

On February 11, Iranians Will Mark
The 44th Anniversary of the Victory
Of the Islamic Revolution.
IRAN NEWS Felicitates the Occasion
And The Next Issue Will Hit the
News-Stands on Sunday, Feb.12

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Iran Deposits With Foreign Banks Grow by 7%

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) has announced a seven-percent growth in Iran's deposits with foreign banks and financial institutions during the third quarter of 2022, as compared to the Q3 2021.

According to the BIS's latest report, Iran's deposits with foreign banks and financial institutions at the end of the Q3 2022 were \$18.586 billion.

The Islamic Republic's deposits with foreign banks and financial institutions at the end of the Q3 2021 stood at \$17.447 billion.

As reported, of Iran's total deposits with foreign banks and financial institutions at the end of the third quarter of 2022, \$9.848 billion were with foreign banks and the rest with non-banking financial institutions.

Based on the BIS data, 40 percent of Iran's foreign deposits, equal to \$7.396 billion, were in the form of Euros in the mentioned period, the share of the dollar is \$270 million and equal to \$1.403 billion is also in the form of the Japanese yen.

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Iran Warns Against Trans-Regional Interference In Afghanistan

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran's top security official has warned that "trans-regional interference" in Afghanistan can lead to the spread of insecurity to other regional countries.

Speaking at the fifth round of the regional security dialogue in Moscow on Wednesday, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani denounced the U.S.' continuous efforts to turn Afghanistan into a platform for promoting insecurity and terrorism.

"Insecurity, which has always been the bane of Afghans, should not be allowed to become a common bane of all the people of the region through trans-regional interference," he said.

"Those who played the biggest role in the destruction of Afghanistan are now the most responsible [sides] for covering the costs of rebuilding Afghanistan's economic infrastructure, and we should not let them evade this responsibility."

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Leader Calls National Unity "Essential Need"



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has underlined the need for national unity, saying the enemies are bent on sowing divisions and fueling mistrust among people as part of their malign designs against the country.

"Among our essential needs at the moment is national unity. National unity acts as a bulwark and formidable barrier against enemies. National unity is what played the principal role in the victory of the [1979 Islamic] Revolution and its progress in the following years. We need to double down on the promotion of national unity," the Leader told a group of Iranian Air Force commanders and personnel in Tehran on Wednesday.

Ayatollah Khamenei underscored that a vibrant revolution is one that can protect itself against potential harm, noting that the Islamic Revolution has thwarted major threats and continues to tread down the path of advancement and improvement.

Every year on February 8, Iranian Air Force commanders and personnel meet the Leader to mark the historic declaration of allegiance of Iranian Air Force officers with the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini on February 8, 1979.

The meeting is viewed as a turning point leading to the victory of the Islamic Revolution three days later, sealing the fate of the US-backed Pahlavi regime in Iran.

The Leader said the enemies are hell-bent on bringing Iran's Islamic establishment to its knees by means of creating discord and mistrust in the society.

"Even though US statesmen have frequently declared that they are not after regime change in Iran, they continue to draw up plans on how to topple the Islamic establishment when they meet up in private political circles," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"One reason for such animosity is that the Islamic Republic has cut off the US' hands from an important, strategic and profit-making region with rich mineral and human resources. Another reason is that the Islamic Republic has been the flag bearer of the call to independence and resistance against excessive demands," Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

"Hope for the future will be dashed once mistrust prevails among political factions and blocs, social groups, and between the government and the nation," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also stated that differences are inevitable, but they must not turn into fault lines.

The Leader also lauded the Iranian Armed Forces' capabilities in the production of various military gear and implementation of large-scale projects, saying that the Iranian Army is now much more constrictive and innovative compared to the deposed and US-backed Pahlavi era.

"While Iranian military experts did not have the right in the past to even observe or touch the equipment of a fighter jet bought exorbitantly from the US, they manufacture their indigenous aircraft nowadays," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Pakistan Plans to Import Extra 100 MW From Iran

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan is planning to import an additional 100 megawatts (MW) of electricity from Iran after the conclusion of the construction work on a transmission line.

"Pakistan's National Transmission and Despatch Company Limited (NTDC) has completed the construction work of 29km long, double-circuit transmission line from Polan to Gwadar," The News reported on February 7, adding that this transmission system will be able to import an additional 100 MW from Iran.

The testing of Circuit-II of the transmission line was completed on February 6, whereas the testing of Circuit-I was supposed to be carried out on February 7. The evacuation of an additional 100 MW of power will be started through this transmission line in the next few days.

"This import of additional power from Iran will be beneficial for the people of Gwadar and Makran divisions in terms of power adequacy and reduction in load shedding, and will increase the confidence of the key business players and investors to tap the opportunities provided by the Gwadar region," the report added.

In June 2022, the governments of Pakistan and Iran signed an agreement for the import of 100MW of additional electricity to meet the needs of Gwadar. According to the head of the Gwadar Development Authority, the city will have additional electricity from Iran starting March 1.

On January 23, several regions of Pakistan suffered a power cut following a breakdown in the national electricity grid. Pakistan's Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir said that the breakdown was not a "major crisis," and added that power generation systems were temporarily closed at night during winter as an economic measure to save fuel costs.

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ViewPoint By: Hamid Reza Naghashian Islamic Revolution, an Inspiration For Freedom-Seeking Nations

On Saturday February 11, Iranian nation along with all freedom-loving people in the world will celebrate the 44th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran which has turned into an inspiration movement for Muslims and even other nations in the world.

When in 1979 the Islamic Republic was established in Iran, nobody but the founder of the Islamic Revolution the late Imam Ruhollah Khomeini believed that the Islamic Revolution will become a torch-bearer for Muslims and freedom-seeking people in the world and today the Islamic Republic under the leadership of its brave and wise Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei is marching towards more progresses and development with full speed that its enemies covet it.

Although in recent years the world has focused on Iran's amazing progress in military industries and nuclear programs, the country has also progressed considerably in other fields like Nano-technology, IT, engineering and medical sciences as the country is now one of the medical hubs in the region.

In recent months and after riots and unrests, the enemies mostly the Westerners have magnified the issue of human rights and above all women's rights while women in the country have experienced amazing progress and achievements that they had never experienced it during the former regime era.

Contrary to reality, enemies have tried to show the women of Iran are as controlled and oppressed. Did the Islamic Revolution really push them back or lift them up to dignified positions and honor? Are they living in a repressive society or one that liberates and empowers them, especially women, in a progressive way?

Historical evidence shows that women in Iran had no adequate political and social rights before the Islamic Revolution. Both politically and socially, they were in a closed and passive space. The school system of the Pahlavi era, Westernized as it was, stopped many females from pursuing education.

Young girls were discouraged from continuing their education, the reason being the Westernized environment in universities and the opposition to Hijab. However, the scenario changed after the Islamic Revolution as the percentage of females in universities rose considerably.

Today, universities in Iran are flooded with women - confident, happy and self-assured. The Muslim-majority country's literacy rate for women is among the best in the world.

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IAEA Chief Stresses Urgency of Iran Deal Revival

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The head of the UN nuclear watchdog has underscored the urgency of resuming negotiations to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, warning that the situation could quickly worsen if the stalled talks fail.

Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said on Tuesday that the diplomatic effort to resuscitate the nuclear deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), "is not at its best point," but progress is "not impossible".

"I hope to be able to re-set, restore, reinforce that indispensable dialogue," he said during a discussion at the London-based Chatham House think tank. "Without that, things are going to get worse."

The talks to salvage the JCPOA kicked off in the Austrian capital of Vienna in April 2021, three years after the United States, under Donald Trump, unilaterally withdrew from the deal and slapped draconian sanctions as part of the so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The negotiations, which kicked off under the Biden administration, have been at a standstill since August last year due to Washington's insistence on its hard-nosed position of not removing all the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration.

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Budget for Women Has Increased by 50%

TEHRAN (IP)- On the sidelines of the cabinet meeting, Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs said that in addition, one percent of the budget of all institutions is allocated to projects centered on women.

Ansieh Khazali stated: "The budget of the Office of the Vice President for Woman and Family Affairs has grown by 50 percent this year, and with the care that the president has for the development of women's activities, one percent of the budget of all institutions will be allocated to the projects of empowering women and family affairs."

Sagacious Pardon by Supreme Leader Granted Mightily, Fatherly

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said in a meeting with leaders of monotheist faiths that Supreme Leader's sagacious pardon was granted to prisoners from a mighty and fatherly position, and system is arranging for expansion of this viewpoint in political and social fields, as well.

President Raisi made the remarks on the sidelines of his meeting with the leaders of monotheist faiths on Tuesday about the pardoning of a large number of prisoners of the recent unrests in Iran, adding, "Ever since the beginning of the unrests, the Supreme Leader emphasized that there should be two levels of separation; the first level was separating the people from the rioters, that is to say, the ordinary people from the few people who acted against the norms, created unrest in public places and damaged public properties."

He said that the second level, in which his eminence emphasized to separate people in it, was between the rioters and the youth, especially those young people who were emotionally, or under the influence of high volume of propagations of the enemies of Iran, acted indecently, or illegally, and to let them return to embrace the nation, and as the Supreme Leader said, "since they are our own children".



Raisi added, "This approach about the members of the society, and particularly the young generation, after the cooling down of the rioting and unrests, is from a mighty and fatherly stand, who is after keeping every individual in the society, and especially the youth, who are the human capitals of the society, and the offspring of the nation."

He said that the Supreme Leader believes the life of an individual who is not linked to the organizers of unrests, and has not committed crimes, must not be ruined due to making a mistake, and their jobs and social status must not be threatened.

"Accordingly, pardoning those whose files are based on accusation, and not definite decree is issued against them yet, is granted based on the Supreme Leader's stands."

The president's meeting with the leaders of monotheist faiths was on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution at the Summit Meetings Hall of Tehran.

MAPNA to Build 20 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - MAPNA Group, which is a group of Iranian companies involved in implementing major industrial projects, has announced a plan for building 20 electric vehicle charging stations across Iran.

The company has invited interested private sector investors to participate in this pioneering project, IRNA reported.

The mentioned stations will be launched in public places such as shopping centers, public parking lots, accommodation centers such as hotels and guesthouses, intercity resorts, entertainment centers, gas stations, and roadside parks.

Based on the model that MAPNA has offered for the private sector participation in the project, the group undertakes the provision of chargers, shelters, software and network systems, installation, commissioning, support, and guarantees, as well as operation and maintenance, while the private sector can provide the branching of electricity, internet, land and protection of the site.

Back in 2020, the former managing director of MAPNA Group said the group was preparing a proposal package for the production of electric cars or to turn regular cars into electric ones.



Iran Starts Preparations for Dairy Exports to Japan

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is planning to launch dairy exports to Japan amid efforts to boost the presence of Iranian companies in international agrifood markets.

Iranian agriculture ministry (MAJ) ordered its various departments on Tuesday to start preparations for exports of dairy products to Japan after the East Asian country included Iran in its list of authorized dairy suppliers.

A letter addressed to heads of Iran's dairy industry associations showed that the MAJ will offer its support to companies planning to supply dairy products, including powdered milk, to Japan.

Iran has seen a major increase in its farming exports in recent years as better precipitation conditions have boosted yields and the government has continued to support the sector as part of efforts to diversify the economy away from crude revenues.

Iranian agrifood exports have now expanded to cover markets outside of the region, including countries in East Asia, where demand for affordable high-quality Iranian products have increased in recent years.

The MAJ announced last week that a large shipment of honey will be exported from Iran to China in the near future as part of an agreement reached with Chinese authorities last year.

President Warns About Dominance of Extremism in France

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi while receiving credentials of the new ambassador of France to Tehran Nicolas Roche on Tuesday warned about the dominance of extremism and support for Islamophobia in France.

Speaking at the ceremony of receiving credentials of the new ambassador of France to Tehran Nicolas Roche, President Raisi warned about the dominance of extremism and support for Islamophobia in France and advised the new French ambassador to put the correct transmission of the facts on his agenda.

Criticizing some European countries for their miscalculations about Iran's domestic affairs, President Raisi considered such miscalculations as a result of having no knowledge about the greatness of the Iranian nation.

Nicolas Roche, for his part, expressed hope for the improvement and expansion of cooperation between the two countries, noting that on behalf of the French President, he is instructed to work towards resolving the existing misunderstandings in relations and expanding cooperation between the two states.

Tehran Ready for Cooperation With Islamabad to End Terrorism

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Deputy Consul General of Iran Mr. Pir Lorin said that Pakistan-Iran relations have always been exemplary and Iranian territory would not be utilized against any country and was ready for all possible cooperation with Pakistan.

He expressed these views while talking to journalists on the occasion of his visit to Quetta Press Club. Quetta Press Club President Abdul Khaliq, newly elected President of Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) Irfan Saeed and other journalists were also present.

Iran's Deputy Consul General Pir Lorin congratulated the newly elected cabinet of Balochistan Union of Journalists and expressed hope that the journalist community would play a key role in further strengthening Pak-Iran relations.

He said that as a good neighbor, Iran has friendly relations with Pakistan.

Pir Lorin said that Iran was ready to provide gas, petrol and electricity to Pakistan because there was no international restriction regarding the supply of Iranian gas.

He said that Iran was supplying 104 megawatts of electricity to the border city of Gwadar and would now provide another 100 megawatts this year.

The activities of armed organizations in Iran were exaggerated by hostile countries and unrest in Balochistan was not in Iran's interest.

He said that Iran was ready for all possible security cooperation with Pakistan to end terrorism.

Newly elected President of Balochistan Union of Journalists Irfan Saeed thanked the Deputy Consul General Peer Lorin for his visit to the Press Club.

Iran-EEU to Hold 3rd Economic Diplomacy Forum in Tehran

TEHRAN (MNA) - The third Economic Diplomacy Forum of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union on the Agrifood Industry will be held in Tehran.

The forum is scheduled to be held on Feb. 13 at the IRIB International Conference Center in the Iranian capital.

The event is organized by private businesses in cooperation with public institutions and embassies of EEU member states, Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture reported.

With the conclusion of a free trade agreement between Iran and the EEU, the two sides are increasing their economic cooperation. Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union signed a memorandum on free trade in Tehran on January 19.

Iran to Start Drilling at Second Largest Gas Field

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran is preparing to start drilling works on its second largest gas field amid efforts by the country to further boost its natural gas output to meet a growing domestic demand for energy.

Deputy Oil Minister Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr said in a TV interview that the National Iranian Drilling Company had stationed two of its rigs at Kish gas field in the Persian Gulf to start drilling for natural gas in the area very soon.

Khojasteh Mehr said Iran expects to fully develop Kish gas field in four phases in the next four years with a total investment of \$7 billion to reach a daily output of 120 million cubic meters (mcm) from the field.

He said a first phase of the field will come on line within the next 14 months with an investment of \$900 million to add some 28 mcm per day to Iran's natural gas output.

The Kish gas field, located close to the resort island of Kish, was discovered in 2006 and holds some 1.4 trillion cubic meters of recoverable gas.

Iran currently produces just more than 1 billion cubic meters per day of gas of which more than 700 mcm comes from South Pars, the world's largest gas field that straddles the maritime border between Iran and Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

Khojasteh Mehr said Iran has invested some \$85 billion in South Pars in years after the Islamic revolution of 1979, of which some \$22 billion has been spent in years after 2011 when Iran was grappling with sanctions targeting its access to foreign investment and technology.

Khojasteh Mehr said Iran's gas output will increase by 500 mcm per day in 2030, a fourth of which will be supplied from Kish gas field.

IRCS to Dispatch 2nd Relief Team to Quake-Hit Turkey

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) is to send its second relief team to the quake-ravaged regions of Turkey.

The head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Pir-Hossein Kolivand said that the rapid relief team of the entity is slated to be sent to the quake-affected regions in the neighboring country.

The aid includes 10 teams comprising eight members each, he said, adding that the volunteer members are to render relief and medical services to the residents.

The teams are equipped with search and rescue pieces of equipment as well as necessary requirements, he noted. The step is taken due to the direct contact with his Turkish counterpart and considering the huge earthquake that struck the country, he added.

Iran Dismisses Claims on Closure of Azeri Consulate in Tabriz

TEHRAN (MNA) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson dismissed the recent claims over the possible closure of Azeri consulate in Tabriz.

"As we have repeatedly expressed our positions, maintaining and developing relations is the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding relations with neighboring countries," Nasser Kanaani told reporters on Wednesday.

The Iranian diplomat made the comments in reaction to recent speculations over the possible closure of the Azeri consulate in Tabriz.

"Iran's position in this regard is clear, and the Islamic Republic of Iran has no plans to close the consulate of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Tabriz," Kanaani said.

Recently Azerbaijan evacuated its embassy following the January 27 attack on the country's embassy in Tehran.

The embassy attack left at least one dead and 2 injured.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev described the incident as a terror attack and demanded a thorough investigation of the incident and "punishment of the terrorists."

Iran Questions Credibility of Chemical Watchdog's Syria Report

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's UN mission questions the credibility of a report issued by the world chemical watchdog that accuses Syria of an alleged 2018 chemical attack against the Arab country's own people.

The report was issued by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)'s so-called Investigation and Identification Team late last month. It alleged that there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that at least one Syrian air force helicopter had dropped two cylinders of toxic gas on the town of Douma near the Syrian capital during the so-called incident. Damascus has strongly denounced and rejected the allegations as completely lacking in all scientific and objective evidentiary basis.

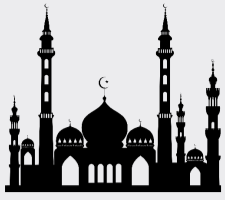
Amir Saeed Iravani, Iran's permanent ambassador to the UN, echoed Syria's condemnation, addressing a United Nations Security Council gathering on Tuesday.

The report, similar to the previous ones that had been issued by the OPCW about the alleged incident, is "based on unauthorized sources, lacks the necessary legal conclusion, and [has been prepared] irrespective of the Syrian government's observations," the envoy added.

Iravani said the same Western countries that either supported or stayed silent towards the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's systematic deployment of chemical weapons against Iran -- during Saddam's 1980-88 war against the Islamic Republic -- had manipulated the OPCW and its subsidiary mechanisms into compiling the report against Syria, so they can advance their political goals concerning the Arab country.

He said the Western states were staging a "premeditated scenario" against Syria.

"The Islamic Republic is deeply concerned about exploitation and politicization of the OPCW," Iravani noted, saying manipulation of the organization in such a way worked to dent its credibility.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	17:58
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:31
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:56

23. But when he delivereth them, behold! they transgress insolently through the earth in defiance of right! O mankind! your insolence is against your own souls,- an enjoyment of the life of the present: in the end, to Us is your return, and We shall show you the truth of all that ye did.

Surah 10. Jonah (23)

Malaysia Seeks Expanding Tourism Ties With Iran

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC NEWS

TEHRAN – Director of Tourism Malaysia in the Middle East says Malaysia is seeking expansion of cooperation in tourism with Iran and invited Iranian tourists to visit Malaysia as one of the exiting multicultural tourism attractions.

Speaking in a press conference which was held at Espinas Hotel of Tehran on the sidelines of introducing new tourist attractions of Malaysia, Director of Tourism Malaysia in the Middle East Ms. Rosnah Mustafah touched upon the advantages of tourism attractions in Malaysia comparing to its neighboring states.

She said that during the pandemic that the borders were closed, Malaysia improved its tourist attractions and now tourists from many countries can enjoy these attractions. She reiterated that Malaysia is a multicultural country and tourists who like this type of country can visit Malaysia, adding that by the way Malaysia is rich in beautiful natural sceneries and also other man-made attractions. She noted that Tourism Malaysia has put on its agenda expansion of flights between Iran and Malaysia and Air Arabia is one of airlines which have flights to Kuala Lumpur.

She said that the second biggest tower of the world is in Malaysia, adding that the Genting Highlands as one of the biggest tourist attraction has been renovated during the pandemic and it is now ready to tourists especially from Iran.

She added that in 2022, Malaysia hosted some 9 million tourists and now the country is working to increase the number of visiting tourists to the pre-pandemic level.

She reiterated that Malaysia, through promotion, tries to increase the number of visiting tourists to 15.6m with annual earnings of 47.6b ringgits.

She noted Iranians have been one of the major visitors of Malaysia as the number of Iranian visitors to Malaysia hit 46559 in 2019 before the pandemic. She added that Malaysian Government has allocated 200m ringgits in the 2023 budget for improving its tourism through promotion and improving infrastructures to attract more foreign tourists.

Ms. Mustafah is leading Malaysian delegation attending the international Tehran Tourism Exhibition, as Tourism Malaysia, along with six group of tourism industry activists of Malaysia, is promoting Malaysia's tourism attractions in this 4-day.

Meanwhile in the presser, Ambassador of Malaysia to Iran Mr. Khair Omar briefed the participants in the presser of his programs for broadening tourism cooperation between the two countries especially in the post-pandemic era.

He said that after the pandemic, everything is getting normal and the pandemic era has been a good time for study how to improve tourism and bringing back it to the



(R to L) Tourism Malaysia Marketing Manager in Tehran Mr. Farhad Jaafari, Chairman of Iran Travel Agencies Mr. Hormatollah Rafiei, Ambassador of Malaysia to Iran Mr. Khair Omar, Director of Tourism Malaysia in the Middle East Ms. Rosnah Mustafah and sales manager of Air Arabia in Iran Mr. Ashkan Shahsavari Shirazi attend a press conference at Espinas Hotel of Tehran on Feb7.

pre-pandemic era. He went on to say that Iran and Malaysia have good relations and both countries know each other well. He stressed that in the past, the number of Iranians in Malaysia reached tens of thousands but the figure has declined due to different reasons and now Malaysia is working to increase the number of Iranian visitors to more than 100,000 per year.

Mr. Omar noted that his role is to broaden tourism between the two countries either bringing tourists from Malaysia to Iran or encouraging Iranians to visit Malaysia. She added that Iranians need no visas for the 14-day stay in Malaysia and they need to get visas for staying 60 days and the embassy eases visa process for them. He reiterated that the embassy has programs to boost tourism cooperation between Iran and Malaysia and said he seeks cooperation and help of the media.

Then Chairman of Iran Travel Agencies Mr. Hormatollah Rafiei said that there are several flights to Malaysia which can ease travel to Malaysia but they are connected flights and talks are underway for launching more direct flights which will boost tourism between Iran and Malaysia. He added that both sides are working to increase tourism cooperation to the past level that five airlines used to cooperate.

He also reiterated sanctions have no place in tourism because tourism is the turning point in connection of people and it is opposed to any war and Malaysia has been one of the destinations for Iranian tourists which has been affected by the pandemic and it will definitely bounce back to the past level.

Then sales manager of Air Arabia in Iran Mr. Ashkan Shahsavari Shirazi explained the plans of this airline for boosting tourism cooperation between Iran and Malaysia and said that the airline has started its work in Iran 7 months ago and it has flights from Sharjah to three Iranian cities of Tehran, Mashhad and Shiraz, adding that the airline will increase its flight to Malaysia to three flights per week from late March for Iranians' new year.

He then explained the advantages of his airline to other airlines serving the passengers.

Meanwhile in the presser, Tourism Malaysia Marketing Manager in Tehran Office Mr. Farhad Jaafari explained more about the programs of Tourism Malaysia for attracting tourists especially from Iran.

Then in meeting with tour operators and travel agencies officials, Malaysian officials introduced the tourism attractions and facilities for Iranian tourists.

Customs Office of Jahrom Special Economic Zone Inaugurated



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Concurrent with the festivities marking the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the customs office of Jahrom Special Economic Zone was inaugurated and started its activities.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the customs office of Jahrom Special Economic Zone, Head of Iran Customs Administration Mohammad Rezvanifar said that the customs administration of the country promises to minimize customs formalities and time in Jahrom Special Economic Zone.

Meanwhile Governor of Fars Province Mohammad Hadi Imanieh hailed the efforts of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) and management of Jahrom Special Economic Zone regarding the launch of the office and providing required infrastructures for the presence of investors in this zone and said that the town of Jahrom is one of the most important and influential towns in the economic affairs of the country and Fars Province.

IDRO's Deputy on Renovation and Exploitation Mr. Farshad Moghimi, for his part, pointed to provision of required infrastructures for the start of process for water, gas, fiber optic network and customs services in the zone and said that to ease investment, some incentives have been offered for attracting investment in the Phase 1.

He said that IDRO has provided possibility for handing over the right of exploitation by 30% from the lands of the Phase 1 of the zone.

Head of the zone Mr. Mehdi Shafeian also said that the building of the customs office has been constructed with a budget around 80b rials and it is important for providing facilities for investors and the issue of imports and exports.

Jahrom Special Economic Zone is on an area around 340 hectares which operates under supervision of IDRO and in the form of two phases which are completing their industrial and commercial infrastructures.

Tehran, Singapore Explore Ways for Broadening Economic Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Ambassador of Singapore to Tehran Mr. Ong Keng Yong in meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafei explored ways to expand economic relation with Iran.

In the meeting, Shafei said that Iran and Singapore can broaden their bilateral or multilateral ties in the future due to the ole of Singapore in ASEAN and Iran's role in the ECO.

He pointed to improvement of the pandemic and said that now both sides can exchange trade delegations and to have in-person meetings. He noted that ICCIMA is eager to dispatch a trade delegation to Singapore.

Then Ambassador of Singapore to Tehran Mr. Ong Keng Yong, for his part, said that Singapore is considered as the second marine hub in the world, adding that the current challenges ahead of his country is inflation and it has increased the fare of transportation and goods. He added that unfortunately studies show that inflation in Singapore to be between 15 to 20 percent this year and it can have negative impact on businesses.

He then said that EAEU member states are active in fertilizer and grains, adding that Singapore seeks broadening ties in this line to increase the level of trade exchange of Iran with Eurasia as well as ASEAN with Singapore.

H added that he believes sanctions unlikely can create problem in the field of agriculture and food industries and therefore they should work to increase export of fertilizer and foodstuff from Iran to other states.

The Singaporean diplomat stressed that despite sanctions there are still some opportunities and



although the political situation in the world is not good, Iran and Singapore can cooperate in the fields of food, medicine and transportation.

He said that the embassy and ICCIMA should present Iran to new companies in those fields.

Then Shafei said that ICCIMA suggests introducing capacities of Oran to the newly-established Singaporean companies and announced readiness of the chamber for full cooperation in this regard.

NDF to Invest \$2b in Developmental Projects of Copper Industry

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) and National Development Fund (NDF) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to cooperate where NDF promised more participation in the copper industry projects and \$2b investment in this industry.

In the ceremony for signing the MoU, the CEO of NICICO Dr. Ali Rostami and Head of the NDF Dr. Mehdi Ghazanfari signed the agreement for cooperation and investment of the NDF in the copper industry chain sector from mine to the downstream and in line with activating potentials and capacities of mines.

Head of Board of Directors of NICICO Mr. Seyed Majid Hedayat, member of board of directors and deputy head of NICICO on resources and consumption Mr. Reza Saleh and deputy head of the NDF Mr. Mohammad Javad Danesh were also present in the ceremony where the NDC agreed to participate more and invest \$2b in the \$15b developmental projects of the copper industry.



In the ceremony, Mr. Hedayat briefed about the current situation of copper industry in the world and said that Iran is rich in copper because of its location on the copper production belt in the world, admitting that this potential has not been used properly yet. He added that in case of implementing the developmental project for production of copper cathode with the early investment of \$15b, the current net profit of Iran from copper industry will increase from \$1.6b to \$5b with creating 50,000 jobs in 2028.

He said that Iran by discovering 7% of its copper reserves ranks fifth in the world while Chile ranks first. He went on to say that Iran with 54m tons of copper reserves content ranks 14th in exploitation of reserves.

Hedayat reiterated that with implementing these projects Iran can move up to the second place in the world, adding that NDF is to invest \$2b in the projects and China is to finance \$6b in it and the remaining \$4b will be provided by the NICICO's internal sources as well as the capital market.

Then Head of the NDF Mr. Ghazanfari said that one of the policies of the fund is to invest in the copper industry and to support mega projects through investment or attracting foreign investors through issuing guarantees. He reiterated that copper industry is a profitable field with high job creation capacities.

IRISL to Build 483 Apartment Units in Bandar Abbas

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line Group (IRISL) held the ground-breaking ceremony for construction of 483 apartment units in Bandar Abbas for its staff.

According to reports, on the eve of auspicious anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, IRISL held the ground-breaking ceremony in Bandar Abbas for building 483 apartment units.

In the ceremony, Ali Shah Heydari, the CEO of Tarh Va Saman Amvaj Kish Company which is in charge of implementing this mega project, said that immediately after the ground-breaking ceremony the construction operation would start in four complexes each with area around 100,000 square meters.

He then went into details of the project and said all those complexes will have recreational facilities.

The apartments are built for the IRISL personnel and it is expected the delivery of the apartments would start in 24 months and they will be gradually delivered.

Some 3700 people work for IRISL onshore and 3000 more offshore and for this reason the group is planning for settlement of the staff.



At Least 20 Killed in Second Day Of Somaliland Clashes

MOGADISHU (Dispatches) - Heavy fighting in Somalia's breakaway region of Somaliland continued into a second day, leaving at least 20 people dead as the UN urged a probe into the clashes.

The violence broke out on Monday between government forces and armed militias in the contested town of Las Anod in the self-declared republic.

The town is claimed by both Puntland, a northern state in Somalia, and Somaliland, which broke away from the rest of the country in 1991 but has not been recognised internationally.

"The fighting has intensified this morning," Mohamed Osman, a local clan militia leader, told AFP by phone.



Syria Longs for Int'l Aid Amid Earthquake Devastation

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - The scale of the destruction in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit swaths of Turkey and Syria on Monday has been unprecedented, even for residents of the war-torn country.

On the Syrian side, the area affected by the 7.8-magnitude quake and its aftershocks is divided between government-controlled territory and the country's last opposition-held pocket of land, encircled by Russian-backed government forces.

The sound of air raids is a regular occurrence for the estimated 4.5 million residents in the besieged enclave, but the roar of multiple buildings crumbling to the ground in unison was a new calamity.



Turkish President Declares Emergency As Quake Death Toll Passes 7,200



ANTAKYA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan declared a state of emergency in 10 provinces devastated by two earthquakes that killed more than 7,200 people and left a trail of destruction across a wide area of southern Turkey and neighboring Syria.

A day after the quakes hit, rescuers working in harsh conditions struggled to dig people out of the rubble of collapsed buildings.

As the scale of the disaster became ever more apparent, the death toll looked likely to rise considerably. One United Nations official said it was feared thousands of children may have been killed.

And residents in several damaged Turkish cities voiced anger and despair at what they said was a slow and inadequate response from the authorities to the deadliest earthquake to hit Turkey since 1999.

"There is not even a single person here. We are under the snow, without a home, without anything," said Murat Alinak, whose home in Malatya had collapsed and whose relatives are missing. "What shall I do, where can I go?"

Monday's magnitude 7.8 quake, followed hours later by a second one almost as powerful, toppled thousands of buildings including hospitals, schools and apartment blocks.

Tens of thousands of people were injured or left homeless in cities in Turkey and northern Syria.

Winter weather has hampered rescue and relief efforts and made the plight of the homeless even more miserable. Some areas were without fuel and electricity.

Aid officials voiced particular concern about the situation in Syria, already afflicted by a humanitarian crisis after nearly 12 years of civil war.

Erdogan on Tuesday declared 10 Turkish provinces a disaster zone and imposed a state of emergency there for three months. This will permit the government to bypass parliament in enacting new laws and to limit or suspend rights and freedoms.

The government will open up hotels in the tourism hub of Antalya to temporarily house people impacted by the quakes, said Erdogan, who faces a national election in three months' time.

The death toll in Turkey rose to 5,434, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said, adding that 31,777 people were injured. In Syria, the toll was at least 1,832, according to the government and a rescue service in the insurgent-held northwest.

Turkish authorities say some 13.5 million people were affected in an area spanning roughly 450 km (280 miles) from Adana in the west to Diyarbakir in the east, and 300 km from Malatya in the north to Hatay in the south.

Syrian authorities have reported deaths as far south as Hama, some 250 km from the epicentre.

"It's now a race against time," World Health Organization Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in Geneva. "Every minute, every hour that passes, the chances of finding survivors alive diminishes."

Across the region, rescuers toiled night and day as people waited in anguish by mounds of rubble clinging to the hope that friends, relatives and neighbours might be found alive

Russia's Lavrov Vows Aid For W. Africa's Jihadist Fight

BAMAKO (Dispatches) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pledged assistance to West African states battling jihadists, as Moscow seeks to expand its influence on a continent in a diplomatic tug-of-war between global powers.

Lavrov hailed the alliance that has been forged between Moscow and Bamako in fighting extremists on his first visit to Mali, which Russia's top diplomat described as "historic".

"The fight against terrorism is, of course, an issue for the other countries in the region," Lavrov told a press conference in the capital Bamako.

"We are going to provide our assistance to them to overcome these difficulties. This concerns Guinea, Burkina Faso and Chad and the Sahel region generally and even the coastal states on the Gulf of Guinea," he said.

Mali had long relied on former colonial power France for military assistance in fighting the insurgency. But Paris pulled troops out of the West African nation last year as tensions with the ruling junta reached breaking point.

Since seizing power in 2020, Mali's ruling junta has brought in Russian planes, helicopters and paramilitaries to strengthen its fight against jihadist militants.

France says the Russian operatives are Wagner mercenaries - a private military group that Moscow has deployed in Syria and now Ukraine, experts say.

The landlocked state is the epicentre of a jihadist insurgency that began in northern Mali in 2012 and spread to neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso in 2015.

Thousands of civilians have died across the three countries, and millions have fled their homes.

Discontent within the military in Mali and Burkina has spurred two coups in both countries.

Sporadic cross-border attacks have also taken place in Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast in recent years, spurring fears that the jihadists are seeking to push southwards to the Gulf of Guinea.

After France wound down its long-running military presence in Mali, similar tensions have broken out with the Burkina Faso junta.



U.S. Seeks Chinese Balloon Remnants

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. Coast Guard imposed a temporary security zone in waters off South Carolina during the military's search for debris from a suspected Chinese spy balloon shot down by a U.S. fighter jet, and the White House said it would keep a calm approach to relations with Beijing.

President Joe Biden told reporters it was always his view that the balloon needed to be shot down and brushed off a question about whether the incident would weaken U.S.-China relations.

"No. We made it clear to China what we're going to do," he said. "They understand our position. We're not going to back off. We did the right thing and it's not a question of weakening or strengthening - it's reality."

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said the balloon's flight over the United States had done nothing to improve already tense relations with China and dismissed Beijing's contention it was for meteorological purposes.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre nevertheless said the U.S. approach to relations with China would remain calm and it was up to China to decide whether it wanted to build on a meeting between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping last November.

"It's up to China to figure out what kind of relationship they want," she said.

The appearance of the Chinese balloon caused a political uproar in the United States and prompted the top U.S. diplomat, Antony Blinken, to cancel a Feb. 5-6 trip to Beijing that both countries hoped would steady their rocky relations.

Beijing condemned the shooting down of the balloon as an "obvious overreaction" and urged Washington to show restraint.

"China firmly opposes and strongly protests against this," Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng said in remarks to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing posted on the ministry's website.

Ukraine Says Russians Endure Deadliest Day

NEAR MARINKA (Dispatches) - Ukraine said the last 24 hours were the deadliest of the war so far for Russian troops as Moscow pressed on with an intensifying winter assault in the east, bringing tens of thousands of freshly mobilized troops to the battlefield.

The Ukrainian claim could not be independently verified and Russia has also claimed to have killed large numbers of Ukrainian troops in recent weeks.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius visited Kyiv later on Tuesday as Berlin, Denmark, and the Netherlands said they would pool funds to restore Leopard 1 tanks from industry stocks and supply them to Kyiv in the coming months.

Pistorius announced the supply of about 80 Leopard 1s this year and about 100 in 2024, more than previously announced.

"I'm full of admiration for your efforts, for how fast you and your comrades learned handling our weapon systems. It was very fast, and this way you'll apply it effectively in your defense against the Russian aggressors," he told a press conference with his Ukrainian counterpart Oleksii Reznikov.

Since the New Year, Western countries have pledged hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles to Ukraine to give it the firepower and mobility to push through Russian lines and recapture occupied territory later this year.

A new U.S. package of weapons is expected to include longer-range rockets, which would give Ukraine the ability to hit Russian supply lines in all of the territory it occupies in Ukraine's mainland and parts of the Crimea peninsula.

But it will take months before they arrive, and meanwhile Ukraine faces a Russian force with its manpower replenished by Moscow's call-up of reservists. The Kremlin says Western supplies of arms only widen and extend the conflict.

"The U.S. and its allies are trying to prolong the conflict as much as possible," Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said in a conference call with military officials.

"To do this, they have started supplying heavy offensive weapons, openly urging Ukraine to seize our territories. In fact, such steps are dragging NATO countries into the conflict and could lead to an unpredictable level of escalation."

His use of the phrase "our territories" appeared to refer to four Ukrainian provinces Russia claimed to have annexed last year, as well as Crimea, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

The Ukrainian military increased its running tally of Russian military dead by 1,030 overnight to 133,190, and described the increase as the highest of the war so far. For its part, Russia said it had inflicted 6,500 Ukrainian casualties in the month of January.



Ecuador's President Accepts Extradition Referendum Defeat

QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso has accepted defeat in a referendum on allowing extradition for organized crime, among other reforms, but added he would continue to fight drug trafficking and keep working to improve social conditions.

The results from Sunday's voting worsened the political difficulties of Lasso, who has struggled to contain rising insecurity, protests by Indigenous groups that have hurt the economy, and widespread violence in prisons.

The extradition referendum, one of eight reforms on the ballot, would have allowed Ecuadorean suspects to be sent abroad for trial on drugs and weapons charges, among others. Lasso advocated the change as a way to cut crime, which his government has blamed on the transnational narcotics trade.

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

Though the extradition practice would be new for Ecuador, Latin American countries, including Colombia and Mexico, often accede to extradition requests from the United States and other nations.

But 51.45 percent of votes had opposed the measure, the electoral authority said on Monday after the contents of more than 96 percent of ballot boxes had been counted.

"I accept that the majority doesn't agree that these [crime] issues would be resolved with the tools put up for consideration in the referendum," Lasso said in a televised speech.

"But I believe that we Ecuadoreans should have a broad and serious debate, without dogmas or ideologies, about how to face the threat that drug trafficking and its links to sectors of politics represent today," he added.

Lasso also called on all political parties to forget quarrels and reach a great agreement for the country's benefit.

A proposed reform to give the attorney general more autonomy to choose prosecutors was also rejected, with about 56.61 percent of votes counted so far against it.

A proposal to reduce the number of lawmakers in the 137-seat assembly to about 100 members also ended in defeat, with the "no" vote securing nearly 53 percent.



Bike Desks Help Mexican Students Learn While Burning Calories



MEXICO CITY (Dispatches) - Rows of sleek new school desks equipped with bike pedals are allowing students in Mexico to power through their class work while cranking out some light exercise, burning off calories in a country known for its alarming obesity rates.

But for the students at a high school just outside the bustling city of Monterrey, the new bike desks offer benefits beyond exercise.

"When we're physically active it also helps keep us focused," said 13-year-old Reimy Rodriguez, in her first year at Public High School 24. "It's actually incredible."

A third of all Mexicans are obese and as children age, many pack on the pounds. A recent national study showed about 8 per cent of children under five were overweight or obese, which rises to almost 19 per cent for kids between 5-11 years old.

Sanjuanita Garcia, the school's principal, points to the bike desks' post-pandemic benefits, especially for boys more vulnerable to excessive weight gain.

"After we got back to in-person classes, we began to observe lots of anxiety among our boys and how obesity shot up," she said.

"With this project, we're trying to break down the problem," she added.

The school currently features two classrooms fully decked out with the new desks, but the plan is to gradually add them to all 21 classrooms.

Miguel Ortiz, founder of the company that built them, wanted to ensure Mexican students could also benefit from the new twist on healthier classrooms after seeing a Canadian school pioneer them.

"We decided to develop a prototype at a viable cost that could be implemented here," he said, noting each bike desk costs about 2,700 pesos — about five times less than the Canadian original.

Thai Cadets Break World Record With Mass Martial Arts Ritual

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thousands of Thai army cadets, university students and a handful of volunteers performed a record-breaking Muay Thai "wai khru" ceremony, all under the watchful eyes of six massive statues of former kings.

The sunset gathering in Hua Hin, part of a Muay Thai Festival in the seaside resort town, broke the previous Guinness World Record of 250 by having 3,660 participants simultaneously performing the traditional pre-match dance of respect for their coach.

The sun had baked the sheets of concrete hot as the barefoot performers -- organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Royal Thai Army, and the culture and sport ministries -- filed onto the parade ground at Rajabhakti Park in front of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha.

Dressed in red uniforms with white Mongkhon headbands, as well as white Muay Kard Chuek ropes -- the hemp wrappings fighters wore before gloves -- the phalanx of men moved in near perfect unison to the directions of famed Muay Thai fighter Sombat "Buakaw" Banchamek.

"Congratulations, you're officially amazing," said the official Guinness adjudicator, confirming the record had been broken. "I feel really proud," said 27-year-old performer Phukrit Purimchaithanat, adding he and his fellow-cadets were glad they had pulled it off after months of preparations.

Scientists Develop Powerful AI Algorithm for More Cancer Understanding



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A new study released last week by Scientists at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine may provide treatment insight for glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) and other cancers.

The University of Miami scientists, along with international researchers, created a detailed AI algorithm that is able to execute computational analysis in order to recognize future therapeutics.

Findings could benefit glioblastoma patients, a deadly condition, and cancer treatment production.

The National Health Institute says glioblastoma multiforme is a fast-growing form of central nervous system tumor that derives from glial tissue of the brain and spinal cord, containing a unique look compared to normal cells.

Glioblastoma is the most common adult primary malignant brain tumor, causing 90% of patients to pass within 24 months following diagnosis.

Research released on February 2, in the journal Nature Cancer, details the AI algorithm referred to as Substrate PHosphosite-based Inference for Network of KinaseS (SPINKS). The AI algorithm helped locate two protein kinases associated with tumor advances in two subtypes of GBM and other forms of cancer.

Precision cancer medicine uses protein kinases as vital targets to help determine a patient's cancer properties. In the study, researchers label "master kinases" as the most active kinases that are targeted by clinicians with drugs and therapeutics during cancer treatments.

Author of the study, Antonio Iavarone, M.D., and deputy director of Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center believes SPINKS will have a big part to play in future cancer treatments.

"Our work represents translational science that offers immediate opportunities to change the way glioblastoma patients are routinely managed in the clinic," Iavarone said in a news release. "Our algorithm offers applications to precision cancer medicine, giving oncologists a new tool to battle this deadly disease and other cancers as well."

This new study builds on Iavarone's research from 2021, in a piece titled "The Making of the Glioblastoma Classification." Previous research listed a new glioblastoma classification by grouping glioblastoma patients based on their likelihood of survival and their tumor's vulnerability to drugs.

The new investigation is able to confirm the previous research's classification through multiple omics platforms, featuring genes, proteins, fat molecules, epigenetics, and metabolites. Those omic datasets enable SPINKS to construct an interactome, which is a set of biological interactions that help discover the kinases creating tumor growth treatment resistance in each glioblastoma subtype.

Scientists involved with the SPINKS research believe it can be easily inputted into molecular pathology labs. The study includes a clinical classifier that can match the correct glioblastoma subtype to each patient. Researchers believe SPINKS can help benefit three-quarters of glioblastoma patients.

Co-senior author of the study and professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer, Anna Lasorella, M.D., believes the classifications provided by SPINKS need to be used as soon as possible.

"This classifier can be used in basically any lab," Lasorella said. "By importing the omics information into the web portal, pathologists receive classification information for one tumor, ten tumors, however many they import. These classifications can be applied immediately to patient care."

Initially, SPINKS was intended for glioblastoma, but the AI algorithm is able to assist with other forms of cancers. Researchers located the identical cancer-driving kinases in breast, lung, and pediatric brain tumors.

According to the CDC, breast cancer is the second most common form of cancer behind skin cancer. However, lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death in 2020, responsible for 23% of cancer deaths.



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Goldman Cuts U.S. Recession Odds to 25% on Jobs

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Economists at Goldman Sachs Group Inc said the risk of a U.S. recession is receding amid a persistently strong jobs market and signs of improving business sentiment.

The Goldman team led by Jan Hatzius cut its estimate for the probability of a recession in the next 12 months to 25% from 35%. By contrast, Bloomberg's survey of economists last month pointed to a 65% chance of a downturn within that time.

Historically the typical chance of a recession in any 12-month period is roughly 15%.

"Continued strength in the labor market and early signs of improvement in the business surveys suggest that the risk of a near-term slump has diminished notably," Hatzius wrote. Employers added more than half a million jobs in January, well above expectations, according to data published Friday.



Adani Crisis Spurs Protests, Arrests as Losses Top \$110b

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - The Adani Group's crisis escalated further as hundreds of demonstrators from India's main opposition party gathered in the capital New Delhi and other cities demanding an investigation into allegations of fraud and stock price manipulation by one of the country's top conglomerates, headed by coal mining tycoon Gautam Adani.

Adani shares continued their freefall, with the conglomerate's cumulative market value loss topping \$110 billion. The crisis was triggered by U.S.-based short-seller Hindenburg Research's Jan. 24 report that accused the Adani group of stock manipulation, unsustainable debt and use of tax havens.

The Adani Group said Monday that its major investors, known in India as "promoters," had pledged to prepay \$1.1 billion in share-backed loans due for repayment by September 2024.

The repayments include shares in Adani's ports business, Adani Green Energy and Adani Transmission.

Members of the opposition Congress party have been urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to order an investigation into Adani Group companies. The Adani Group has rejected the criticism and denied wrongdoing in detailed rebuttals, but that has failed to arrest the unabated fall in its shares.

In New Delhi, Congress Party workers threw fake currency notes in the air and chanted slogans. Some burnt a suitcase plastered with images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Adani. Some protesters scaled police barricades and were detained and taken away in police vans.

Opposition party workers in the financial capital, Mumbai, and in the southern city of Chennai gathered outside the offices of a state-run bank and the country's largest insurer, which is known to have investments in Adani shares.

So far, there is no sign the fracas was spreading across India's financial sector and the protests are more a reflection of political theater rather than spontaneous public outrage. Lawmakers disrupted Parliament proceedings for a third day on Monday as calls mounted for India's market regulator to look into Hindenburg's claims.

Adani and his companies have lost tens of billions of dollars as investors dumped their shares. Last week, the Adani Group canceled a \$2.5 billion share offering, promising to provide refunds to investors.

The billionaire's fortune had swelled by more than 2,000% in recent years. Critics say he has benefited from strong relationships with Modi and his government, while others point out he also prospered under previous administrations.

"What action has been taken, if ever, to investigate the serious allegations made over the years against the Adani Group?" Jairam Ramesh, the Congress Party's general secretary, said in a statement issued over the weekend. "Is there any hope of a fair and impartial investigation under you?" he said in a reference to Modi.

Shares in Adani Enterprises, the group's flagship, wobbled Monday and were down 2.1% by mid-afternoon Monday. Its market value has shrunk by more than 50% since the Hindenburg report. Stock in five other Adani listed companies fell 5% to 10%.

Global Airline Traffic Last Year Rebounds to Over Half of Pre-Pandemic Levels

LONDON (Dispatches) - Global airline traffic recovered to 68.5% of pre-pandemic levels last year and surged 64.4% from 2021, according to figures published by global aviation body IATA.

Airlines lost tens of billions of dollars in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and saw the first signs of relief as travel started to return in 2022, particularly during the summer months.

With China's recent reopening, that recovery is set to go on, the head of IATA said.

"This momentum is expected to continue in the new year, despite some governments' overreactions to China's reopening," said Willie Walsh, IATA's director-general.

China previously said it would resume overseas group tours organized by tour agencies and online travel companies for Chinese citizens starting from Monday.

European carriers saw full-year traffic jump 132.2% compared to 2021, while North American airlines saw a 130.2% rise year-on-year, according to the data.

But analysts and executives have long said that recovery to full pre-pandemic levels depends on how quickly travel to and from China can bounce back.

"It is vital that governments learn the lesson that travel restrictions and border closures have little positive impact in terms of slowing the spread of infectious diseases in our globally inter-connected world," Walsh added.

Many countries, like France, introduced mandatory COVID testing for those flying from China, sparking protests from the aviation sector.



Current schedules show there could still be substantially fewer flights between Asia and Europe in 2023 compared to 2019, data from Cirium showed, but more routes are being announced.

Some airline groups have said they would reopen some routes to China in the coming months, but with flights being less frequent than prior to the pandemic.

Air France-KLM said earlier this month it would start running daily flights to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing starting in July while British Airways said it would start flights between London and Shanghai from April 23.

Growth in flights from other regions might have to pick up more to compensate for a lag in Chinese flights in order for full global traffic recovery to 2019 levels, some analysts have said.

Russia Central Bank To Adopt Hawkish Tone, Keep Rate at 7.5%

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Russian central bank is expected to hold its key interest rate at 7.5% on Friday but may give a more hawkish signal to the market as inflationary risks become more pronounced, a Reuters poll showed.

Last year, the bank gradually reversed an emergency rate hike to 20% it implemented in late February after Moscow's decision to send tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine, which led to increasingly wide-ranging Western sanctions being imposed on it in response.

The key rate has stayed at 7.5% since the last cut in September, with stubbornly high inflation stymieing the Bank of Russia's efforts to soften monetary policy further.

All 25 analysts and economists polled by Reuters on Monday predicted that Russia would keep its benchmark rate unchanged again on Friday.

"So far, inflation dynamics do not call for a rate hike, but proinflationary risks are increasing," said Mikhail Vasilyev, chief analyst at Sovcombank.

The three key proinflationary risks of a weaker rouble, a widening budget deficit and shortages in the labour market have all become more pronounced since December, Vasilyev added.

The rouble has lost almost 15% against the U.S. dollar since early December, while the central bank has warned that Russia's partial mobilisation of troops for the conflict in Ukraine could stoke longer-term inflation due to a shrinking labour force.

"The signal could indeed be tightened, because inflation risks are still prevalent, as can be seen in still elevated inflation expectations and weekly CPI statistics," said Olga Nikolaeva of ITInvest. "Budget expenditures are creating an additional serious risk."

With Russia's oil and gas revenues declining under the weight of price caps and embargoes, analysts expect Russia's budget deficit to widen further than forecast. Such softer fiscal policy would require tighter monetary policy, the central bank has said.

The signal for tighter monetary policy is already embedded in prices of the government's OFZ treasury bonds. Yields, which move inversely to bond prices, have been steadily rising since mid-October. Russia's 10-year benchmark OFZ yield stood at 10.61% on Monday.

However, annual inflation's likely drop in March to 2%-3% - as the base effect of last year's price surge kicks in - may limit the central bank's options to hike rates, said Alfa Bank Chief Economist Natalia Orlova.

Far above the central bank's 4% target, inflation is down from 20-year highs reached shortly after the nearly year-long conflict in Ukraine began. Annual inflation came in at 11.9% in 2022 and is now running at around 11.5%.

Malaysia Confident of Avoiding Recession



KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia is confident of achieving positive growth and avoid a recession this year despite having to navigate through global headwinds.

Even though the country's economic growth this year was projected to be moderate compared with 2022, International Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said he was optimistic that Malaysia would not face a recession. "On the issue of recession, I am optimistic there will not be (one)...the definition of a recession is two successive quarters of negative GDP (gross domestic product) growth.

"Bank Negara Malaysia, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank have projected for Malaysia to continue achieving positive economic growth in the 3 per cent-5 per cent range.

"I do not think we are going to face a recession. However, compared with the growth we achieved in 2022, there will be some moderation.

"Therefore, we need to take this opportunity to ensure all of our engines of growth keep firing especially in terms of trade and investment," he told Bernama during his recent visit to Penang.

In 2022, Malaysia's total trade surpassed the RM2 trillion mark for the second consecutive year when it registered RM2.8 trillion, with exports reaching RM1.6 trillion, exceeding 12th Malaysia Plan projections, and imports reaching nearly RM1.3 trillion.

During his two-day (Feb 3-4) visit to Penang, Tengku Zafrul said he held meetings with top state officials and industry players to discuss efforts to strengthen the industrial ecosystem here as it is one of the leading investment destinations for the electrical and electronics (E&E) and medical technology sectors.

Swiss to Vote on Preventing Cashless Society

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Swiss citizens will get the chance to try to ensure their economy never becomes cashless, a pressure group said, after collecting enough signatures by Monday to trigger a popular vote on the issue.

The FBS (Free Switzerland Movement) says cash is playing a shrinking role in many economies, as electronic payments become the default for transactions in increasingly digitised societies, making it easier for the state to monitor its citizens' actions. It wants a clause added to Switzerland's currency law, which governs how the central bank and government manage the money supply, stipulating that a "sufficient quantity" of banknotes or coins must always remain in circulation.

There is no evidence of moves towards a cashless society by Swiss authorities.

FBS said it had garnered over 111,000 signatures in support of the measure, above the 100,000 needed to trigger a popular vote. Under Switzerland's system of direct democracy, the proposal would become law if approved by voters, though government and parliament would decide how that law was implemented.

"It is clear that ... getting rid of cash not only touches on issues of transparency, simplicity or security ... but also carries a huge danger of totalitarian surveillance," FBS president Richard Koller said on the group's website.

He also views Switzerland as a European standard-bearer for the defense of cash, as pushing through such guarantees in the European Union would entail the "almost impossible" process of securing approval from all 27 member states. Accelerated by the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns, the trend towards increased cashless payments was evident as far back as 2017, when an Ipsos study found more than a third of Europeans and Americans would happily go without cash and 20% pretty much did so already.

Pakistan, IMF Grapple for Consensus to Unlock Critical Funding

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan and the visiting International Monetary Fund mission are struggling to arrive at a consensus on fiscal adjustment plans, sources said, in talks aimed at unlocking critical funds needed for the ailing South Asian economy.

The mission has been in Islamabad since Jan. 31 to sort out the differences over fiscal policy that has stalled the release of more than \$1 billion from \$6.5 billion bailout package signed in 2019.

The IMF funding is crucial for the \$350-billion economy facing a balance-of-payments crisis with foreign exchange reserves dipping to less than three weeks of import cover.

The two sides disagree on their data on the fiscal gap, two finance ministry officials with knowledge of the talks told Reuters.

The IMF says the primary deficit is 0.9% of GDP, or around 840 billion Pakistani rupees (\$3.06 billion), but according to Islamabad it stands at 0.45%, or around 450 billion rupees (\$1.64 billion), said the officials, who declined to be named as the talks were confidential.

"There is a clear difference in data," said one of them.

They said Islamabad is expecting a deal by Feb. 9. Observers say the funds are needed to avoid defaulting on external payment obligations, while the lender's green signal is vital for any other external funding.

The finance ministry and the IMF country representative did not respond to Reuters request for comments.

Pakistan's 2022-23 budget in June estimated the primary deficit to be 0.2% of GDP and fiscal deficit 4.9% of GDP.

The country has already shifted back to a market-based exchange rate and hiked fuel prices - measures demanded by IMF. But analysts say the steps will increase crippling inflation, which is already up 27.5% year-on-year in January.

The big pile of energy sector debt - over 4 trillion Pakistani rupees (\$14.55 billion), including 1.6 trillion in the gas sector - is another stumbling block in the talks, officials said.

They said Pakistan has submitted a plan to cut the debt in phases though price hikes and dividends from gas companies, but the IMF is demanding a clearer path forward.

Over 900 billion rupees in gas sector subsidies for FY2022-23 are also on the chopping block, they said, adding that Pakistan has agreed to withdraw export sector subsidies.

Iran 75% Self-Sufficient in Home Appliance Production

TEHRAN (MNA) - Head of Iranian home appliance sellers' union said more than 75 percent of the equipment and parts used for manufacturing various types of home appliances are produced domestically and only 25 percent including pumps and motors are imported, IRIB reported. "In the field of audio and video equipment, however, 40 percent is domestically produced and 60 percent is supplied through imports," Akbar Pazouki said.

Over the past few years, the Iranian government has been following a new strategy for supporting domestic production to neutralize the impacts of the U.S. sanctions while reducing the reliance of the economy on oil revenues. The home appliances sector has been one of the pioneers in this regard and like many other areas, the production of home appliances has witnessed a significant rise in the past four years.



Swiss Neutrality on the Line as Arms-for-Ukraine Debate Heats Up

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Switzerland is close to breaking with centuries of tradition as a neutral state, as a pro-Ukraine shift in the public and political mood puts pressure on the government to end a ban on exports of Swiss weapons to war zones.

Buyers of Swiss arms are legally prevented from re-exporting them, a restriction that some representing the country's large weapons industry say is now hurting trade.

Calls from Switzerland's European neighbors to allow such transfers to Kyiv have meanwhile grown louder as Russia's assault intensifies, and parliament's two security committees recommended that the rules be eased accordingly.

"We want to be neutral, but we are part of the western world," said Thierry Burkart, leader of the centre-right FDP party, who has submitted a motion to the government to allow arms re-exports to countries with similar democratic values to Switzerland.

Under Swiss neutrality, which dates back to 1815 and is enshrined by treaty in 1907, Switzerland will not send weapons directly or indirectly to combatants in a war. It operates a separate embargo on arms sales to Ukraine and Russia.

Third countries can in theory apply to Bern to re-export Swiss weapons they have in their stocks, but permission is almost always denied.

"We shouldn't have the veto to stop others helping Ukraine. If we do that, we support Russia which is not a neutral position," Burkart told Reuters.

"Other countries want to support Ukraine and do something for the security and stability of Europe... They cannot understand why Switzerland has to say no."

Increasing numbers of Swiss voters agree. A survey by pollsters Sotomo published on Sunday showed 55% of respondents favour allowing weapons re-exports to Ukraine. "If we had asked this question before the war..., the response would have probably been less than 25%. Talking about changing neutrality was a taboo in the past," Lukas Golder, co-director of pollsters GFS-Bern, told Reuters.

The government - under pressure from abroad after rejecting German and Danish requests for permission to re-export Swiss armoured vehicles and ammunition for anti-aircraft tanks - said it would not prejudice parliamentary discussions.

Bern "adheres to the existing legal framework.. and will deal with the proposals in due course," said a spokesman for the Department of Economic Affairs, which oversees arms-related trade issues.

Burkart said he had received positive signals on a law change from other parties in the fragmented legislature.

The left-leaning Social Democrats say they are in favour of changes, as are the Green Liberals, although the Greens remain opposed.



Green MP Marionna Schlatter said allowing weapon deliveries to Ukraine risked a "slippery slope" towards ending all restrictions, and was incompatible with Switzerland's neutrality.

Meanwhile the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP), the lower house's largest party and traditionally staunch defenders of neutrality, now appears divided.

"Allowing arms shipments to a country involved in an armed conflict is ... destroying the basis of peace and prosperity in our country," said SVP lawmaker David Zuberbueeler.

SVP member Werner Salzmann, who sits in the upper parliamentary house, disagrees, raising concerns in the Aargauer Zeitung daily about collateral damage to a Swiss defence industry that also backs the campaign for a law change.

The sector, which includes multinationals Lockheed Martin and Rheinmetall, sold 800 million Swiss francs' (\$876 million) worth of armaments abroad in 2021 according to government data, putting it in the global top 15 of exporter nations.

Having a strong arms industry has gone hand in hand with the tradition of neutrality, but the balance of this duality may now be under threat, industry association SwissMem said. "Some of our members have lost contracts or are no longer investing in Switzerland because of the current restrictions," said SwissMem director Stefan Brupbacher.

"Our current situation weakens our security policy..., hampers the credibility of our foreign policy and damages our companies," he said. "It's time to change."

Islamic Revolution...

FROM PAGE 1

Various studies have credited it to the founder of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, who called for the active participation of women, not only in politics but also in higher education and the public sector.



After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, women were given equal rights to shape their futures. The revolution provided them a chance to build their distinct political identity and they have been tremendously successful in doing that.

But the West has tried to paint a negative picture of the Islamic Republic of Iran in dealing with human rights and women's right but the truth is the otherwise. Women in Iran are today far more politically aware and enlightened than their counterparts in other Muslim societies.

This is just a small part of achievements of the Islamic Revolution. The military industry has experienced an amazing success that has forced enemies to praise the achievements. Various types of missiles and drones as well as other types of weapons are another sings for this progress.

The number of educated in the country has increased considerably and illiteracy has been almost eradicated.

The progress in the IT and other technologies have put Iran on the list of powerful countries in the world and the world and it is expected in the next decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran will turn into a country which inspires other nations to follow it.

The triumphant return of Imam Khomeini to Iran on February 1, 1979, after 15 years in exile, marked the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution. It's been 44 years this week since that epoch-making event.

The young generation needs to look beyond the fall of the West-backed Pahlavi dynasty in order to understand the complete political significance of the great revolution led by Imam Khomeini.

The Islamic Revolution was, above all, a movement against the Eurocentric paradigm, a political movement that displaced the orientalist framework and its vision of Muslims as beings without agency.

The anti-Eurocentrism of the 1979 revolution can be seen in attempts by the new government in Tehran to dismantle the influence of the West within Iranian society.

We can say, in other words, that the Western ideology, politically embodied by the Shah, was seen by the large majority of Iranians, as a political zombie. A discourse that had and has no takers.

We can describe the Islamic Revolution as the first revolution that didn't follow Western grammar, and because of this, Western scholars and pundits didn't see it coming.

The best example of this is the book written by Fred Halliday on the eve of the revolution. The author predicted a number of outcomes for Iran, including military rule, continued monarchy, and even a socialist republic, but failed to mention the possibility of an Islamic government.

That the possibility of an Islamic revolution wasn't even mentioned can help us understand why the West can't see Islam through a political prism. In other words, the possibility of using Islamic grammar as an emancipatory tool was, and still is, unthinkable for the West.

The Islamic Revolution was a process, a political process, which created the Islamic identity, an identity rooted in a long tradition of anti-colonial resistance. This identity has nothing to do with the Western grammar of Marxism or national liberation.

The enemies of the Islamic Revolution and arrogant countries and above all its enemy Number 1 Israel have tried for decades to topple the Islamic system in Iran by resorting to any mean plot and excuse but each time they have failed to materialize their vicious goals because the Islamic Republic is a popular system and it has its root in the hearts of the people and it is very vey difficult, and even impossible, for the enemies to cut down this strong tree.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is now a powerful country which decides independently and does not act to please its lords because the era of slavery and colonialism has ended and now Islamic Iran can easily repel any threat and bully and for this reason, Iranians will celebrate the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution more ardently than ever to show the enemies they are living in illusion of regime change because Islamic Revolution is like a child for the people and no parents like to destroy their child unless they lose their senses.

So happy Islamic Republic anniversary, and people can smell pleasing scent of freedom and other nations can get inspiration from the Islamic Republic and its wise leadership..

Italy Wants More Money for Africa to Curb Arrivals in Europe

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will ask European Union peers this week to give more money to Africa and create "European humanitarian corridors" to curb irregular immigration, a document showed.

The paper, seen by Reuters, lays out Rome's position for a Thursday-Friday summit of the 27 EU nations' leaders in Brussels to discuss increasing arrivals from the Middle East, north Africa and south Asia.

It called for a "more tangible commitment" by Europe "underpinned by meaningful financial resources" to work on everything from border controls to combatting human trafficking with countries along migration routes.

It also sought a new "Pact for Africa" to help investment, education, training, business and jobs around the world's poorest continent.

The summit has been convened after Austria and the Netherlands led complaints about increasing irregular arrivals.

The bloc's border agency Frontex reported 330,000 irregular border crossings last year, the highest since 2016 as global mobility restarted following the COVID pandemic.

The number is still a far cry from 2015 when more than 1 million people crossed the Mediterranean, risking their lives in unsafe dinghies and overwhelming the bloc.

EU countries fought bitterly over how to provide for those coming, and migration has since been a highly sensitive issue.

Higher immigration numbers have now revived ideas seen as inadmissible for years, from EU financing for border fences to handling asylum requests in centres outside the continent.

IAEA Chief...

FROM PAGE 1

Iran, whose strict adherence to the deal had been certified several times by the IAEA, maintains that it is necessary for the US to offer guarantees that it will not withdraw or violate the agreement again. The US has refused, complicating the prospects of the talks.

Grossi further said that in spite of the standoff in the talks, he remained optimistic about progress.

"I wouldn't despair in the sense that the JCPOA cannot be revived," he said.

"I'm not saying yes JCPOA [or] no JCPOA. The important thing is to keep the non-proliferation rule strongly in place, and so we will see," he said. "The next few weeks and months will be crucial to determine whether there is a possibility."

Last month, Grossi warned that Iran had enough highly enriched uranium to build "several" nuclear weapons if it chose to do so. "One thing is true: They have amassed enough nuclear material for several nuclear weapons, not one at this point," he claimed.

Iran Deposits With...

FROM PAGE 1

According to the BSI report, Iran's commitments to foreign banks and financial institutions at the end of the third quarter of 2022 also faced a 27-percent growth compared to the same period in 2021 and reached \$1.865 billion. Iran's commitments to these banks in the third quarter of 2021 amounted to \$1.462 billion.

Iran's total financial transactions with foreign banks and financial institutions at the end of the third quarter of 2022 also increased by 8% compared to the same period of the previous year and reached \$20.451 billion. In the same period of 2021, Iran's foreign exchanges were reported to be \$18.909 billion.

The Islamic Republic's total financial transactions with banks and financial institutions of 44 countries across the globe were valued at \$19.963 billion in the first six months of 2022.

The Bank for International Settlements is an international financial institution owned by central banks that "fosters international monetary and financial cooperation and serves as a bank for central banks".

Iran Warns Against...

FROM PAGE 1

Afghanistan has been in turmoil since the hasty withdrawal of all of the United States' forces from the country in August 2021, which led the Taliban, who had previously ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, to take power again.

Since then, the United States and its allies have largely suspended their financial assistance to Afghanistan, adding fuel to a refugee crisis that has dramatically affected Afghanistan's neighbors.

The administration of US President Joe Biden has also frozen billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank.

Shamkhani stressed that the frozen assets belong to the Afghan people and that their release plays a critical role in the country's reconstruction, saying, "Using these assets should not be hampered by cruel and illegal US sanctions."

He also expressed Iran's full readiness to help Afghanistan's political, economic, cultural and social reconstruction and development.

Iran, he continued, has always stood by the people of Afghanistan over the past four decades through the country's worst conditions.

"Even now, based on the guidance of Leader of the

Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and despite the problems that the cruel, unilateral and illegal sanctions of the United States have created for the Iranian people, the government and people of Iran continue to provide assistance to the people of Afghanistan and welcome a large number of them," the top security official said.

Shamkhani further stressed that Afghanistan's security, peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan is Iran's priority.

The collective efforts of Afghanistan's neighbors alone cannot contribute to the establishment of lasting peace and stability there, he said, calling on the country's ruling establishment and other domestic actors to take concrete measures to that aim.

Shamkhani also called for the promotion of national unity in Afghanistan through the political participation of all of its people, saying the country also needs to make serious endeavors to curb terrorist groups.

The Islamic Republic, he added, believes that the imposition of any kind of political system via foreign interference or internal confrontation will only escalate instability and insecurity in Afghanistan.

Pakistan Plans to...

FROM PAGE 1

This is the second major power outage in Pakistan since October 2022 and it comes at a time when the country is dealing with the economic and energy crisis.

Meanwhile, Iran was also expected to start gas supply to the Pakistani port of Gwadar under the CPEC project from December 2022.

In late January, Iran urged Pakistan to construct a portion of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) Gas Pipeline Project on its territory till February-March 2024, which was agreed by the sides, or pay the fine in the amount of \$18 billion. Iran had already completed its segment of the pipeline, which begins from the gas field and stretches to the Pakistan border. The Pakistani government announced in October 2022 that Islamabad was "sincerely considering different solutions to resume work on the IP Gas Pipeline Project in order to meet the country's energy needs on a sustainable basis while following the internal laws."

In recent months, Iran and Pakistan have taken several steps to strengthen energy cooperation. Boosting energy ties was a main topic of talks between Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi during a meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Summit (SCO) in Samarkand in mid-September 2022.

In late October, the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Hosseini, said Tehran was ready to provide petrol, electricity and natural gas to Islamabad at cheap rates to help cope with the worsening situation.

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Bottas Has Years of Racing Left in Him

ZURICH (Dispatches) - Alfa Romeo Formula One driver Valtteri Bottas said he still had years of racing left in him and had not given up on getting back on the podium for the first time since he left Mercedes.

The 33-year-old Finn won 10 grands prix as team mate to eventual seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes from 2017-2021 before joining Ferrari-powered Alfa Romeo for 2022.

Bottas scored 49 points and finished 10th overall last season with a best result of fifth.

PSG Under Investigation Over Alleged Undeclared Labor

PARIS (Dispatches) - Paris St Germain are under investigation by French prosecutors over alleged undeclared labor, the Paris prosecutors' office said.

"Following a complaint received on Dec. 13, 2022, an investigation was opened on Jan. 16, 2023 on the grounds of undeclared work," the office told Reuters.

The complaint was launched by Tunisian national Hicham Bouajila, who said he worked for the club's president Nasser al Khelaifi as an advisor, his lawyer, Bertrand Repolt, told Reuters.

Knicks Rally From 21-Point Deficit to Beat 76ers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Evan Fournier, pressed into duty with RJ Barrett scratched due to illness just before the opening tip, scored a season-high 17 points and drained three key 3-pointers in the fourth quarter as the New York Knicks completed a comeback from a 21-point first quarter deficit and beat the visiting Philadelphia 76ers 108-97.

Julius Randle (24 points, nine rebounds, seven assists) flirted with a triple-double for the Knicks, who recorded their biggest comeback win of the season and won for the first time when trailing after three quarters. Jalen Brunson had 21 points and seven assists while Quentin Grimes added 13 points. Miles McBride came off the bench to score 14 points while fellow reserve Isaiah Hartenstein had 14 rebounds.

Joel Embiid (31 points, 14 rebounds), Tobias Harris (14 points, 10 rebounds) and James Harden (12 points, 12 assists) recorded double-doubles for the 76ers, who had their eight-game road winning streak snapped. De'Anthony Melton scored 14 points while Tyrese Maxey had 12 points and P.J. Tucker added 10.

Magic 119, Hornets 113

Double-doubles by Paolo Banchero and Wendell Carter Jr. carried Orlando to a victory against host Charlotte.

Banchero had 22 points and 10 rebounds and Carter added 20 points and 12 boards. Markelle Fultz (16 points) and Franz Wagner (14) also scored in double figures for the Magic, whose 18 offensive boards contributed to a decisive 52-39 rebounding advantage.

LaMelo Ball racked up 33 points and Terry Rozier had 24 points -- but only three in the second half -- for Charlotte, which shot 54.2 percent from the floor. Ball ended a three-minute scoring drought late in the fourth with a pair of baskets to make it 112-107. Carter's free throw and Wagner's layup pretty much put the game out of reach, particularly after Washington failed to complete a three-point play at the 33-second mark.

Cavaliers 122, Pacers 103

Darius Garland scored 24 points to lead all five starters in double figures as Cleveland used a dominant second quarter to beat Indiana in Indianapolis.

Isaac Okoro had a season-high 20 points and Donovan Mitchell added 19 for Cleveland, which has won two straight for the first time since early January. Indiana lost for the 12th time in its last 14 games despite a strong outing from Myles Turner, who had 27 points and 10 rebounds. The Cavaliers closed the first half on a 26-9 run and held a 16-point



advantage at the break. Mitchell scored nine points during the pivotal stretch. Indiana outscored Cleveland 38-36 in the third quarter but still trailed by 14 entering the final period.

Raptors 106, Grizzlies 103

Toronto outscored Memphis 28-17 in the fourth quarter to rally for a thrilling road victory. Pascal Siakam finished with 19 points, six rebounds and five assists. Scottie Barnes added 16 points and seven rebounds. Chris Boucher had 13 points off the bench in the first half and finished with a double-double (17 points, 10 rebounds). Seven of eight players who saw the floor scored in double figures for Toronto.

Desmond Bane led Memphis with 26 points. Jaren Jackson got in early foul trouble but finished with 18 points, eight rebounds and four blocks. Santi Aldama added 15 points, all in the first half.

Timberwolves 128, Nuggets 98

Anthony Edwards scored 20 points, D'Angelo Russell added 18 points and 10 assists and Minnesota led short-handed Denver wire-to-wire in a rout in Minneapolis.

Four of Minnesota's five starters scored in double figures, with Jaden McDaniels and Rudy Gobert joining Edwards and Russell with 14 and 16 points, respectively. The Timberwolves shot 48 of 87 from the floor (55.2 percent) compared to just 34 of 71 (47.9 percent) for the Nuggets.

Michael Porter Jr. led all Nuggets scorers with 22 points, while Christian Braun added 19. Bruce Brown scored 16 and both Ish Smith and Zeke Nnaji scored 10 off the bench.

Pelicans 136, Kings 104

Trey Murphy III scored a season-high 30 points and host New Orleans defeated Sacramento in a battle of short-handed teams.

The Pelicans played without three starters -- Zion Williamson (hamstring), Brandon Ingram (toe soreness) and Jonas Valanciunas (quad soreness) -- and the team won its second game in two nights after a 10-game losing streak. CJ McCollum added 24 points, Willy Hernangomez had 22 points and 16 rebounds and Naji Marshall scored 17 in New Orleans' highest-scoring game of the season.

LaLiga Files Legal Complaint After Vinicius Racially Abused

RABAT (Dispatches) - The Spanish football league has filed a legal complaint to a Mallorca court after Real Madrid and Brazil player Vinicius Jr was racially abused by supporters in a match away to Real Mallorca, the organization said.

Mallorca fans were filmed racially abusing the 22-year-old forward during Sunday's win against the LaLiga holders, with the video published by streaming company DAZN on social media.

"LaLiga has forwarded all the information gathered, together with its complaint, both to the Court of Instruction in Palma de Mallorca, and to RCD Mallorca so that it can participate in the case," said the statement.

It is the sixth complaint LaLiga has filed for racist chanting or insults against Vinicius.

Earlier on Tuesday, Real coach Carlo Ancelotti said the abuse that has been directed at Vinicius is a problem for the whole of Spanish football.

"It seems that the problem is Vinicius, and it is not like that. It is a problem of Spanish football and it must be solved," Ancelotti told a news conference in Rabat ahead of the Club World Cup semi-final against Egypt's Al Ahly.

"The question I ask is this: Is it Vinicius or his team mates? What do his team mates have to defend Vinicius from? Vinicius is the victim of something that I don't understand."

Spanish police are also investigating a possible hate crime against the Brazilian after a mannequin wearing his No. 20 shirt was hung from a bridge in front of the club's training ground ahead of the Madrid derby two weeks ago.

The mannequin was hung by the neck next to a banner in Atletico Madrid's red and white colours that read "Madrid hates Real".

Pele, Neymar and other leading Brazilian figures defended Vinicius in September after a panelist on a Spanish soccer show compared his goal celebrations to that of a monkey, sparking an immediate backlash on social media.



Wales Midfielder Allen Retires From Int'l Duty

LONDON (Dispatches) - Wales midfielder Joe Allen announced his retirement from international football on Tuesday at the age of 32.

The former Liverpool player said injury problems had been a factor in the decision to end his Wales career after 74 caps as he focuses on playing for Championship side Swansea.

"Playing for Wales has been a great passion and love in my life. I have been extremely fortunate," Allen said in a statement released by the Football Association of Wales.

He added: "Our nation's support is inspiring, and it has given me immense pride to wear the shirt -- so many unforgettable experiences."

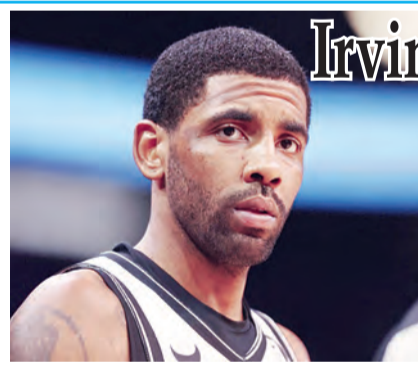
"Unfortunately, time and injuries take their toll and so it's time for me to make way for our next generation."

Allen made his Wales debut in 2009 and was part of a successful generation that also included Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey.

He was named in the Euro 2016 team of the tournament as Wales reached the semi-finals.

He also helped Wales qualify for Euro 2020 and reach their first World Cup since 1958 when they appeared at the tournament in Qatar last year.

Allen, who played for Liverpool and Stoke before returning to Swansea last year, made his final Wales appearance in the World Cup group-stage defeat against England.



Irving Joins Mavericks as Clubs Make NBA Trade Official

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Kyrie Irving was welcomed to the NBA's Dallas Mavericks as the Texas team and the Brooklyn Nets confirmed their blockbuster trade deal.

Days after the controversial guard requested a move before Thursday's NBA trade deadline, both clubs tweeted confirmation of the transfer following team physicals.

The Mavericks tweeted "Welcome to Dallas" messages to Irving and Markieff Morris, who came over from the Nets in exchange for Spencer Dinwiddie and Dorian Finney-Smith, who received a similar social media greeting from Brooklyn.

The Nets also reportedly received a future first-round NBA Draft pick and two second-round selections in the deal.

The Los Angeles Lakers, Phoenix Suns and Los Angeles Clippers were among several clubs linked to Irving after his request to be moved went public, reportedly after failing to agree on terms for a long-term contract extension.

Dinwiddie returns to Brooklyn, where he played for five seasons before a knee ligament injury early in the 2020-21 campaign.

Irving, who won an NBA crown with the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2016, is averaging 27.1 points, 5.3 assists and 5.1 rebounds a game this season, at times carrying the scoring load for Brooklyn while a knee injury sidelined Kevin Durant.

His skills will make a potent combination with those of Dallas star Luka Doncic, who is averaging 33.4 points per game but is putting in massive minutes to handle the Mavs' scoring load.

Pinturault Revels In Combined Gold On Home Snow

PARIS (Dispatches) - Alexis Pinturault put two misfiring years, including a sole World Cup podium this season, firmly behind him as he sealed a dream gold in the World Ski Championships on home snow.

Pinturault is a child of Courchevel, his parents owning two upmarket hotels in the swanky French resort built by his grandfather.

And the crowds turned out en masse to watch the 31-year-old local hero. He did not disappoint as he bagged a second world combined title after previously winning in 2019.

"It was really special, a really great atmosphere. It feels very special to be here for me," Pinturault said.

A packed stand around the finish area was awash with his fans, cowbells ringing and French flags waving.

"To share this with the French people and the Courchevel people is something very special for me," he added.

Pinturault belied his stuttering World Cup season -- a third in the Beaver Creek super-G his only podium -- as he set the fastest time in the combined's opening super-G before nailing a solid slalom run for victory.



Nordic Countries Jointly Oppose Russian, Belarusian Sports Participation

LONDON (Dispatches) - The Nordic Olympic Committees wrote to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to reiterate their opposition to Russian and Belarusian athletes being allowed to take part in international sports.

The IOC said last month that athletes from Russia and Belarus might be allowed to earn slots for the Olympic Games in Paris next year through Asian qualifying.

"Now is not the right time to consider their return; that is our position," the statement said. Athletes from Russia and neighboring Belarus, which aided Moscow's invasion of Ukraine a year ago, have been banned from many international competitions since, and organizers of the Paris 2024 Olympics said they will abide by the IOC's decision on who is allowed to take part in the Games.

Tuesday's joint statement by the Nordic Olympic Committees, Paralympic Committees and sports confederations said they stood firm in their opposition to Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials being allowed to participate in international sports.

"We, the Nordic Olympic and Paralympic Committees and Confederations of sports, take this opportunity to reaffirm our steadfast support once again with the Ukrainian people and the demand for peace," it said.

