said that due to sanctions, direct trade between Iran and Japan has been almost zeroed, adding that it seems the trade between the two countries is pursued unofficially and through the intermediary.

He went on to say that Japan government and Japanese traders are eager to broaden trade ties with Iran because their trade ties date back to almost one century ago and this increased interest and enthusiasm for broadening economic exchanges.

He then pointed to high trade volume between Japan and the U.S. and said that Japan and the U.S. have considerable joint investment and therefore it is natural that after the U.S. sanctions, the Japanese preferred to restrict their trade with Iran. He stated that the national interests of the Japanese force them not to have direct trade with Iran.

Shakoori reiterated that in recent days that Western countries have increased sanctions against Iran, Japan has not followed them and has tried to keep ties with Iran as before.

He went on to say that the Japanese are interested in joint investment with Iran and this country due to its progress in technology and innovation can be a good option for Iran for cooperation in the field of technology, noting that but sanction is one of the main hurdles in way of arrival of Japan's investment to Iran.

On the imports of cars from Japan, he said that currently there is no chance for direct cooperation with Japanese and South Korean auto-makers and middlemen import Japanese and South Korean cars via the third party and Iran may face problem for providing the spare parts of those cars in the future.

He went on to say that Iran needs to revise its diplomacy and ties with the world because currently Iran has only direct trade with China, Russia, Turkey, the UAE and Oman directly and trade with other states are done through the third party country.

Over 1,600 Killed in a Deadly Earthquake in Turkey, Syria

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - A powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake has hit Turkey and Syria, killing over 1,600 people and trapping many others.

The quake struck at 04:17 am local time (0117 GMT) at a depth of about 17.9 kilometers (11 miles) and was followed by a 6.7-magnitude aftershock 15 minutes later, according to the US Geological Survey.

Turkey's AFAD emergencies service center put the first quake's magnitude at 7.4.

According to the head of Turkey's disaster and emergencies management agency (AFAD) Yunus Sezer, the country's death toll following the earthquake has risen to 1,014, with some 2,824 buildings destroyed.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had earlier put the death toll at 912 with over 5,000 others injured. He described it as the country's largest disaster since 1939, adding that 2,818 buildings collapsed as a result. The Ankara government has requested international aid amid the widespread devastation caused by the quake. The president of the Turkish Red Crescent also urged the nation to make blood donations.

Kerem Kinik also said on Twitter the organization sending additional shipment of blood to the affected region. The country's vice president Fuat Oktay announced the suspension of schools in the 10 affected cities and provinces. He also announced that flights to and from the airport in Hatay province have been suspended, while airports in Marash and Antep are also closed to civilian flights.

The quake leveled buildings across major cities in southern Turkey, including Kahramanmaraş and Gaziantep, and caught most people while they were still asleep.

"I have never felt anything like it in the 40 years I've lived," Erdem, a resident of the Turkish city of Gaziantep, near the quake's epicenter, told Reuters. "We were shaken at least three times very strongly, like a baby in a crib."

The World Health Organization (WHO), meanwhile, said it was concerned about areas in Turkey from which there had been no news following the overnight tremor.

"National authorities will be focusing on search and rescue at the moment," a WHO spokesperson told Reuters in a statement, adding "Then we will expect an increased need for trauma care to treat the injured and to support the entire health system in affected areas."

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Iran Trade With Neighbors Rose 19.9% to \$48.7b

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran traded 81.19 million tons of goods worth \$48.74 billion with its 15 neighboring countries sharing land or sea borders.

According to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, Iran traded 81.19 million tons of goods worth \$48.74 billion, excluding crude oil exports, with its 15 neighboring countries sharing land or sea borders, from the beginning of the current Iranian year on March 21, 2022 to the end of the 10th month of the year on January 20, 2023, registering 1.16% and 19.94% year-on-year rises in terms of tonnage and value respectively.

The UAE was the main trade partner of Iran during the period with 20.27 million tons (up 5.48%) of exchanged goods worth \$19.77 billion (up 17.42%). It was followed by Turkey with 15.89 million tons (up 3.94%) worth \$11.69 billion (up 33.52%) and Iraq with 24.33 million tons (down 9.97%) worth \$9.08 billion (up 10.47%).

Iran's exports to its neighbors stood at 63.28 million tons worth \$25.73 billion, registering 4.45% and 26.57% rises in weight and value respectively, Financial Tribune reported.

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Iran to Partially Restore Gas Supply to Iraq on Feb. 6-7

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran will partially restore natural gas supplies to Iraq within the next two days, according to a report published in the Iraqi media, as the country is emerging from a cold snap that caused a major increase in domestic demand for heating and forced cuts to exports last month.

Iraqi government sources told Arabic-language Baghdad Today website on Sunday that Iran is expected to restore at least 7 million cubic meters (mcm) per day of natural gas exports to Iraq via a pipeline that passes through the Iraqi province of Diyala on February 6-7.

The sources said that Iran had been forced to cut gas exports to Iraq to zero on January 26 because of an unprecedented cold snap that caused a significant increase in domestic gas consumption.

The sources said the restored gas supply from Iran will be entirely delivered to the Bismayah power plant near the capital Baghdad to help ease electricity shortages in the city.

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Russia Calls on IAEA Not to Make Iran-Related Documents Public

TEHRAN (MNA) - The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should refrain from disclosing any Iran-related documents not meant to be made public, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Monday.

"Once again, we always express and point to concerns when information and documents, which contain restricted data and aren't meant for public use, are leaked to the public and turn into a news topic," the diplomat told reporters, commenting on the agency's move to publish a confidential report on Iran's Fordow nuclear facility.

"The IAEA cannot operate like that. It points to the West's politicization attempts. There is no reason to depart from the normal professional course on the issue," Ryabkov added.

He noted that for years, Russia had been seeing "our Western colleagues hyping up stories that require a calm and careful approach, as well as professional discussions."

Earlier, Iran criticized IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi over the publication of a confidential report on the Fordow nuclear site. The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) termed the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) disclosure of unverified information about nuclear activities in Iran's Fordow plant as unprofessional.

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Raisi Offers Condolences to His Turkish, Syrian Counterparts

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi has sent separate messages to his Turkish and Syrian counterparts to express condolences on the new deadly earthquake.

Raisi showed sympathy regarding the heartbreaking quake, which left hundreds of people killed and numerous others injured in Turkey and Syria, expressing readiness to provide both neighboring states with emergency aid.

Early on Monday, a powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit southern Turkey and northern Syria killing at least 641 people, with the number expected to rise further. According to the latest updates, 284 people in Turkey and 427 people in Syria lost their lives, and the number of injured people consists of 639 citizens in Syria and 2323 citizens in Turkey.

Diplomatic Dynamism Exists Regarding Talks To Revive JCPOA

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran says “diplomatic dynamism” exists with regard to the talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal, and messages are still being exchanged between the parties to the 2015 nuclear deal.

Speaking at a weekly press conference in Tehran on Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said there is diplomatic dynamism with respect to the sanctions-lifting talks through various channels.

“Messages are being exchanged at different levels in this regard, and the Islamic Republic has always welcomed these attempts and measures with goodwill,” he said.

Regarding some regional efforts, the spokesperson noted that, “Qatar is one of the friendly countries in the region, which has always made diplomatic efforts with good faith to help bring closer the views on various issues between Iran and other parties, in particular the sanctions-lifting negotiations.”

The talks kicked off in the Austrian capital city of Vienna in April 2021, with the intention of removing anti-Iran sanctions and examining the US's seriousness in rejoining the 2015 nuclear deal.

The negotiations, however, 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 slapped on Tehran by the previous US administration.

Kanaani said a visit to Tehran by the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is possible in the future provided that the technical preparations are in place.

He further referred to Iran's “close and continuous cooperation” with the IAEA, adding that contact between the two sides will go on in a technical framework.

Elsewhere in his presser, Kanaani advised Azerbaijan to exercise restraint and avoid haste and prejudice in its judgment about the recent incident at Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran.



“We will pursue this issue in a logical and principled framework and we hope that the bilateral relations of the two neighboring and friendly countries, which have unbreakable common interests, will not further be affected by this bitter, unfortunate incident,” he said.

“Iran's basic approach in relation to Azerbaijan is to overcome this incident and work together to resolve misunderstandings.”

Also in his remarks, the spokesman rejected the allegation of sending equipment and drones to be used by Russia in the war in Ukraine, expressing Tehran's readiness to hold talks with Kiev to resolve misunderstandings.

He said a round of specialized talks was held in Oman, and if necessary, there is no problem with holding a new round.

“The first round of technical and expert-level discussions between the members of the two teams has been conducted. We do not have any particular problem in continuing the talks and initiating a new round. We can hold these talks at a suitable time, but the exact time for the second round of the discussions has not yet been decided,” he added.

Kanaani also stressed that the policy of the Islamic Republic regarding the Ukraine issue is based on not supporting the war and not supporting one side against another.

Additionally, the spokesman said Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani will soon travel to Russia in the framework of top security officials of Afghanistan's neighboring countries.

Tehran Offers All Its Resources In Syria to Help Quake-Hit People

DAMASCUS (IRNA) - Iran's consul general in the Syrian city of Aleppo says Tehran is ready to mobilize all its resources in Syria, including its military advisory capacity, to help people affected by an earthquake that has hit areas in north of the country.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran will stand by the people of Aleppo like it has done in the past and we will offer all (our) existing capacities to help those injured in the earthquake this morning,” said Salman Navvab Nouri in an interview with the IRNA on Monday.

A major earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck central Turkey and northwest Syria in the early hours of Monday, killing about 300 people and injuring hundreds more.

The quake, which was also felt in Cyprus and Lebanon, caused buildings across the region to collapse, triggering searches for survivors in the rubble.

Russia to Dispatch Humanitarian Aid Cargo to Quake-Hit Khoy

TEHRAN (MNA) - The people of the earthquake-hit city of Khoy will receive a shipment of Russian humanitarian packages tomorrow, according to the Russian embassy in Iran.

Officials of the Russian embassy in Iran announced that Russia will dispatch humanitarian aid for the victims of the earthquake-hit city of Khoy on Tuesday.

The reports suggest that the Russian humanitarian packages have entered Iran through the Armenian border and will be dispatched to Khoy city of West Azarbaijan Province.

A 5.9-magnitude earthquake hit the city at 9:44 pm local time on January 28. The epicenter was located 23 kilometers southeast of Khoy with a population of 175,000.

At least three people died and over 900 were injured as a result of a powerful earthquake.

The earthquake caused 20 to 50 percent damage to buildings in 70 villages, according to the Governor of the West Azarbaijan Province.

Baghdad Ties With Tehran Based on Common Interests

TEHRAN (MNA) - In a meeting with the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, the Iraqi Foreign Minister emphasized that Baghdad's relations with neighboring countries, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran, are based on common interests.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari met and held talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein in Baghdad on Sunday.

In this meeting, the Iraqi diplomat and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister discussed regional challenges.

The officials also discussed the existing cases between the two countries, especially the energy issue.

In its relations with neighboring countries, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq acts on the basis of common interests, the Iraqi Foreign Minister emphasized, noting that this will strengthen Iraq's national interests.

Supreme Leader Foiled Foes' Plot to Turn Youths Into Rioters

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf pointed to Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's pardon of prisoners, noting that the Supreme Leader obstructed the enemies' plot to turn youths and teenagers into organized rioters.

Qalibaf made the remarks in the Monday session of the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) in Tehran, saying that on the verge of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Supreme Leader issued a pardon for a remarkable number of prisoners of the recent unrest as an act of kindness and fatherly gesture.

Ayatollah Khamenei agreed with the amnesty and commutation proposed by the head of Iran's judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei. The pardon included tens of thousands of inmates, who were arrested due to their role in the recent unrest in Iran.

From the onset of the recent riot, the Supreme Leader differentiated between those who had been excited and deceived and those who organized the unrest, so he played a unique role in social reconciliation and revitalizing national solidarity and unity, the speaker noted.

The Supreme Leader's agreement with the pardon shows the tradition of prophets and imams in forgiving when in power, which hindered the enemies' conspiracies, he argued.

All Iranian officials are tasked with following the Supreme Leader's attitude and pursuing social reconciliation, he said, urging that the authorities should adopt kind stances to prevent foes and organized rioters from standing in the way of revitalizing the national unity.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf offered condolences to the Turkish and Syrian nations over the last deadly earthquake.

Iranian Basij Forces Show Solidarity In Face of EU Parliament Resolution

TEHRAN (IP) - Iranian Basij (popular volunteer) forces demonstrated their power and solidarity in 12 thousand people gathering in Tehran.

Basij is a Persian word that means to be prepared and mobilized; it is the name of a paramilitary force in Iran that was formed in 1979 upon a decree by the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini as a popular and voluntary force that is tasked with serving the Islamic Republic's ideals.

The Basij is an affiliate of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC). It has many sub-divisions, including “Basij-e Sazandegi” or the “Construction Basij”, which is engaged in building or renovating schools, houses, and hospitals in deprived areas, or the Medical Basij which is tasked with providing free-of-charge medical service in low-privileged areas.

In order to renew allegiance with the ideals of the great founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and show the power and authority of the Basij forces, a gathering of 12 thousand Basijis of Tehran was held on Monday in Tehran's Azadi sports complex under the title of the “Defenders of the Velayat” exercise.

The gathering took place after the decision of the European Parliament to declare the IRGC as a so-called terrorist organization and the publication of insulting cartoons by the French magazine Charlene Hebdo.

In this ceremony, the deputy commander of the IRGC, Brigadier General Ali Fadavi, said: “The enemies thought that they would win, but they have been making this miscalculation for 44 years.”

Referring to the recent foreign-backed riots inside the country, he said: “In the recent sedition, they tried and planned but failed. But Basijis prevailed.”

Pardoning Prisoners sign of Islamic Gov't's Benevolence

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi says giving pardon to tens of thousands of prisoners, including many involved in recent riots in the country, was a sign of benevolence of the Islamic government.

Gharibabadi made the comments in a post on his Twitter page on Monday as he hailed a decision a day earlier by Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to grant clemency to people detained in recent riots in Iran.

“Granting pardon to the accused is deemed an unprecedented initiative. Such an Islamic and humanitarian act is emblematic of the leniency practiced by and popularity of the Establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran - and indeed a big move in the field of human rights,” he said in his tweet.

On the 44th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei on Sunday agreed to a proposal by Iranian judiciary chief to pardon or commute sentences of a significant number of convicts from the recent riots and those convicted in public courts and others.

Greenhouse Cultivation Development, a Major Policy of Agriculture Ministry

TEHRAN (MNA) - The development of greenhouse cultivation is a major policy of the Agriculture Ministry, the deputy agriculture minister stated.

In this regard, several projects have been defined and introduced to the banks, and as soon as the notification is made, the projects will receive facilities and their implementation will begin, the official added.

In recent years, the water crisis has caused serious challenges in Iran's agriculture sector.

To solve this problem, several solutions, including the implementation of pressurized irrigation project and greenhouse cultivation, have been emphasized by experts and officials in this sector.

Iranian Agriculture Ministry's Greenhouse Development Program is one of the priority projects of this ministry which aims at increasing productivity, efficiency, and water consumption management in the agriculture sector.

The program was approved in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017) under the framework of the National Resilient Economy Plan.

The development of the country's agricultural parks and greenhouses not only is going to create new job opportunities but also increases the country's non-oil exports and helps preserve the environment and the national water and soil resources.

South Pars Output hits 2m Tons in 10 Months

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of South Pars Gas Complex announced that since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year which began on March 21, more than 165.32 billion cubic meters of gas has been produced in South Pars joint gas field.

Ahmad Bahoush said the gas has been injected into the country's trunklines and more than 1.975 million tons of ethane have been produced in this complex during the period.

He stated that the specialists and employees of the South Pars Gas Complex have been able to warm the homes of the compatriots by carrying out appropriate repairs, innovative and effective measures, adding: “In the past 45 days of the winter season, the 13 refineries of the South Pars Gas Complex have injected over 25.841 billion cubic meters of gas to the national transmission network.

He noted the amount of gas output of South Pars refineries since the beginning of this calendar year, and stated: “With the efforts, collective wisdom and teamwork of specialists and employees, more than 165.32 billion cubic meters of gas has been injected into the country's national distribution network since the beginning of the year.”

The CEO of South Pars Gas Complex, pointing out that this complex has become the country's largest gas supply gateway by supplying more than 75% of gas, added: “South Pars Gas Complex is the first company in the country in the field of using Iranian parts and equipment and first-time equipment from knowledge-based companies.”



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:56
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:33
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:58

20. They say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?"
 Say: "The Unseen is only for Allah (to know), then wait ye: I too will wait with you."
 21. When We make mankind taste of some mercy after adversity hath touched them, behold! they take to plotting against Our Signs! Say: "Swifter to plan is Allah."
 Verily, Our messengers record all the plots that ye make!
 Surah 10. Jonah (20-21)

Iran's Free Trade With Venezuela on the Agenda

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization says Iran eyes free trade with Venezuela and it is on the agenda of the country.

Speaking in a press conference held on the occasion of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Alireza Peyman-Pak said that Iran has signed for trade with preferential tariff and free trade with EAEU, and this is the first trade agreement of Iran that 90% of the goods codes of the country are in the green line and the agreement has been finalized technically and it will come into effect from next summer.

He added that economic diplomacy is one of the top and important issues in the current government, adding that with using international capacities of the country, the outcome and statistics have been promising and effective. He went on to say that the country had \$45.3b of non-oil exports in 10 months of the current year which shows 18% in terms of values and 3% in weight.

Peyman-Pak reiterated that the country posted the highest amount of non-oil export in 10 months, noting that it seems the non-oil exports would surpass \$52b by the yearend in mid-March and this figure will be the highest in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He added that this achievement has been attained despite many problems like devaluation of the currency, elimination of preferential forex, energy, power cut,



Russia-Ukraine war and decline in the price of metal products as well as recent riots and protests in the country which disrupted the exchange of trade delegations.

He said that five markets of China, Iraq, Turkey, the UAE and India were focused this year although African, Latin American and East Asian countries have suitable capacities.

Peyman-Pak then pointed to the prioritized exhibitions, adding that auto parts exhibition in Russia was useful and also some exhibitions were held in Iran in different fields.

He then pointed to construction of export terminals and said that it takes time, adding that Iran looks for free trade with countries, adding that free trade with Venezuela is on the agenda.

Peyman-Pak further said that the organization is planning for preferential tariff agreement with Indonesia while it signed the preferential trade with Pakistan but was not active as it was waiting for removal of restrictions.

Sepahan Oil Co.'s Export Terminal Inaugurated



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

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

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 isotanks for all types of stored products are among the benefits of launching the terminal.

The terminal has been built on a land about 19,000 square meters and is considered as one of the biggest export terminals of the southern coasts of the country. The terminal will create 40 direct and over 1000 indirect jobs in the region.

With the launch of the export terminal of Sepahan Oil Company, it will rank in storing different types of oil in Hormozgan Province and Bandar Abbas which has come on stream with a credit around 180b tomans.

On Saturday, during the one-day visit of the Oil Minister 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.

98% of Petchem Catalysts Supplied Domestically



TEHRAN (Shana) -- The CEO of the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) announced that 98% of the catalysts of the oil industry are produced by reliable domestic companies, adding: "Iranian catalysts are currently being exported to countries in the region and are being successfully used in complexes."

Majid Daftari at the first specialized exhibition and conference of the oil industry catalyst, which was held at the same time as 44th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, stated that the catalyst industry of the country is a precious group that was able to render Iran needless of importing catalysts."

Pointing out that 99 catalysts, activators and absorbents are used in the oil industry, he added: "85 of these are being produced by domestic companies, and the remaining 15 either have a very small amount of consumption inside, or are not economical to produce."

The PRTC CEO stated that 98% by weight of the catalysts of the oil industry are produced domestically, and continued: "It has been about two years that favorable steps have been taken to export Iranian catalysts to the countries of the region, and the companies of the region are now using Iranian catalysts."

Daftari emphasized: "Since the beginning of the 13th administration, localization of all catalysts of the oil industry was assigned to PRTC; this company extends a helping hand to all scientific and research centers so that the remaining catalysts can be localized with their cooperation."

He stated that the amount of catalyst consumed in the oil industry is about 37,000 tons per year, and stated: "PRTC provides all its facilities to knowledge-based companies and researchers to help accelerate the achievements."

The PRTC CEO stated that this company is in charge of creating knowledge in the field of processes, catalysts and chemicals, and added: "This company had focused on 6 high-use processes of the petrochemical industry in the past and obtained their savvy, which is currently being used in petrochemical complexes."

Iran, Zimbabwe Mining, Geological Cooperation to Expand

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Following the 9th Iran and Zimbabwe Joint Economic commission, it was announced that the two countries' geological cooperation will expand in applied, exploration, mining and personnel training fields.

The Geological Studies and Mining Exploration Organization of Iran reported that the 9th Iran and Zimbabwe Joint Economic commission, which was held on February 1st, had numerous expert level commissions on Sunday, in which the document of the bilateral commission was signed by the Iranian labor and social welfare minister and the minister of foreign affairs of Zimbabwe.

In that document in the section about industrial and mining agreements, it is said that the Geological Studies and Mining Explorations Exploration Organization of Iran is ready for implementing applied,



exploration, mining and training geological projects in Zimbabwe in collaboration with them.

The Iranian minister of labor and social welfare said at the ceremony to sign that MOU said that the Geological Studies and Mining Explorations Exploration Organization

of Iran and the Geological Organization of Zimbabwe reached good mutual understanding in geological and mining exploration fields in this commission.

Ms. Haniyeh Bakhshaei on behalf of the Geological Studies and Mining Explorations Exploration Organization of Iran and Mr. Mazmo, the programming and strategic affairs of Mining Organization of Zimbabwe and Mr. Delio Eve, senior technician of Ministry of Mines Development of Zimbabwe were commissioned to finalize the text of mutual cooperation in geological and mining fields by the end of May, 2003.

Iranian Catalysts Excel European Ones

TEHRAN (Shana) - The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) underlined the export of Iranian catalysts to Russia, and said: "Iranian catalysts have excelled the European ones."

Morteza Shahmirzaei stated at the first specialized exhibition and conference of the catalyst of the oil industry, which was held at the same time as the 44th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution at the National Petrochemical Company: "The capacity of the petrochemical industry before the revolution was about 3 million tons per year with actual production of around 1.5 million tons."

Appreciating the efforts of the petrochemical industry who have already achieved the nominal capacity of 90 million tons per year, he added: "The industry should be deepened and focus on quality improvement and production of products with higher value-added."

The NPC CEO continued: "Researchers and knowledge-based companies should all take steps towards localization of technical know-how, catalysts, chemicals, goods and equipment of the petrochemical industry, and NPC will not spare any support in this direction."

Shahmirzaei stated: "We are determined that Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC), with the help of private and knowledge-based companies, which are the main capital of this industry, will make the country self-sufficient in production of catalysts until by the end of the Raisi administration."

Iranian Shipping Fleet Transit Capacity to Hit 50m Tons

TEHRAN (MNA) - Managing Director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Ali-Akbar Safaei has said the transit capacity of the country's shipping fleet is planned to increase up to 50 million tons in the future, the PMO portal reported.

"Our medium-term target is to transit 15 to 20 million tons of goods annually and the long-term plan is to reach more than 50 million tons of annual transit, for which we need to develop our railway infrastructure," Safaei said. According to the official, the capacity of the country's ports has increased by 251 million tons since the victory of the Islamic Revolution 44 years ago.

"The total capacity of the country's ports in 1357 (1978) was 19 million tons, and today the figure has reached more than 270 million tons," the PMO head said.

He stated that the container capacity of the country's shipping fleet which was 75,000 TEUs in 1978 has currently reached 8.5 million TEUs.

The official further underlined PMO's plans for the expansion of ties with neighboring countries in the maritime and port sector.

According to Safaei, more than 183 million tons of goods were loaded and unloaded at the country's ports in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-January 20, 2023), which has increased compared to last year.

"In the container sector, 2.15 million TEUs were transported, which indicates a growth of eight percent compared to the same period last year," he said.

Majlis Supports Nuclear Power Plant Industry

TEHRAN (IP) - The spokesperson of the Energy Commission of Iran's parliament detailed the parliament's plan to develop a peaceful nuclear program and support the nuclear power plant industry.

Malek Shariati, the spokesman of the Energy Commission of the parliament, said the commission reviewed the details of the development plan for the peaceful exploitation of nuclear technology to generate electricity on Sunday.

Stating about today's meeting of the Energy Commission, Malek Shariati added: The meeting was dedicated to the review of the details of the 18-point plan for the development of peaceful exploitation of nuclear technology in generating electricity, which preliminary had been approved in the previous meetings.

The spokesman also expressed hope that with the final approval of this plan regarding the amount of investment for the development of nuclear power plants, the electricity production of the country will improve.

The spokesperson of the Parliament's Energy Commission pointed out: The plan aims to support the country's nuclear power plant industry because Iran has indigenized the knowledge of the industry and we should be able to use it for peaceful nuclear energy to generate nuclear electricity.

TCCIMA to Host Iran-EAEU Economic Diplomacy Forum

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Trade (TCCIMA) on Feb13 to hold Iran-EAEU Diplomacy Forum on Agrofood Industry.

According to reports, TCCIMA in cooperation with the state organizations and embassies of EAEU member states is to hold the 3rd EAEU Economic Diplomacy Forum which will be focused on agrofood.

The forum is to review ways for boosting cooperation between EAEU member states in the field of agro products and food industries.

The event will be best opportunity for economic activists to exchange their views in the mentioned fields.

Eight Dead in Weekend Avalanches in Austria

VIENNA (Dispatches) - Austrian police said that five people had been killed in avalanches in the west of the country, after three deaths were reported Saturday despite pleas for caution on ski slopes.

The eight deaths came as resorts are filled during the February school holidays in Vienna, with the avalanche alert level at four on a scale of five after several days of intense snowfall and wind.

On Sunday, the body of a 59-year-old man buried while helping the snow removal effort in his tractor was recovered, police in Austria's western Tyrol region said. Two skiers aged 29 and 33, including a guide, who were carried off-piste on Saturday morning were found dead in Sankt Anton am Arlberg.



Four Dead After Migrant Boat Sinks Off Greece

ATHENS (Dispatches) - Four migrants, including three children, died after their boat sank off the island of Leros in the southeastern Aegean Sea on Sunday, the Greek coast guard said.

The coast guard recovered the body of a woman and rescued at least 39 migrants who, according to their accounts, had sailed from Turkey, a coast guard official said.

The three children died after being hospitalized, the coast guard said. The nationalities of the migrants were not immediately known. Along with Spain and Italy, Greece is one of the key entry points into the European Union for refugees and migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia.



Ukraine DM Expects Help From Western Warplanes



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's defense minister expressed confidence that Western allies would agree to the country's latest weapons request — warplanes to fight off Russian forces that invaded nearly a year ago.

Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told a news conference in Kyiv that Ukraine has already received everything from its "wish list to Santa," except planes. "There will be planes, too," Reznikov predicted. "The question is just what kind exactly.... Consider that this mission is already completed."

So far, Ukraine has won support from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets. But several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could provoke the Kremlin and draw their countries deeper into the conflict, which has cost tens of thousands of lives and wreaked massive destruction.

Kyiv says such jets are essential to challenging Russia's air superiority and ensuring success in a Russian offensive that Reznikov predicted could begin around the war's one-year anniversary, Feb. 24.

"Not all Western weapons will arrive by then, but we have the resources and reserves to help stabilize and sustain the offensive," Reznikov told reporters.

Since the war began, Western leaders have balked at some of Ukraine's requests, such as for longer-range missiles and tanks, only to agree later. The warplanes are the latest example.

Ukraine has relocated its warplanes and concealed air defense assets, hampering Moscow's efforts to gain full control of the skies. After suffering early losses, the Russian air force has avoided venturing deep into Ukraine's airspace and mostly focused on close front line support.

German-made tanks are on the way to Ukraine. Reznikov said his forces would begin training on Leopard tanks in Europe on Monday, before their delivery to Ukraine. So far, Canada, Poland, Germany, Great Britain and the United States have announced they will supply tanks to Ukraine.

The Kremlin has said Western countries' supply of increasingly sophisticated and more weapons will only prolong the conflict, and it has characterized NATO as a direct participant. Reznikov, commenting on the supply of Western weapons and the state of the Ukrainian army, took the rhetoric further on Sunday, telling reporters: "I absolutely boldly claim that we have become a de facto NATO country. We only have a de jure part left."

Ukraine has applied to join NATO, as have two of Russia's other neighbors, Finland and Sweden.

On the battlefield, Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said four people were injured Sunday when a Russian S-300 missile fell near an apartment block in Kharkiv city, and another was hurt when a missile hit a university building. Video showed the building hit was the National Academy for Urban Economy, about 700 meters from the city's central square.

Meanwhile, heavy fighting continued in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, one of four regions that Russia illegally annexed last year even though its forces do not fully control the area. Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said five civilians were wounded in rocket attacks during the night in the city of Druzhkivka and that the town of Avdiivka and its outskirts were also fired on.

In the Black Sea port of Odesa, workers labored to connect temporary generators shipped in to restore electricity. The city and surrounding area were plunged into darkness over the weekend following a large-scale network failure.

U.S. Fighter Jet Shoots Down Suspected Chinese Spy Balloon

SURFSIDE BEACH (Dispatches) - A U.S. military fighter jet shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon off the coast of South Carolina, a week after it first entered U.S. airspace and triggered a dramatic -- and public -- spying saga that worsened Sino-U.S. relations.

President Joe Biden said he had issued an order on Wednesday to take down the balloon, but the Pentagon had recommended waiting until it could be done over open water to safeguard civilians from debris crashing to Earth from thousands of feet (meters) above commercial air traffic.

"They successfully took it down, and I want to complement our aviators who did it," Biden said.

Multiple fighter and refueling aircraft were involved in the mission, but only one -- an F-22 fighter jet from Langley Air Force Base in Virginia -- took the shot at 2:39 p.m. (1939 GMT), using a single AIM-9X supersonic, heat-seeking, air-to-air missile, a senior U.S. military official said.

China strongly condemned the military strike on an airship that it says was used for meteorological and other scientific purposes, and which it said had strayed into U.S. airspace "completely accidentally" -- claims flatly dismissed by U.S. officials.

"China had clearly asked the U.S. to handle this properly in a calm, professional and restrained manner," China's foreign ministry said in a statement. "The U.S. had insisted on using force, obviously overreacting."

The balloon was shot down about six nautical miles off the U.S. coast of the Atlantic Ocean, over relatively shallow water, potentially aiding efforts to recover elements of the Chinese surveillance equipment over the coming days, U.S. officials said.

One U.S. military official said the debris field was spread out over seven miles (11 km) of ocean, and multiple U.S. military vessels were on site.

The downing of the balloon came shortly after the U.S. government ordered a halt to flights in and out of three airports in South Carolina -- Wilmington, Myrtle Beach and Charleston -- due to what it said at the time was an undisclosed "national security effort." Flights resumed on Saturday afternoon.

Macron Gives Ground to Allies in Unpopular Pension Reform Bid

PARIS (Dispatches) - President Emmanuel Macron's government offered a concession on contested French pension reforms, seeking to shore up support from prospective right-wing allies ahead of the parliamentary debate.

People who began work between the ages of 20 and 21 will be able to retire at 63, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne told the JDD weekly, rather than the headline age of 64 that has unions and large swathes of the public bristling.

"We hear the request" of MPs from the conservative Republicans party, whose votes are needed to make up a majority for the reform, Borne said.

Republicans leader Eric Ciotti had earlier told the Parisien newspaper that the change would "secure a very large majority" of his MPs.

Although re-elected to the presidency last year, Macron also lost his parliamentary majority and has been forced either to cobble together compromises or ram through laws using an unpopular constitutional side door.

But he has stuck to the widely disliked pension reform, against which hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated and many workers went on strike in two days of mass action so far, with more planned on February 7 and 11.

Meanwhile the left-wing opposition in parliament has submitted thousands of amendments to stymie debate on the law.

Borne also acknowledged demands from the Republicans and Macron's Democratic Movement allies for a 2027 review of the reform, which aims to bring the pensions system out of deficit by 2030. And she said the government would pile pressure on companies to end the practice of letting go of older employees, which leaves many struggling to find work in their final years before pension age.

"Too often, companies stop training and recruiting older people," Borne said. "It's shocking for the employees and it's a loss to deprive ourselves of their skills."

Government plans will force companies to regularly publish details of how many older workers they employ, with Labour Minister Olivier Dussopt on Saturday trailing financial penalties for those which fail to do so.

High Turnout as Cypriots Vote for New President

NICOSIA (Dispatches) - Cypriots voted in large numbers in a close presidential election between three front runners, with the focus on corruption and the economy amid deadlock over the island's long-standing division.

A record 14 candidates -- but only two women -- are standing, with the winner needing 50 percent plus one vote to succeed two-term President Nicos Anastasiades.

There was a strong turnout, with almost 312,008 votes cast, chief returning officer Costas Constantinou said.

That figure constitutes 55.6 percent of the electorate -- a 4.7 percent increase on the same time during the last presidential election in 2018.

Opinion polls predict a run-off on February 12, with no contender expected to secure an immediate outright majority.

"I expect the next president to do something about corruption and to settle the Cyprus question," said civil servant Andreas Georgiadis, 29, after voting in the capital Nicosia.

Many analysts say former foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides is the favourite. Backed by centrist parties, the 49-year-old commands a firm lead in opinion polls but not enough to shake off his rivals.

He is likely to face off in the second round against either Andreas Mavroyiannis, a 66-year-old technocrat backed by communist party AKEL, or Averof Neofytou, 61, leader of the governing conservatives, DISY.

"Only through unity, through a collective effort, can we really meet the expectations of the Cypriot people," said Christodoulides after voting in Paphos, in the island's southwest.

The last opinion poll by state broadcaster CyBC on January 27 had Christodoulides leading at 26.5 percent, Neofytou at 22.5 percent and Mavroyiannis at 21 percent.

"All polls indicate that Christodoulides is going to the second round," said Andreas Theophanous of the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs.

"And if he goes to the second round, he is predicted to win." Voters appeared concerned about a cash-for-passports scandal and the pressures of irregular migration on public resources, while the issue of the island's decades-old division remains at an impasse.

Cyprus has been split since 1974, when Turkish forces occupied the island's northern third in response to a Greek-sponsored coup.

"Some things must change radically in my view, on the Cyprus problem and the economy," teacher Maria Christodoulou, 45, told AFP at a polling station in Nicosia.

The centrist parties that back Christodoulides take a tough line on reunification talks, but his rivals are seen as less hawkish. Neofytou is seen as a pragmatist and "dealmaker", while Mavroyiannis backer AKEL champions reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriots.



Ecuador Votes on Extradition Amid Crime Boom

QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuadorians voted in a referendum that will decide whether or not to allow extradition of citizens linked to organized crime in a country rocked by a dramatic increase in violence.

The extradition of Ecuadorians is prohibited by the South American country's constitution.

But conservative President Guillermo Lasso has proposed legalizing it as a means of dealing with a crime wave that has claimed the lives of two candidates in local elections being held alongside the referendum.

Ecuador is sandwiched between Colombia and Peru, the world's two largest cocaine producers, and has itself become a hub for the global drug trade in recent years.

Despite not having any major drug plantations or cartels of its own, nor big laboratories for refining cocaine, the United States has listed Ecuador among the top 22 drug-producing or transit countries in the world.

Drugs produced elsewhere are shipped from Ecuador's Guayaquil port to the United States, Europe and Asia.

This has resulted in a bloody territorial war between gangs, some with ties to Mexican cartels according to the authorities, who brutally kill each other on the streets and in Ecuador's overcrowded jails.

The country's murder rate almost doubled between 2021 and 2022 from 14 to 25 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, according to official figures. Drug seizures have skyrocketed and prison massacres have left more than 400 inmates dead since 2021.

In neighbor Colombia, extradition to the United States has proven to be a useful weapon against drug traffickers, though cocaine production is still booming.

Allowing extradition is one of eight constitutional measures that some 13.4 million eligible voters among Ecuador's 18.2 million people will be asked about in Sunday's mandatory Yes/No vote.

Other proposals include shrinking the opposition-controlled 137-member National Assembly.

The referendum goes hand in hand with elections for mayors, municipal and neighborhood councils, and for a council that nominates people to key oversight posts.



Protecting 30% of Oceans a Huge Challenge For the Planet



MONTREAL (Dispatches) - How do we go from protecting eight percent of marine areas to 30 percent in less than 10 years? This question is at the heart of a global forum in Canada this weekend aiming to save marine ecosystems under threat from overfishing, pollution and climate change.

On the heels of the historic biodiversity agreement signed at COP15 in Montreal late last year, about 3,000 officials, scientists, NGOs and Indigenous groups are meeting in Vancouver for the fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5), which opened Friday and runs until February 9.

Scientists have said the meeting is crucial for setting up a framework to reach the agreed target at COP15 of protecting 30 percent of the planet's lands and oceans by 2030.

It's an immense step for ocean conservation, which will see a tripling of areas made off-limits to most human activities, with an aim to preserve sensitive ecosystems and species at risk.

The summit, usually held every four years, is taking place two years late due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "We must re-think our policies, economies, priorities, and processes in ways that reflect the important role nature plays in our own health, equity, well-being and economic sustainability," said host Canada, which has some of the world's longest coastlines.

Covering almost three-quarters of the earth's surface, oceans are home to a quarter of known species and absorb 30 percent of CO2 emissions from human activities.

"COP15 marked a historic inflection point in conservation efforts for nature... but the pressure is on now not just to reach the numerical target, but to make sure that we do it right, that our marine protected areas are in the right places (and) that they're managed well," Pepe Clarke of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) told AFP.

Some experts fear the "politics of figures."

Biodiversity hotspots or particularly vulnerable areas that deserve urgent conservation measures have been identified, scientists have said.

Now it is essential to have discussions to "establish a global network, ecologically representative and which adequately protects the whole range of ecosystem types," according to Clarke.

Especially since protecting and managing our oceans more sustainably will make them more resistant to climate change.

But even if the world achieves "the ambitious target of protecting 30 percent of the oceans by 2030 within high-quality (marine protected areas), the goals of the framework cannot be fully met without appropriate management of the other 70 percent of the oceans," said the Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-profit.

For Sian Owen, director of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), "it is crucial that both existing and emerging industries that threaten our deep ocean are quickly and unequivocally rejected and that we sustainably manage the remaining 70 percent."

UN member states will meet again at the end of February to try and hammer out a treaty for the protection of the high seas, a session that should in principle be the last.

Protecting international waters, which cover nearly half the planet, is crucial for the health of the entire ocean and its biodiversity, and for limiting global warming.

"Governments must restrict activities that destroy and disturb vital ecosystems that support life on Earth," said DSCC.

Endangered Monarch Butterflies Face Perilous Storm



SANTA CRUZ (Dispatches) - As devastating storms pounded California, nature lovers feared for endangered monarch butterflies that winter there as part of a seemingly magical migration pattern.

The colorfully winged insects that travel vast distances over the course of generations have been closely watched in the US state since they neared extinction just three years ago.

As the sun rose one January morning, volunteers began counting monarch butterflies, finding them clustered atop cypress and eucalyptus trees in various sites along the California coast.

The butterflies huddled in clusters of gray colonies until one spread its wings to reveal the orange spots for which they are known.

The sight provided a bit of reassurance for Stephanie Turcotte Edenholm, who counted more than a thousand monarchs at a sanctuary in the California coastal town of Pacific Grove.

The educator spent much of the morning explaining the lives of the butterflies to young school students. They got to watch as dozens of butterflies took flight, believing -- mistakenly -- that the mild temperature signaled the end of winter.

"It's too early for them to get so agitated, they're using up their fat reserves," Edenholm fretted.

She worried, too, that they would mate and the females would fly off in search of milkweed plants to lay eggs on. Milkweed is all that baby caterpillars eat once the eggs hatch, but it was too early in winter for the plants to be growing.

Volunteers counted more than 330,000 "western monarch" butterflies at the end of November, according to the Xerces Society conservation group.

That number came as a relief compared to the 2,000 butterflies counted at the end of 2020, and an encouraging step up from the 250,000 or so butterflies tallied in 2021.

But the ranks of butterflies were far from the millions observed in the 1980s, due to threats including habitat loss, pesticides and climate change, according to Xerces.

The monarch was added last year to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of threatened species and Xerces has asked the US Fish and Wildlife Service to place monarchs on its endangered list.

Such a designation would help monarch defenders fight real estate developers out to raze trees or build on terrain needed by migrating butterflies.

The question of whether to protect monarchs is a philosophical one, since the insects are known more for incredible migrations than being crucial for pollinating crops or flowers, according to Xerces biologist Emma Pelton.

"We wouldn't lose human crops or wild plants in particular if the monarchs disappeared," Pelton said.

But the world would lose butterflies "that perform a really incredible migration, and that people are very attached to, emotionally and culturally, throughout North America."

Some species of monarchs travel thousands of miles, from Canada to Mexico, while the lifespan of any single butterfly is typically measured in weeks.

Bill Henry remembers a childhood here filled with butterflies.

"It was kind of a magical thing to be immersed in the abundance of the natural world," said Henry, now director of Groundswell Coastal Ecology group in Santa Cruz, not far from Pacific Grove.

"It paints a picture, it's something that dreams are made out of."



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Japan to Restrict Chip Manufacturing Machine Exports to China

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan's government will begin restricting exports of advanced semiconductor manufacturing equipment to China in Spring after it amends a foreign exchange law to allow the change, Kyodo News reported.

The new regulation will not mention China specifically in a bid to reduce the risk of retaliation by Beijing, the report

said, without saying where it obtained the information.

Japan and the Netherlands have agreed to join the United States in halting shipments of semiconductor manufacturing equipment produced by the likes of Nikon Corp and ASML Holdings in a bid to stop China developing and advanced chips that could be used to enhance its military power, sources told Reuters, confirming earlier media reports.



U.S. Reports Blowout Job Growth

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. job growth accelerated sharply in January while the unemployment rate hit more than a 53-1/2-year low of 3.4%, pointing to a stubbornly tight labor market, and a potential headache for Federal Reserve officials as they fight inflation.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday also showed job creation in the past year was much stronger than previously estimated, suggesting the economy was nowhere near a recession. Though wage inflation cooled further in January, average hourly earnings increased faster in 2022 than previously estimated.

The strength in hiring, which occurred despite layoffs in the technology sector as well as in sectors like housing and finance that are sensitive to interest rates, poured cold water on market expectations that the U.S. central bank was close to pausing its monetary policy tightening cycle.

Economists said the head-scratching report and other data on Friday showing a sharp rebound in services industry activity last month suggested the Fed could lift its target interest rate above the recently projected 5.1% peak and keep it there for some time.

"The labor market is still running hot, too hot for the Fed's liking," said Daniel Vernazza, chief international economist at UniCredit Bank in London. "Anyone that thought the Fed might stop hiking as soon as its March meeting is likely to be disappointed on this evidence."

The survey of establishments showed nonfarm payrolls surged by 517,000 jobs last month, the most in six months. Economists in a Reuters poll had expected a gain of 185,000. Data for December was revised higher to show 260,000 jobs added instead of the previously reported 223,000. Employment growth last month was well above the monthly average of 401,000 in 2022.

With January's report, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) published its annual payrolls "benchmark" revision and updated the formulas it uses to smooth the data for regular seasonal fluctuations in the establishment survey.

The economy added 568,000 more jobs in the 12 months through March 2022 than previously reported. Revisions to payrolls data from April through December also showed more jobs created than previously estimated. The economy added 4.8 million jobs in 2022 instead of the 4.5 million previously reported.

The revisions dispelled claims by researchers at the Philadelphia Fed who published a paper in December suggesting employment growth in the second quarter of 2022 was overstated by about a million jobs.

The BLS revised its industry classification system, which resulted in about 10% of employment reclassified into different industries. Last month's broad increase in employment was led by the leisure and hospitality sector, which added 128,000 jobs, with 99,000 of them in restaurants and bars.

Leisure and hospitality employment remains 495,000 jobs below its pre-pandemic level. Professional and business services employment rose by 82,000, with temporary help jobs, a harbinger for future hiring, rebounding by 25,900 after declining for several months. Government payrolls jumped 74,000, boosted by the return of striking university workers in California.

Construction payrolls increased by 25,000 jobs, which were mostly among specialty trade contractors. Manufacturing employment rose by 19,000 jobs.

World Food Prices Decline for 10th Month Running in January

ROME (Dispatches) - World food prices fell in January for a 10th consecutive month, and are now down some 18% from a record high hit last March following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations food agency said.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 131.2 points last month against 132.2 for December. It was the lowest reading since September 2021.

The December figure was revised down from an original estimate of 132.4.

Falls in the prices of vegetable oils, dairy and sugar helped pull down the index, while cereals and meat remained largely stable, the FAO said.

In separate cereal supply and demand estimates on Friday, the FAO raised its forecast for global cereal production in 2022 to 2.765 billion tons from a previous estimate of 2.756 billion tons.

The FAO cereal price index rose just 0.1% month-on-month in January to give a 4.8% increase on the year. International wheat prices declined 2.5% as production in Australia and Russia outpaced expectations. Rice, by contrast, jumped 6.2%, driven in part by strong local demand in some Asian exporting countries.

Vegetable oil prices fell 2.9% in January, the dairy index dipped 1.4% and sugar declined 1.1%. Meat slipped a mere 0.1%.



IMF Giving Pakistan Tough Time in Unimaginable Economic Crisis

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the International Monetary Fund was giving his country a "tough time" over unlocking stalled funding from a \$6.5 billion bailout at a time of "unimaginable" economic crisis.

Hours after his remark, the Pakistani rupee hit a record low against the U.S. dollar in a steep slide since last week. "Our economic situation is unimaginable," the premier said, adding the IMF visiting mission was giving Pakistan a "tough time."

"The conditions we have to fulfil are beyond imagination," he said, but admitted that the country has no option but to accept them.

"You all know we are running short of resources," Sharif said, adding the country was "facing an economic crisis".

He made the comments in a meeting of civil and military leaders in the northwestern city of Peshawar he chaired to prepare a response to Monday's mosque bombing that killed more than 100 people.

He was speaking in the context of funds the country might need for any military or counter-terrorism response to the resurgent Islamist militancy.

IMF's Pakistan representative did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The IMF mission is visiting Pakistan to discuss fiscal consolidation measures the institution needs from Pakistan to clear a 9th review of its Extended Fund Facility, aimed at helping countries facing balance-of-payments crises.

Turkish Inflation Eases Further From Peak

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Price increases in Turkey eased further in January, official data revealed Friday, providing relief to consumers and a welcome boost for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan heading into elections slated for mid-May.

Consumer prices grew at an annualized rate of 57.7% last month, compared to 64.3% in December, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data showed. The coronavirus pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine stoked inflation worldwide, spearheaded by soaring food, energy and commodity prices.

The January reading marked a third straight month of decrease and the lowest level in 11 months, a trend that Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati said is expected to gain even further pace in the period ahead.

Inflation is down from the peak of 85.5% registered last October, a 24-year high.

"The current data indicates that we have left the most challenging period in inflation behind us and that the coming months will be much better," Nebati wrote on Twitter.

Economists attribute the slowdown in part to a slide in the price of Turkey's energy imports. Natural gas prices have fallen back to early 2022 levels after soaring in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Both annual and monthly readings came in above market expectations despite a favorable base effect, which is still expected to carry on until parliamentary and presidential elections planned for May 14.

"Overall, annual inflation maintained its downtrend in January as expected and is likely to decline further until May mainly due to strong base effects, albeit depending on the currency stability," said Dutch banking giant ING.

"While pricing pressures showed some further strengthening, increases across all groups were lower than they were last year and therefore helped the drop in the headline figure," the lender said in a blog.

Month-over-month, consumer prices rose 6.65%, the statistical institute said, nearly twice a Reuters poll forecast of 3.8% and the fastest since April 2022.

Annually, consumer price inflation was forecast to be 53.5%. A Bloomberg survey of economists saw it at 53.8%, while Anadolu Agency (AA) poll projected it would ease to 53.26%.

The sharp monthly rise was due to an array of new-year price hikes, including for public transit, tobacco products and services, as well as rising food prices.

Europe in Crossfire of U.S.-China Economic Rivalry

PARIS (Dispatches) - The economic confrontation between the United States and China has put Europe in the crossfire, with Washington's plan to boost green industries threatening to cause collateral damage to a key ally.

The United States has adopted the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which contains \$370 billion in sweeping investments, subsidies and tax cuts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest-ever US program to combat climate change.

But some of its provisions have been criticized by European Union officials as discriminatory against European carmakers, with some saying it smacks of protectionism.

French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire and his German counterpart Robert Habeck travel to Washington to meet Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Tuesday and try to resolve the impasse.

EU leaders will hold a summit later in the week that aims to begin crafting a response to the US measures.

The IRA aims to bolster green industries that will be key to the future economy, such as the manufacturing of batteries and solar panels.

US firms will be able to receive subsidies similar to those their Chinese rivals receive, on the condition that they manufacture domestically.

"One of the key objectives of the IRA is to exclude Chinese suppliers from clean energy supply chains," said Tobias Gehrke, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

He said the priority was reducing US dependence on Chinese imports.

China dominates the electric vehicle sector, with 78 percent of the global production of battery cells and three-quarters of the big plants to manufacture the lithium-ion batteries they use, according to a study by the Washington-based Brookings Institution.

The IRA has sent chills down the spines of European leaders, who fear the generous support will encourage firms to shift production to the United States.

The EU has called on the United States to provide European firms exemptions -- like those granted to trade bloc partners Canada and Mexico.

However, attempts to find a resolution have so far failed to bear fruit.

Gehrke said Washington was thinking about manufacturing jobs and reducing dependence upon Chinese imports first and foremost, and the impact on its European, Japanese and South Korean allies was more of an "afterthought".

"I don't think America wants to punish Europe ... I don't think they thought about Europe at all," he said.

Cecilia Malmstroem, the EU's former trade commissioner and now a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute think tank in Washington, agreed.

"Europe has become a bit of collateral damage in this" effort to reduce dependence on China, she said.

"I do not think it was intentional to target the Europeans," she added.

Sri Lanka Completing Pre-Requisites for IMF Aid



COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka is completing the pre-requisites to unlock a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and expects rapid approval from the global lender, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said.

"We are successfully completing the difficult stage required to get support from the International Monetary Fund. We expect to get their consent without delay," Wickremesinghe said in his address to the nation to mark the 75th Independence Day.

Sri Lanka, caught in the worst financial crisis since independence from Britain in 1948 triggered by a severe shortage of dollars, has seen steep inflation, a currency plunge and its economy slide into recession.

The island of 22 million people has also been hit by high taxes, a shortage of essential items such as medicine and fuel, and daily power cuts.

Wickremesinghe, who took over after his predecessor fled the country and resigned last year after thousands of protesters occupied his office and residence, has pledged to put the economy back on track but warned it will be an uphill task.

"I know that many of the decisions I have been compelled to take since assuming the presidency have been unpopular I will continue this new reform program with the majority of people who love this country," he added.

Sri Lanka is currently focused on getting financing assurances from key bilateral creditors China and Japan. India, the third major creditor, agreed to support debt restructuring last month.

Sri Lanka's central bank estimates an economic turnaround in the second half of 2023 and inflation to reach single digits by the end of this year.

Fishery Exports Increase 35% In 9 Months on Year

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The value of Iran's fishery export has risen 35 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2022), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to the secretary of the Aquatics Production and Trade Union of Iran.

According to Ali-Akbar Khodaei, the nine-month fishery export was also 20 percent more than the last year's figure in terms of weight, IRIB reported.

The official put the total fishery exports in the previous year at 151,000 tons.

Iran's caviar export, however, has decreased significantly due to the lack of demand in global markets, Khodaei said.

Iranian caviar is mainly exported to European countries, and Arab neighbors including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Oman.



South Korea Reinforces Its Position In European Defense Market

SEOUL (Dispatches) - The recently established military relationship between South Korea and Poland is a multidimensional phenomenon, reaching beyond security in its traditional meaning. In fact, large-scale arms contracts are almost always politicized and followed or accompanied by intensified economic ties. Certainly, in the current circumstances, this view is shared by Warsaw and Seoul (see Part One).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and growing tensions between the United States and China, South Korean companies are following the global trend of shortening supply chains. In recent years, these entities accounted for the greatest foreign investment flows into the Polish market, ranked fourth in 2019 (Oecd-library.org, accessed on January 25) and rising to first in 2021 (The Korea Herald, May 17, 2022). From South Korea's perspective, Poland is an attractive and sought-after partner because it grants access to the European market as well as a skilled and still relatively cheap labor force. Not to mention, Warsaw is well-situated within the European Union's economic and defense architecture. Economically speaking, these factors partly apply to other Central and East European (CEE) markets as well. That is why Seoul is already widely present in countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary to leverage opportunities for increased foreign direct investment.

The competitive advantage of deepening cooperation with South Korea is rooted in the fact that Korean companies simply have little domestic competition in some sectors of these markets. Nevertheless, Poland is one of the only countries in the region capable of and willing to become a Korean defense production hub due to its objectively strong potential as a regional leader (as demonstrated by Warsaw's unwavering support of Ukraine) and proper production facilities to be able to absorb the transfer of Korean technology.

Geographically, Poland's location is also advantageous. Located in the heart of Europe, the country provides alternative trade routes for Korean defense products manufactured by Poland. Nearby Turkey, Finland, Norway and Estonia have already bought K9 howitzers—South Korea's most popular military export—and it is expected that similar regional contracts will intensify. Indeed, Norway is considering making the Korean-made K2 tank its new main battle tank (Asian Military Review, May 6, 2022). Logistical facilities located in the region also support the notion of increased defense negotiations with Seoul. After the Russian heavy weapon-centered land invasion of Ukraine, upgrades to the land forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) eastern front are now more likely to occur than in the past three decades. Moreover, Poland's Baltic coastal line make the African and Middle East markets accessible too, which is critical given a potential take-up of Korean arms throughout Africa (The Korea Times, August 5, 2022). Finally, proximity to Germany's giant motor industry makes Poland its natural economic hinterland. Hence, any investments in related sectors, including the battery industry, seem reasonable.

The Korean military industry has been determined to enter the Polish and CEE markets for some time. Hyundai Rotem had already presented its offer of K2PL battle tanks in 2018 during the International Defense Industry Exhibition in Kielce, Poland (AltairTV, September 10, 2018). Nevertheless, only Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine finally triggered this state-to-state cooperation. Strengthening bonds with a crucial NATO member does not only benefit South Korea's defense industry in a financial sense, but, perhaps more importantly, it also builds confidence in the quality of



Korean equipment and increases the competitiveness of Korean defense companies.

It should be kept in mind that South Korea is a latecomer to the global defense market. Hence, Seoul certainly desires an elevated standing as it hopes to penetrate other markets. "Poland is where our journey for the export of 1,000 FA-50 fighters begins," Korea Aerospace Industries CEO Ahn Hyun-Ho declared, adding that Poland is a potential buyer of KF-21 "4.5th-generation" fighter aircraft, which is currently under development (Yonhap News Agency, July 28, 2022). Accordingly, the recently signed deals in Central and Eastern Europe might serve as a stepping stone into other industries, including shipbuilding. In December 2022, PKN Orlen, Poland's leading energy group, co-organized a christening ceremony for two liquefied natural gas carriers at Hyundai Heavy Industries' facilities in Ulsan, South Korea. The Polish company has chartered these for ten years from Norwegian energy entity Knutsen Group.

Neither China nor Russia—as the two major regional adversaries for Seoul and Warsaw in their respective areas—have commented on the recently intensified Korean-Polish defense relationship. Even so, it is clear that these developments run against Beijing's and Moscow's interests, if only from a military perspective. The large purchases of new weaponry and the creation of new logistical facilities in Central and Eastern Europe require both Russia and China to adjust to the new operational framework. If Korean defense production capacities are temporarily disabled—in the worst-case scenario, as the result of a strike or act of sabotage—it might be possible to replace them with elements delivered from Poland, a circumstance that any potential aggressor must reckon with.

The Polish-Korean defense relationship has every potential to become a win-win situation, with Warsaw boosting its military potential and reviving its heavy military industry, on the one hand, and Seoul solidifying its position in the European and global defense markets, on the other. Furthermore, strong political and military ties have already given rise to increased economic cooperation between the two sides, especially in the energy sector. Much will depend, however, on economic and political factors, as Poland is struggling with high inflation and is preparing for parliamentary elections this fall. Nevertheless, this burgeoning bilateral relationship should serve as another stepping stone for South Korea's deeper economic and military engagement in the CEE region.

Enemy Resorted to...

FROM PAGE 1

"The Islamic Revolution took place at the era of modern ignorance, when communism and liberalism, based on atheism and apostasy, had dominated the whole world, and superpowers directly or indirectly designed and directed all important and strategic developments," the Army chief noted.

The revolution, General Mousavi added, established an independent and powerful system in Iran by presenting a transcendental model relying on pure Islamic ideas.

"The Islamic Revolution took the path of development and excellence through its powerful resistance and perseverance, in a way that now, after 44 years, with the collapse of communism and the death of liberalism, it is rapidly moving towards the realization of a new Islamic civilization," General Mousavi said.

He also noted that the Islamic Revolution is still defending Iran's interests and security and is standing against bullies and arrogant powers.

"Today, the Islamic Revolution is subject to the enmity of arrogant powers due to its nature and performance as well as its serious pursuit of ideals and loyalty to its main slogans."

General Mousavi further stressed that the Army has in recent years pursued its main missions of protecting Iran's independence, territorial integrity and Islamic establishment.

Russia Turns to...

FROM PAGE 1

"Sample tractors have been sent to Russia and are currently being used in the fields. It is expected that with the launch of a sales network and after-sales services, the presence of tractors produced at ITMCO will increase in most Russian oblasts," he added.

According to Vahidzadeh, ITMCO products are exported to 25 countries. During the last 10 months, various kinds of tractors, engines, casting parts, spare parts and other products worth 37 million dollars have been exported.

ITMCO predates the 1979 Islamic Revolution, having been established in the northwest city of Tabriz in 1968 to assemble Romanian and British tractors.

The A to Z of manufacturing is currently done at ITMCO which has one of the largest cast iron foundries in Iran and the region. Iran Tractor Foundry Company (ITFCO), a subsidiary of ITMCO, also produces some of the key cast parts for major automakers Iran Khodro and Saipa.

ITMCO is the third biggest automotive company in Iran after Iran Khodro and Saipa. Apart from producing 16 types of tractors, it also builds engines for various machines, including graders, compressors, water pumps, generators, forklifts, combine harvesters and road construction vehicles.

Having also tried its hand recently in producing a mini truck which did not meet with the hoped-for success, it now plans to roll out a modern 12-tonne light-duty truck with the help of a Chinese manufacturer.

When the US Treasury imposed sanctions on Iran Tractor Manufacturing Company (ITMC) in October 2018, the largest tractor manufacturer in the Middle East and North Africa pledged to respond to the measure by ramping up exports.

The company has gone through a series of renovations in recent years, buying more modern machinery and setting up new production lines.

These new lines have led to the creation of an R&D center where experts with high degrees from some of the prestigious universities head workshops and engineering centers.

ITMCO has 12 subsidiaries which contract out many tasks to 800 domestic parts manufacturers. ITMCO tractors are also assembled in Venezuela and Tajikistan.

Speaking to Fars, some of the Russian experts acknowledged that the level of training in Tabriz and ITMCO is on par with "and sometimes even better than" the training they had received in European countries such as Germany and Italy.

"The level of technology of tractors and the reception they have got from Russian farmers is such that it justifies the difficulty of traveling and settling at IMTCO for more than half a month," one of the technicians said.

"Russian farmers are eagerly waiting for the second batch of tractors to be sent to their country."

Vast Majority of COVID-19 Deaths Among Older Adults



GENEVA (Dispatches) - More than 80% of COVID-19 global deaths during the first two years of the pandemic were among people aged 60 and older, according to a new study from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The trend held true across countries of all economic backgrounds, the report published Thursday found. But older populations in lower and middle income countries experienced the highest mortality rates and accounted for the majority of global COVID-19 death estimates.

More than 5.4 million COVID-19 deaths were reported worldwide in 2020 and 2021, but WHO estimates that there were 14.9 million excess deaths during that time. Excess deaths are the number of deaths above what would be expected. The estimate means that the toll of deaths related to COVID-19 is more than double the official number, a trend that previous research also found.

"The large disparity observed between reported deaths and estimated excess mortality, especially in upper-middle-, lower-middle-, and low-income countries, makes ascertaining true COVID-19-associated mortality challenging," the authors wrote in the study.

The research also found that the median percentage of adults aged 60 and older who had their primary shots was 76% at the end of 2022, which is significantly short of WHO's goal to have all at-risk populations fully vaccinated.

"These vaccines have been found to be safe and highly effective in reducing severe COVID-19, hospitalizations and mortality; however, despite available evidence on effectiveness reported COVID-19 vaccination coverage among older adults has not yet come close to the WHO goal of 100% in many parts of the world," the study said.

Iran Trade With...

FROM PAGE 1

Iraq was the biggest destination of Iranian exports during the period with 24.21 million tons (down 3.27%) of imports worth \$8.92 billion (up 22.45%). It was followed by Turkey with 12.86 million tons (up 6.55%) worth \$6.61 billion (up 45.95%) and the UAE with 9.26 million tons (up 2.63%) worth \$4.82 billion (up 26.91%).

Meanwhile statistics revealed that more than 93 percent of the Iranian commodities have been exported to 20 countries.

Member of International Relations and Trade Development Commission of Iran Industry, Mine and Trade House said that 20 countries out of 143 export destinations accounted for more than 93 percent of the export share of Iranian goods.

Ruhollah Latifi went on to say that the 20 states consist of three Eurasian (European-Asian), two African and 15 Asian countries.

He further noted that 102.9 million tons of goods worth \$45.3 billion were exported from Iran to 143 countries from March 21, 2022 to January 20, 2023.

According to Latifi, 96 million and 956,000 tons of the goods, worth \$42 billion and \$336 million and \$589,000, have been exported to the top 20 countries.

China with \$12.6 billion, Iraq with \$8.9 billion, Turkey with \$6.6 billion, the UAE with \$4.8 billion and India with \$1.6 billion were the first five destinations for exporting Iranian goods during the said period, he said.

A total of 76.1 million tons of goods worth \$34.5 billion which was exported to the five states accounted for 76.3 percent of Iran's total exports, he said.

Over 1,600 Killed...

FROM PAGE 1

In Syria, the country's official media as well as rescue teams working across the nation put the death toll at over 600.

The official SANA news agency, quoting the country's health ministry, said the quake had killed at least 403 people and left at least another 1,284 injured, including the cities of Aleppo, Hama, Latakia and Tartus.

Rescue teams said over 200 people were killed and at least another 419 injured in northwestern parts of the country, which are held by pro-Turkish militants.

Reports said the Syrian border city of Harem in Idlib province was completely ruined by the quake.

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad held an emergency cabinet meeting to review the damage and discuss the necessary measures, according to his office.

Raed Ahmed, who heads Syria's National Earthquake Center, told Syrian media that this was "historically, the biggest earthquake recorded in the history of the center."

The tremors were also felt in Lebanon and Cyprus.

People in the Lebanese cities of Beirut and Tripoli ran into the street and took to their cars to get away from their buildings in case they collapsed, Reuters cited witnesses as saying.

Turkey is in one of the world's most active earthquake zones. In 1999, more than 17,000 people were killed in the worst earthquake to hit the country in decades.

Iran to Partially...

FROM PAGE 1

However, they said the power plant will need some 21 mcm per day of natural gas to be able to run at full capacity.

Iran supplied around 27 mcm per day of natural gas to Iraq via the Diyala pipeline before the cuts were imposed in late January.

That comes as exports to Iraq via another pipeline had also declined last month while similar cuts were imposed to Iranian gas supplies to Turkey due to problems in Iran's domestic network.

Industry sources said earlier this week that Iranian natural gas exports to Iraq and Turkey had fallen by at least 75% or some 46 mcm per day last month.

Both countries heavily rely on Iranian gas for electricity generation and industrial demands.

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Isco Keen to Hear From Everton

MADRID (Dispatches) - Former Real Madrid and Sevilla midfielder Isco is keen to hear from Everton. Isco, now a free agent, has been in talks with Konyaspor. But it's suggested he is putting off the Turks as he hopes Everton firm up their interest. TuttoJuve says Isco is waiting for the Blues to make an offer to sign him. The article says that Isco is keen on moving to the Premier League, and would be open to moving to Everton. The three-time La Liga winner made 19 appearances for Sevilla, scoring one goal, before his contract was terminated.

Malnati Leads as High Winds Halt Play

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - American Peter Malnati was atop the leaderboard when gusting winds halted play at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am, with US PGA Tour officials now expecting the tournament to finish today. Only a couple of players had completed the third round when gusting winds forced organizers to suspend play because balls wouldn't hold on at least one green. A planned resumption never materialized as the winds sweeping in from the Pacific Ocean continued blow. Malnati admitted he had mixed feelings when play was halted.

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SPORTS

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 7, 2023

Pelicans Down Lakers, James 36 Points Shy of NBA Record

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The New Orleans Pelicans snapped a 10-game losing streak with a 131-121 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, even as Lakers superstar LeBron James crept closer to the NBA all-time scoring record.

Brandon Ingram shook off a scoreless first quarter to lead the Pelicans with 35 points. CJ McCollum added 23 and Trey Murphy added 21 as New Orleans turned the tide against a Lakers team that scored 72 points in the first half and led by 12 midway through the third quarter. James scored 27 points and now needs 36 to overtake Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's record of 38,387.

He's averaging more than 30 points per game this season, and could well achieve the summit next week when the Lakers host Oklahoma City on Tuesday and the Milwaukee Bucks on Thursday.

But the Lakers remain in dire need of victories, and missed a chance to gain on the Pelicans as they both chase a spot in the play-in tournament.

Lakers star Anthony Davis scored 34 points against his former team and the Pelicans trailed by eight late in the third quarter when McCollum drove for a basket. New Orleans stole an inbound pass and Jose Alvarado made a three-pointer to pull the Pels within three heading into the fourth.

Midway through the fourth, Murphy connected on back-to-back three-pointers as New Orleans took a six-point lead on the way to their first win since January 13.

The Golden State Warriors held on for a 119-113 home victory over the Dallas Mavericks after superstar Stephen Curry limped out with a lower left leg injury in the third quarter.

The Warriors led all the way against a Mavs team without injured star Luka Doncic, but things tightened up after Curry banged knees with Dallas' McKinley Wright and departed for the locker room.

Curry's 21 points led the Warriors, whose 23-point lead was cut to five with 1:28 to play.

In Brooklyn, the Nets shook off uncertainty sparked by Kyrie Irving's bombshell trade request to rally from a 23-point deficit and beat the Washington Wizards 125-123.

The Nets, still without injured star Kevin Durant, Ben Simmons and T.J. Warren also made do without Irving, who was sidelined by "right calf soreness" after saying he wanted out by next week's trade deadline.

Kristaps Porzingis led the Wizards with 38 points before fouling out. Washington had wasted no time in taking control, building a 23-point lead in the first half.

Los Angeles Clippers scored the first four points of the extra session to regain the lead for good, withstanding a 41-point performance from Knicks guard Jalen Brunson.

Western Conference leaders Denver powered to a 128-108 victory over the Atlanta Hawks, propelled by a triple double of 14 points, 18 rebounds and 10 assists from two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player and 41 points from Jamal Murray.



Neuer Accused of Putting Personal Interests Above Bayern

BERLIN (Dispatches) Bayern Munich sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic said he was "disappointed" with injured captain Manuel Neuer, who "put his personal interests above" the club.

The statement, which relates to Neuer's tell-all interview with media outlets Sueddeutsche Zeitung and The Athletic, is the latest in the war of words between the club and its captain.

Neuer, who is currently out injured with a broken leg from a skiing accident in December, criticised the club's decision to fire long-time goalkeeping coach Toni Tapalovic, saying he felt "as if my heart had been ripped out".

Speaking with German tabloid Bild on Sunday, Salihamidzic said: "I understand Manuel is affected personally, but as captain I would have expected a different attitude from him."

"Manuel has put his personal interests above the interests of the club."

"We'll discuss it with him sensibly internally."

The off-field saga is mirrored by poor results on the field for the German champions, who are yet to win a league match in 2023.

Haaland Can Improve By Watching Kane

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City striker Erling Haaland can improve by watching and learning from his Tottenham Hotspur counterpart Harry Kane, manager Pep Guardiola said.

Norway's Haaland, 22, scored his fourth league hat-trick in City's 3-0 win over Wolverhampton Wanderers last weekend, taking his tally to 25 goals from 19 games as his sensational debut season in the English top-flight continues.

But Guardiola said Haaland can develop his all-round game by studying players like Kane, who became Tottenham's joint all-time record goalscorer on Jan. 23.

"With Erling, one of the attributes that surprised me the most is how he is aware he can improve in many departments," Guardiola said.

"And I'm pretty sure maybe watching Harry Kane, but not necessarily Harry, other players too, he has the will to think, 'I can do better.' With his age, this is the best thing he can believe. Otherwise, it would be boring."

Kane, who has 16 league goals, scored the winner in Tottenham's 1-0 win at Fulham two weeks ago to draw level with the late Jimmy Greaves on 266 goals for the club.

"Harry Kane remains one of the best strikers I have ever seen in my life," Guardiola added. "What an exceptional player - the numbers and, more than the goals, the quality."

"That they didn't win a title (does not mean) he is not a good player. I think he proved that."

Svitolina Wants Continued Wimbledon Ban on Russian, Belarusian Players

LONDON (Dispatches) - Ukraine's Elina Svitolina said that the ban on Russian and Belarusian players competing at Wimbledon must continue after they were excluded from last year's championships.

Wimbledon barred players from the two countries due to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, a decision which was swiftly condemned by the men's and women's tours as well as Novak Djokovic and Martina Navratilova.



PSG in Talks With Messi Over Renewing Contract

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris Saint-Germain's football advisor Luis Campos says he will be "delighted" if Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi agrees to extend his contract with the French champions.

The 35-year-old seven-time Ballon D'Or winner achieved his lifetime ambition of winning the World Cup in December but has maintained a decent run of form on his return to France.

He scored a key goal in the 3-1 win over Montpellier and then notched his 10th Ligue 1 goal of the season on Saturday as PSG, missing Kylian Mbappe and Neymar through injury, came from behind to beat Toulouse 2-1.

Messi joined PSG in 2021 on a two year contract, with the option of renewing it for another, after an emotional farewell to Barcelona where he had spent his whole professional career.

"We are in discussions. I cannot hide that, I would love to have him involved in this project, that he can continue with us," Campos told French broadcaster TF1.

"I would be delighted if he does so, but we are talking at the moment trying to achieve that goal, that Leo Messi remains with us."

Campos lauded Messi's recent contributions to the team especially in the win over Montpellier.

"At half-time I said to him 'Leo it is imperative you drag the others with you'. He replied: 'keep calm' and he produced an exceptional second-half."

Messi's form is just the boost PSG require with Mbappe's injury due to see him miss their Champions League Last 16 first leg clash with Bayern Munich on February 14.

"Losing Kylian of course is tough, I saw he was very sad about the injury," said Campos.

"However, then I then saw him working out in the morning so as to recuperate as fast as possible."

"That is the personality of a winner, of someone very special. He is already the best striker in the world."

Wawrinka Claims Davis Cup Victory For Switzerland

PARIS (Dispatches) - Stan Wawrinka took Switzerland to the Davis Cup Finals group stage, winning a rollercoaster deciding clash against Germany, just weeks shy of his 38th birthday.

Three-time Grand Slam title winner Wawrinka, who helped the Swiss to the Davis Cup title alongside Roger Federer in 2014, defeated Daniel Altmaier 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 as his country triumphed 3-2 in their qualifying tie.

Former world number three Wawrinka, now down at 135 after a long spell rebuilding his career following two foot surgeries, was playing in the tournament for the first time in eight years having made his debut in 2004.

By contrast Altmaier, 13 years younger, was making his Davis Cup debut in Trier.

Wawrinka, who turns 38 next month, had lost his singles opener on Friday in straight sets to Alexander Zverev.

He was on the losing side again earlier Saturday when he and Dominic Stricker were beaten in the doubles 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-4 by Tim Puetz and Andreas Mies.

However, Marc-Andrea Huesler then stunned world number 14 Zverev 6-2, 7-6 (7/3) to bring Switzerland level at 2-2, setting the stage for Wawrinka's moment in the spotlight.

"I'm happy that I won one point and the last one was the most important," said Wawrinka.

"We have a great team. They've been building this team for the last few years. I was happy to come back if they needed me."

The United States, who have won the 123-year-old tournament on a record 32 occasions, also booked their place in September's group stage by seeing off Uzbekistan in Tashkent.



Mallorca Damage Madrid Title Hopes

PALMA (Dispatches) - Real Madrid's hopes of retaining the La Liga title were dented Sunday as the champions lost 1-0 at Real Mallorca, to remain five points behind leaders Barcelona.

The Catalans were to play Sevilla and could open up an eight point lead after a frustrated Madrid fell short against Javier Aguirre's side, with Marco Asensio missing a penalty against his former club.

Nacho's 13th minute looping header into his own net separated the teams in a hard-fought clash, frequently slowed by various fouls from the hosts.

Amid a constant battle between winger Vinicius Junior and Mallorca's players and supporters, the islanders held off Los Blancos to record an impressive victory.

"It was difficult because of the kick-off time, the opponent, it all gets complicated when they go in front," Nacho told Movistar.

"They were lucky with the goal, and we also missed a penalty."

Vinicius suffered 10 fouls and Mallorca committed 29 in total.

"I think there's an atmosphere developing around Vinicius that doesn't favor anybody, not the player, not football, not the fans, who in the end get involved with the kid," added Nacho.

"Between us all we have to enjoy football which is a beautiful sport -- we have to leave controversies and nonsense to one side."

Real Madrid were without goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, hurt during the warm-up, along with the injured Karim Benzema, Eder Militao and Ferland Mendy, among other absentees. Rodrygo started up front in place of Benzema, while Dani Ceballos and Fede Valverde were given starts in midfield ahead of veterans Toni Kroos and Luka Modric.

