

**Deputy Foreign Minister on Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kaniitiical Said in Beirut That Lebanon Is an Important Country In Region, and Aliens Must Not Interfere in Its Internal Affairs**

# IRAN NEWS

**Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in a Message to His Iranian Counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian Felicitated The 44th Anniversary of the Victory Of the Islamic Revolution of Iran**

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## Israel Involved in Isfahan Drone Attack, Main Elements Arrested

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian security forces have arrested the main perpetrators of a recent foiled drone attack in the central city of Isfahan, in which Israeli "mercenaries" were involved.

"The main perpetrators of the unsuccessful attempt to sabotage a Defense Ministry industrial center in Isfahan on January 8 have been identified and arrested," Iran's Intelligence Ministry and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said in a joint statement on Friday.

"So far, the involvement of mercenaries of the ... Zionist regime (Israel) in that act has been proven," the statement added.

It emphasized that the failed operation was a desperate response to the crushing blows the Israeli regime has suffered inside the occupied territories.

According to the statement, any act of trespassing on Iran's territories would be met with a firm response from the security forces of Iran. It, however, stressed that the Israeli aggression would not remain unanswered and warned the regime of a "lesson to remember."

As investigations are still underway, more information will be provided at an appropriate time, it said. **See Page 7**

## IAEA Accused of Revealing Iran's Nuclear Information To JCPOA Opponents

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has criticized the UN nuclear watchdog for the leakage of information about the country's nuclear energy program to the opponents of diplomatic efforts to revive the nuclear agreement.

"The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) gives information about Iran's nuclear program to the opponents of the negotiations to revive the JCPOA," Mohammad Eslami said in an interview with Russia's Sputnik news agency, while making a reference to the nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

He expressed regret over the IAEA's "political, unprofessional behavior" in connection with the disclosure of the JCPOA's confidential reports to those who oppose the negotiations to restore the 2015 accord, which was unilaterally abandoned by the US in 2018.

He emphasized that the AEOI's interaction with the UN nuclear agency is based on the Safeguards Agreement. **See Page 7**

## Iranians Celebrate 44th Anniversary of Islamic Revolution With Nationwide Rallies



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Millions of Iranians have taken to the streets across the country to celebrate the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution that toppled the US-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979.

The rallies in the capital Tehran began at 9:30 a.m. local time (06:00 GMT) on Saturday, with demonstrators from various social strata and different parts of the city marching toward the iconic Azadi (Freedom) Square.

People waved photos of the late founder of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and legendary General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a 2020 US terrorist attack in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, as well as the martyrs of the Revolution.

The flight of colored balloons and iridescent papers from the Azadi Tower, the performance of professional parachutists of the Armed Forces and the mass recital of Iran's national anthem were among the celebratory events held in the Azadi Square.

On the eve of the 44th anniversary, fireworks displays were performed in Tehran and other cities at 9:00 p.m. overnight, as people chanted Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest) in an expression of support for the Islamic Revolution.

Covered by 6,000 media personnel across the country, the foot processions, which came after three years of motorcade marches due to the coronavirus pandemic, were held in 1,400 Iranian cities and 38,000 villages.

The mass rallies on the 22nd of Bahman in the Solar Calendar, which corresponds with February 11, are held each year with tremendous patriotic fervor in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Iranian nation overthrew the despotic regime of Pahlavi, which was fully supported by the United States in the winter of 1979. The struggle against the shah regime reached full fruition on February 11, 1979.

Delivering a speech at the Azadi Square, President Ebrahim Raisi lauded the 22nd of Bahman as the day of the triumph of "truth over falsity," the day of the victory of "the oppressed over the arrogant," and the realization of the "miracle of the century."

Raisi said the epic day put an end to tyranny and dependence and marked the beginning of independence, freedom and the Islamic Republic, adding that the day brought about the crystallization of the will of the great nation of Iran.

Stressing that both the establishment and the continuation of the Pahlavi regime was against the nation's will and accompanied with a coup d'état, the Iranian president said, "They committed crimes and treason during their rule, and they were unconcerned about [Iranian people's] great capacities, and only cared for the pleasure of the global hegemony and the United States."

"Pahlavi's despotic rule only brought backwardness to this nation and country," Raisi added, "They came to power against the principles of the Constitution and with a coup."

Pointing to the country's achievements in various areas, including science and technology, economy, defense, health and medicine, Raisi said, "Today, we rank first in the region in many fields and we are in the fourth, fifth and sixth place in many arenas in the world. This is for our self-discovery, self-confidence, and reliance on God. Our dear nation has conquered many peaks but the enemy cannot stand it."

The president said when the enemy saw that the country was progressing in all fields and was not stalled, they started hatching another plot and thought that they could stop the country with chaos.

"They implemented the chaos project and thought that they could bring the country to a standstill with turmoil, and for this reason, they launched a hybrid war in this field."

Raisi noted, referring to the recent violent riots after the mid-September death of a woman in Tehran.

"They initiated a combined work in the form of a political, economic, media, psychological and perceptual warfare, unaware that the Iranian nation knows them and their tricks."

The president underlined, "Today, despite the threats and sanctions, Islamic Iran enjoys the growth of fixed capital, investment growth, economic growth, and growth in other indices."

## U.S. Targets Iranian Petrochemicals, Oil in Fresh Sanctions

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States imposed sanctions on companies it accused of playing a critical role in the production, sale and shipment of Iranian petrochemicals and petroleum to buyers in Asia, as Washington increases pressure on Tehran.

The U.S. Treasury Department in a statement said it imposed sanctions on six Iran-based petrochemical manufacturers or their subsidiaries and three firms in Malaysia and Singapore over the production, sale and shipment of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Iranian petrochemicals and petroleum.

The latest U.S. move against Iranian oil smuggling comes as efforts to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear deal have stalled and ties between the Islamic Republic and the West are increasingly strained as Iranians keep up anti-government protests. **See Page 7**

## Iranian Automaker to Export 2,000 Cars to Russia

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Khodro, the largest automobile manufacturer in Iran, has started exporting 2,000 cars to Russia, according to Alexey Dedov, the Russian ambassador in Tehran.

In an interview with Sputnik, Dedov said that Iran Khodro plans to deliver the 2,000 cars to Russia by the end of March.

According to Dedov, the largest program of Iran Khodro, which includes the delivery of 2,000 cars to Russia by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1401 (March 20, 2023), is currently underway.

The diplomat added that SAIPA, another Iranian automaker, is also in talks with Russian distributors for the annual export of more than 20,000 cars to their country.

Despite the ongoing talks, Dedov emphasized that the issues related to obtaining certification and establishing a network of dealerships have yet to be resolved, which may change the delivery schedule. He also noted that Russia and Iran are in discussions regarding their joint production of cars and spare parts. **See Page 7**

## Iran Hopes Bilateral Trade With Pakistan To Top \$2b This Year

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Sayed Mohammad Ali Hosseini underscored the need for further enhancing trade between Pakistan and Iran and expressed optimism that the volume of bilateral trade will top \$2 billion this year.

The ambassador was speaking at an event to celebrate the "76 Years of Pakistan-Iran Diplomatic Relations" at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI), organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) in collaboration with the Embassy of Iran.

Other speakers included Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director CAMEA Amina Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran Rahim Hayat Qureshi, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of Iran in Pakistan Ehsan Khazaei, Pakistan's Former Ambassador to Iran Riffat Masood, and Chairman Board of Governors ISSI Ambassador Khalid Mahmood (retired).

Ambassador Hosseini, while talking about Iran-Pakistan relations, highlighted that bilateral relations have been growing in various fields. **See Page 7**

## Iran Drone Power Up 33% Since Last Year

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The commander of the Iranian Army's Air Force says there has been a significant increase in the force's drone capability compared to a year before.

Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi made the remarks while briefing Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran during a meeting of a group of Iranian Air Force commanders and personnel with the Leader.

Referring to the achievements of the Air Force during last year, Vahedi said that "the drone power has increased by 33 percent."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the commander pointed to a host of other achievements, including designing and manufacturing piston and turbine engines, producing F-14 fighter jet simulators, overhauling 29 fighter jets, and aerial refueling in the Persian Gulf region to "counter threats."

The Leader also addressed officers in the meeting which is held annually on February 8 to mark the day when Iranian Air Force commanders and personnel made a historic declaration of allegiance to the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in 1979. **See Page 7**

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## Iran Enjoys Highest Health Security Indexes in Region

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Minister of Health and Medical Education of Iran Bahram Eynollahi has underscored that the Islamic Republic is superior in all health security indexes in comparison to the neighboring states' healthcare situation.

Eynollahi made the remarks in the healthcare workers conference at the Mashhad University of Medical Sciences on Thursday, saying that the healthcare workers are among the most important personnel in upgrading the health security indexes of the country.

According to the minister, the progress in health system of Iran is the biggest achievements of the Islamic Republic, because many healthcare activities had been conducted by foreign physicians prior to the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, but the health and medical education of the country has trained professional staff, who have succeeded in creating great development in this respect.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's healthcare system provides more than 98 percent of the population with health services, he said, adding that the life expectancy rose to 78 years among the Iranians.

## U.S., E3 Anti-Iran Bids Doomed to Failure

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says the United States and the three European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal made grave miscalculations by instigating the recent riots in Iran, stressing that their ongoing bids to tarnish the Islamic Republic's image are all doomed to failure.**

Raisi made the remarks in a Thursday meeting with a group of foreign ambassadors to the Islamic Republic on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution victory.

He added that Iran, in spite of the Western sides' failure to honor their commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has always declared its readiness to finalize the Vienna negotiations, voiced eagerness to work out a good and fair agreement on the revival of the 2015 deal and removal of sanctions, and exhibited goodwill.

"The US and the three European countries [which are signatories to the accord] were caught up in a state of delusion and made miscalculations [during recent riots in Iran]. As acknowledged by their officials, they opted to meddle in Iran's domestic affairs ... to wriggle out of their commitments than to seize the available opportunity and negotiate a return to their obligations," Raisi pointed out.

The Iranian president added, "Over the past few months, we have seen a new wave of hybrid foreign plots and interference by some Western countries in Iran's internal developments. Having relied on sanctions and misinformation by enemies and opponents of the Iranian nation, these countries have stood up against the honorable and resilient Iranian nation. They have been waging one of the most overt forms of psychological and hybrid warfare."

He noted that during the recent unrest, some tried to tarnish Iran's global image through completely misleading information, adding that such attempts are still underway, but are all doomed to "ignominious" defeat.

Raisi went on to highlight an improvement in the status of Iranian women and their participation in different areas, citing statistics that show significant breakthrough in women's social roles and gender equality.

He pointed to the significant increase in the number of female academic personnel in Iranian universities, stating that women's illiteracy rate in Iran now stands at less than 10%. He said Iranian women have made up 56 percent of university entrants,



and that women have a strong presence in knowledge-based companies.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always shown its adherence to and respect for the principles of human rights ... Our approach to human rights is not based on political objectives and gains, but rather rooted in our beliefs," Raisi said.

"We are ready to have mutual talks with different countries about human rights. Respect for human rights is not a one-way street," the Iranian president said, adding, "So-called advocates of human rights in the West must be held accountable for their abysmal records. Double standards and discriminatory [approaches] will fail to improve the status of human rights, and will instead pose serious threats to human principles. It also erodes trust in international institutions," the Iranian president said.

He underlined that arrogant powers, particularly the US and certain Western countries, insist on their imperialist stances and refuse to understand realities in Iran. This accounts for their strategic mistakes and the flawed policies they have pursued against Iran and the region, he said.

Arrogant powers have not shied away from any fiendish plot against Iran's Islamic establishment ever since the Islamic Revolution emerged victorious in 1979, Raisi said, adding that they supported deposed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the 1980-1988 war imposed by Iraq on Iran, and have imposed several rounds of sanctions against the country.

Such bids have, however, failed to stop Iran's progress and will not manage to do so in the future, Raisi said.

Raisi said Iran has always underscored the stability, security and development of the region, and believes that regional security and progress is intertwined with the stability of Iran.

He also reaffirmed Iran's unwavering support for the Palestinian nation and their legitimate cause, stating that the occupying Tel Aviv regime has been the main reason behind the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the West Asia region.

"Double standards by the West and international organizations on the Palestinian issue are among the instrumental factors behind the continued occupation [of Palestinian territories] and the increase in crimes of the apartheid Israeli regime against oppressed Palestinians," the Iranian president noted.

## FM Reacts to West's Machinations Against Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in an interview with American media on Thursday responded to the false claims about the recent turmoil and western media machinations against Iran.

Speaking in an interview with US's National Public Radio (NPR), Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian briefed on Tehran's position regarding recent domestic developments.

In reaction to the question about the action of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei in pardoning tens of thousands of rioters arrested in the recent riots, Amirabdollahian said that on the occasion of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution pays special attention to the issue of clemency and mercy. And, therefore, the decree is to release all these detainees, save for those who have committed murder or other serious crimes.

He added, "No student whatsoever was detained at the universities or premises of the universities during the riots. In fact, those who were detained were people who played a role in the riots on the streets."

In response to the question about the number of people arrested in the recent riots, the Foreign Minister underlined that first, it should be noted that the use of tens of thousands for the number of detainees is not accurate. Even if these statistics are from human rights groups, they have been "played up."

He highlighted that despite high tension during the riots, the police were not allowed to carry firearms. However, American and Israeli armament came through from some of "our neighboring countries" with little stability and was used to escalate the clashes by the mob.

Answering a question about the alleged situation of journalists in Iran, Amirabdollahian noted, "We cannot confirm the detention of journalists in Iran. It's very easy to relabel the person who has been detained. You could, at any moment, call that person in question a defendant of human rights, a journalist, among others."

"No journalist was detained during riots," Amirabdollahian said, adding, "Just two weeks ago, something happened in Iran. A scammer was to flee Iran. What he did, in order to help his escape, was to post videos on social media saying that - claiming that he was a protester, that he was subjected to torture. But in fact, he was a scammer and a fraudulent person ... He was arrested by the police."

"You see, the West has carefully and meticulously targeted the riots. Allow me to ask this question to you. You see, there was a lot of maneuvering on Mahsa Amini by Western media. But when it comes to Shireen Abu Akleh, did they really cover her?"

## Boosting Ties With Friendly Countries on Agenda

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran, in a meeting with the Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Guinea, emphasized that the development of cultural relations with friendly countries is one of the main approaches of Iran's 13th government.

Mohammed Mehdi Esmaili, considered the development of cultural relations with friendly and close countries as the main approach of the Iranian government and said:

"The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is always seeking to expand interactions with friendly and brotherly countries, and on this basis, it is necessary to prepare for the development of relations and cultural exchanges and we have a friendship with the friendly country of Guinea."

According to Iran Press, in a meeting with Alpha Soma, the



Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Guinea, Esmaili referred to the previous memorandums of understanding between Iran and Guinea and said that we welcome the signing of a new cultural and artistic memorandum between the two countries.

Referring to the achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the last 4 decades, Esmaili said: "The Islamic Revolution has brought important successes to the people of Iran in the past 44 years."

In this meeting, the Minister of Culture, Tourism and handicrafts of Guinea considered the relationship between Iran and Guinea as a friendly one and said: "Since the independence of Guinea, we have had a friendly and constructive relationship with the Iranian authorities and we hope that cultural relations with Iran will develop more than before."

## Judiciary Rejects Reports on Exacting Commitments From Freed Inmates

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Judiciary rejects reports about the alleged exaction of various commitments from the inmates, who were recently pardoned as part of an amnesty offered by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

The Judiciary's Media Center made the remarks in a statement on Friday after the emergence of some reports on certain social media outlets as well as throughout cyberspace alleging that the inmates had been freed after they made some commitments.

It rejected the reports as inexact and erroneous, saying such allegations had been circulated in order to try to tarnish the sanctity of the amnesty that had been offered by the Leader as well as the joyful social atmosphere that followed the issuance of the decree.

Less than a week ago, Ayatollah Khamenei either pardoned or commuted the sentences of a large number of Iranian prisoners, who had been arrested during the recent foreign-backed riots in the country, agreeing to a request forwarded by Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei.

The Leader issued the approval on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the glorious victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution, which put an end to the rule of the United States-backed Pahlavi regime in the country in 1979, and the birth anniversary of the first Shia Imam, Imam Ali (AS).

Further down the statement, the Judiciary clarified that the only commitment that had been asked of the prisoners to make was for them to give a voluntary pledge not to repeat the crimes they had committed.

## Iran Continues Cooperation With IAEA

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for reaching Iranians' interests.

In a video message on Thursday, Amirabdollahian congratulated the Iranians on the 44th anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution, saying that it had been a pleasure over the past four decades to witness the tremendous and significant progress of the country in the fields of science and technology, defense, industrial, aerospace, medicine, and other various areas.

Describing the Islamic Republic of Iran as a progressive country in the region, he underscored that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a country with a superior geopolitical position and great Islamic civilization, is working to lift sanctions.

Stressing that Iran has never left diplomacy and the negotiating table, Amirabdollahian noted that wherever there are some benefits to the great nation of Iran, the government is actively present.

He further noted that they strongly support the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran in all areas.

Iran's neighbors and Asia are the top foreign policy priorities for the Islamic Republic within the framework of balanced foreign policy, dynamic diplomacy, and intelligent interaction, he said, adding that at the same time, Tehran has made serious efforts to develop cooperation with European, African and Latin American countries.

Despite the sabotage by the US and three European countries (Britain, Germany, and France), Iran is committed to its international obligations, Amirabdollahian said, noting that Tehran's cooperation with the International Atomic Agency (IAEA) continues and that Iran insists on the technicality of this cooperation and the Agency should avoid having a political and selective approach.

Criticizing some Western countries to use negotiations as a political and partisan tool, he underlined that the Islamic Republic of Iran has considered negotiations not merely for negotiations, but for its collective achievements and outcomes.

Iran has repeatedly stated that negotiations and diplomacy with the aim of achieving common interests and maximizing Iran's national interests are on its serious agenda, Amirabdollahian added.

## Many Nations Asking for Iran-Made Military Equipment

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's defense minister says the country has made remarkable advancements in producing military equipment following the 1979 Revolution.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with khamenei.ir, the official website of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Gharai Ashtiani said the Revolution turned a military force heavily dependent on the United States into a self-sufficient force equipped with a variety of homegrown equipment.

He said the Islamic Republic has since its inception had to deal with enmities rooted in the new system's beliefs and values, including its support for the oppressed people in West Asia and around the world.

The general said throughout the years, enemies have taken each and every opportunity to bring the Islamic Republic to its knees, but they have proven unable to reach that goal. The minister said Iran has tried hard to boost its deterrent defensive power, and it has had great achievements and is now on the path of becoming a world power.

"In the defense sector, we have achieved a [high] status in the international arena in a very short period. The world started [this path] two-hundred years ago and we started 30 or 40 years ago. [The enemies] fear the acceleration of our growth and say considering this trend Iran can't be stopped," he said.

The general said demand for Iran-made military equipment has increased rapidly in recent years.

"Many countries have come to us asking for equipment. This perception that the Islamic Republic is capable and powerful forces enemies to back off."

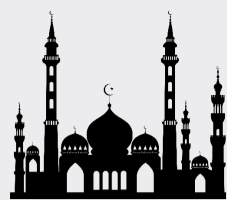
"Today, the world sees that the Islamic Republic is so powerful that it's producing strategic weapons and exporting them. They see that we are playing a role in the region."

He said Iran's military forces are now capable of detecting the enemies' weak points and create designs on how to hit hostile forces where it really hurts.

The general said Iran's adversaries now can't deal with its defensive power and its clout in the region.

"I'm certain that considering the international situation, the enemy can't even imagine having a greedy eye [on Iran] or for example having a military operation. It can by no means do this."





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:01
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:29
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:53

24. The likeness of the life of the present is as the rain which We send down from the skies: by its mingling arises the produce of the earth- which provides food for men and animals: (It grows) till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out (in beauty): the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it: There reaches it Our command by night or by day, and We make it like a harvest clean-mown, as if it had not flourished only the day before! thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who reflect. Surah 10. Jonah (24)

## Iran Accounts for 1.2m Tons of 212m Tons of World Fishery Products

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

**TEHRAN – The CEO of Fishery Company of Etko Organization and a member of Protein Production and Packaging Industry Employers Trade Association says Iran's share of 212m tons of fishery products of the world is only 1.2m tons.**

Speaking in a press conference on Wednesday, Mr. Mahmoud Moalem said that with having such capacities and capabilities, the country should not be affected by the sanctions and the like issues, adding that if these capacities are managed wisely, the problems will drop to its lowest amount. He noted that one of the very good capacities of the country is to use its sea and water resources, adding that the country has 4500 kilometers of coasts in its southern part that four provinces enjoy it. He pointed to Khuzestan, Bushehr, Hormozgan and Sistan and Baluchestan as the provinces which benefit from coasts while the country has some 2000 kilometers of coasts in the north.

Moalem further said that with enjoying such a considerable coastal areas, Iran's share of world fishery products is not even 0.5%, adding that some 212m tons of fishery products are produced in the world per year and Iran's share is only 1.2m tons.

He added that the question is why with having such a great amount of coasts Iran's share of the fishery in the world is insignificant. He added that Iran ranks 23 in the world in fishery products but India, China and Indonesia

are the major fishery producers in the world and these three countries account for 73% of world fishery products.

Moalem further said that -the per capita for fishery products consumption in Iran is 13 kilograms and tinned fish is the dominant fisher product consumption in Iran.

He further pointed to the reason for establishment of Fishery Company by Etko Organization and said that Etko Organization is a big operational group which missed fishery and it decided Fishery Company to be launched. He further said that the fishery company of the organization had only one factory in Ghaemshahr last year but due to the prudence and wise management of Etko Organization, the number of factories increased and the fishery unit of the organization was launched in Chabahar.

He added that the fishery chain in Etko Organization has been formed since last year and the center of operation of this unit is in Chabahar Port as the port is a strategic port in the region and the Middle East. He said that the main fishing in this port is industrial fishes which is used in the tuna producing factories.

He added that the company exported sole and croaker fish worth of \$540m, noting that the region can produce 4,000 tons of shrimp and 85% of shrimp product is exported and Arab states and Southeast Asian countries are the main destinations for Iran's shrimp which earns good amount of forex for the country.



## Mass Housing Construction Cooperatives; Answers to Doubts and Solutions



**Cooperative means convergence to achieve a goal, and a cooperative is a group of people who strive to achieve a goal. In a frank conversation with Engineer Mohammad Nazari, a member of the Board of Directors of Omsan-e Ojsazan Omid Mass Construction Cooperatives and Head of Board of Directors of e West Parliament Holding, we have examined the doubts surrounding the mass house building cooperatives.**

**Why is the price of mass production cooperatives lower than the market price?**

Mass house building cooperatives are formed in order to build and supply housing at full price. Major purchases, optimal use of human resources, and the credits and facilities that the government has considered for this sector of economic actors make mass cooperatives able to offer housing at a lower price than the market.

**We have all heard about doubts on mass builders. Why is there so much bad news about mass builders?**

The answer to this question is very simple! Consider a housing cooperative that has pre-sold 500 housing units and is unable to build them, or the project is halfway through and is stopped. 500 families, each with at least 3 members, get involved and cry their demands everywhere with great anger. Now, consider a small land developer that has, for example, 8 units under construction and the project has been stopped. In both cases, a project has been stopped, but the number of complaints is very different. When we look at Tehran and especially at District 22 of Tehran, we see huge towers and construction projects that have risen from the ground by these mass builders and have given Tehran an advanced urban appearance. Considering that there are thousands of mass housing cooperatives in the country, a small percentage of these cooperatives have failed to fulfill their obligations in the specified time. But to see the glass half full, a much higher percentage of them have fulfilled their obligations and delivered their units with all the problems and deficiencies. Of course, this issue applies to all guilds, and one should not accuse all guilds of lack of work and even fraud in some cases because of the mistakes and lack of work of some people. For economic progress in the country, we need to support productive markets such as construction. In my opinion, building trust in the productive markets is the way out of the current economic conditions.

**Why can't some housing cooperative companies fulfill their obligations?**

Mass construction requires a lot of planning and organization. Some crowdsourcing companies do not have a clear vision of their workload and business organization needs. This weakness makes them not spend the necessary expenses for the provision of hardware and software infrastructure, as well as the recruitment, training and employment of human resources. This problem makes them face a very high workload after underwriting and they cannot deliver their projects properly. In general, weakness in leadership is the bane of mass housing developers. Using trusted, experienced and expert consultants; it is a solution that can be suggested to the leaders of this group of economic activists.

**What are the components of a successful mass housing cooperative?**

First, you must make sure of the existence of the legal personality of the cooperative. This is possible by querying the comprehensive system of the country's legal entities information base. Also, check the announcement of changes and registration of the company in the official newspaper and ask for the resume of the company and read it well. The background and resume of the chairman of the board of directors and the CEO of the housing cooperative company can tell the facts about it. The definition of mass construction projects includes preliminary maps based on the land map, the predicted density, the definition of the number of floors, the approximate number and size of the units and the facilities and services per capita of the project, parking and storage, elevators, the type of structure and construction material, interior decoration material and landscaping. The above information must be provided to the investor. The type, form, and appearance of presenting this information can represent the behind-the-scenes management and expertise of the mass production company's human resources.



**What is your advice on comparing the mass construction projects?**

First, the project land should be checked. If the land has a document of 6 dong, check that it is in the name of the mass production company or its board of directors. If the land is a promise, a detailed examination of the promise or affidavit and the terms and conditions of the contract is a way forward. Be sure to visit the project site before signing the contract and check the surrounding area of the project in terms of infrastructure and public services, mobile antenna and internet status, green space, large stores, access to public transportation, etc. In the next step, contracts should be reviewed. Usually, mass production companies enter into contracts with investors in two stages. The first contract in which the density is assigned to you. This contract and its amount must be definitive. If the land contract or the density is not acceptable, ignore the purchase of that project! The main and important issue is the second contract, which is known as construction manual or construction contract. This contract is definitely unaccountable and unlike the initial contract, if it was definitive, ignore the purchase of that project! Because it seems unlikely, considering the economic inflation and the time-consuming process of mass construction, which takes 36 to 48 months, to be able to financially plan a project definitively from the beginning. The contract should be checked to be signed by the person who is the owner of the signature in the contract and must have security symbols such as a raised seal or hologram. Also, be sure to read the signed text before signing. In some cases, companies that don't have the good intention, they give you a contract to study and bring another contract to you to sign! In addition to these, some mass production companies, in addition to the contract they conclude and sign in the cooperative office, grant the contract and its subject matter and powers in the notary office in the form of a

power of attorney on behalf of the land owners to the buyer. This is important because your contract with the cooperative company and its number and date will be registered in an official authority and in a way it can be one of the documents proving your contract with the cooperative company or the land owner. Of course, there is a lot of debate among lawyers about this, but look at it from the point of view that if, God forbid, you get into trouble with the manufacturer, it is one of the documents that can be used by you in court. There must be a penalty clause in the contract for the delay in handing over the unit. Also, the delivery time must be clearly stated. Tables of consumable materials and the type of structure are also among the things that should be checked completely. The way of handing over to others and specific payment terms are also issues that should be taken into consideration.

**What do you think about the various payment conditions of mass building cooperatives?**

This issue completely depends on the financial strength of the mass production company in providing the number and amount of installments. Providing bank loans is not necessarily a sign of mass credit. Some loans are publicly available through banks. However, the repayment of installments of these loans should not be underestimated. Sometimes there are mass building companies that, with their financial strength, are able to offer long-term, interest-free payment terms that are better than bank loans. All in all, offering long-term installments can be a good sign of the builder's financial strength and makes it easy for you to hand over the unit. The process of paying installments by investors is one of the important components in the continuity of the construction process of mass construction projects. If mass builder has good financial power, it can use its financial resources to maintain the continuity of construction until the installments of all investors are paid and not to delay the delivery of units. In addition to long-term installments, some cooperative companies that build mass housing, consider a profit for participating in the construction, so that if the investor fails to fulfill his obligations to them for any reason, the investor's investment in the project is not ignored. This feature can make investors more confident and willing to invest in the project.

**How much risk is the pre-purchasing of a house from mass building cooperatives?**

Investment in the general sense is not without risk! But compared to the existing investment markets such as currency, gold, coins, stock market, cars and the like, investing in pre-purchase of house, if it is done with open eyes and a thorough investigation of the mass cooperative company, can have less risk and create a profit equivalent to other markets for investors. Let me remind you that investing in non-productive markets will not cure the pain of our economy. Directing capital towards productive markets such as construction and building trust in this sector is one of the ways to overcome the current economic conditions of the country. Tell us about the project that your cooperative is underwriting and you are the creator of it. The luxurious Galleria complex project is located on a land of 3990 square meters in one of the most pleasant areas of Tehran, Vardavard. According to calculations, the price of apartments in this area will grow significantly in the coming years. Galleria has 9 floors. Among the facilities considered for the Galleria Complex are things like swimming pool, sauna, Jacuzzi, massage parlor, roof garden, kindergarten, walking track, guest parking, luxurious lobby with a ceiling height of 6 meters, private car wash, fitness club and private cinema. Cited. One of the great advantages of this project is the smartization of units and the right to choose its materials. One of the outstanding features of this project is the two-story plot, which has a 6 dong single-leaf document and has water, electricity, gas, and telephone. We are currently demolishing the old buildings in the project. Construction and definitive delivery commitment of 36 months and payment of installments in 48 months, as well as 15% annual contribution interest and 20% penalty for failure to deliver on time is our guarantee for the construction and delivery of the luxurious Galleria Complex.



## South Korea Lifts Visa Curbs On Chinese Travelers

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea plans to resume issuing short-term visas for travellers from China on Saturday after China improved its COVID-19 situation, Seoul officials said.

South Korea suspended issuing short-term visas to Chinese visitors last month after China abruptly ended its "zero-COVID" policy, leading to a wave of infections. Beijing retaliated by halting short-term visas for South Korean travellers.

Kim Sung-ho, South Korea's vice interior minister in charge of disaster and safety management, said the government had decided to restart the visa issuance after the number of infections among Chinese arrivals dropped significantly, and new strains of the virus have not emerged.



## Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali Juntas Plan Three-Way Partnership

OUAGADOUGOU (Dispatches) - The foreign ministers of Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali, all ruled by military juntas, have proposed a regional partnership to facilitate trade and tackle insecurity in the region, they said in a joint statement.

The ministers met in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou this week to discuss collaboration. All three West African countries have experienced military takeovers since 2020, reversing democratic gains that had seen the region shed its tag as Africa's "coup belt". Frustrations over governments' inability to protect civilians from a worsening jihadist insurgency spurred some of the putsches, which have led to economic sanctions and soured relations with regional and Western allies.



## Turkey and Syria Quake Death Tolls Top 22,000



ANTAKYA (Dispatches) - Rescue crews saved a 10-day-old baby and his mother trapped in ruins of a building in Turkey and dug several people from other sites as President Tayyip Erdogan said authorities should have reacted faster to this week's huge earthquake.

The confirmed death toll from the deadliest quake in the region in two decades stood at more than 22,000 across southern Turkey and northwest Syria four days after it hit.

Hundreds of thousands more people have been left homeless and short of food in bleak winter conditions and leaders in both countries have faced questions about their response.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad made his first reported trip to affected areas since the quake, visiting a hospital in Aleppo, state media reported. But the World Food Programme said it was running out of stocks in rebel-held northwest Syria as the state of war there complicated relief efforts.

Erdogan on Friday visited Turkey's Adiyaman province, where he acknowledged the government's response was not as fast as it could have been.

"Although we have the largest search and rescue team in the world right now, it is a reality that search efforts are not as fast as we wanted them to be," he said.

He also said looting of shops had taken place in some areas although a state of emergency should quell this.

Erdogan is standing for re-election in a vote scheduled for May 14 and his opponents have seized upon the issue to attack him. The election may now be postponed due to the disaster.

With anger simmering over delays in the delivery of aid and getting the rescue effort underway, the disaster is likely to play into the election, if it goes ahead.

Erdogan, for whom the vote was his toughest challenge in two decades in power even before the earthquake, has called for solidarity and condemned what he has described as "negative campaigns for political interest".

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, head of Turkey's main opposition party, criticised the government response.

"The earthquake was huge, but what was much bigger than the earthquake was the lack of coordination, lack of planning and incompetence," Kilicdaroglu said in a video statement.

Rescuers, including teams from dozens of countries, toiled night and day in the ruins of thousands of wrecked buildings to find buried survivors. In freezing temperatures, they regularly called for silence as they listened for any sound of life from mangled concrete mounds.

In the Samandag district of Turkey's Hatay province, rescuers crouched under concrete slabs and whispering "inshallah" (God willing), carefully reached into the rubble and picked out a 10-day-old newborn. His eyes wide open, baby Yagiz Ulas was wrapped in a thermal blanket and carried to a field hospital. Emergency workers also took away his mother, dazed and pale but conscious on a stretcher, video images showed.

In Diyarbakir to the east, Sebahat Varli, 32, and her son Serhat were rescued and taken to hospital on Friday morning, 100 hours after the quake.

Across the border in Syria, rescuers from the White Helmets group used their hands to dig through plaster and cement until reaching the bare foot of a young girl, still wearing pink pajamas, grimy but alive and free.

But hopes were fading that many more would be found alive.

In the Syrian town of Jandar, Naser al-Wakaa sobbed as he sat on the pile of rubble and twisted metal that had been his family's home, burying his face in the baby clothes that had belonged to one of his children.

## Russia Strikes Ukrainian Power Grid

KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia struck power facilities across Ukraine with missiles, the day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy concluded a tour of Western capitals, as Ukrainian officials said a long-awaited Russian offensive was under way in the east.

Ukraine's air force said 61 of a total of 71 Russian missiles had been shot down. But Energy Minister German Galushchenko said Russia had hit power facilities in six regions with missiles and drones, causing blackouts across most of Ukraine.

Russia has repeatedly attacked civilian infrastructure far from the front lines over the last four months, leaving millions of urban Ukrainians without power, heat or water for days at a time in the middle of winter.

The barrages have often followed Ukrainian diplomatic or battlefield advances.

This one came as Zelenskiy ended a tour of London, Paris and Brussels with standing ovations ringing in his ears, though no public promises of the fighter jets he was asking for.

Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko said 10 Russian missiles had been shot down over the Ukrainian capital after air raid sirens blared across the country during the morning rush hour and officials urged weary civilians to heed them and shelter.

European Council President Charles Michel said the attacks were indiscriminate and constituted war crimes.

"The EU and its member states stand by Ukraine and all Ukrainians. And will further speed up the provision of military equipment, including air defence," he tweeted.

Russia denies targeting civilians and says the facilities it attacks are relevant to Kyiv's war effort.

Ukraine has been bracing itself for a new Russian offensive in the belief that, after months of reverses, President Vladimir Putin wants to tout a battlefield success before the anniversary of the invasion he launched on Feb. 24.

Putin will give his delayed annual showcase address to parliament, akin to the U.S. president's State of the Union speech, on Feb. 21. That was the date last year when he recognised the breakaway Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent, a prelude to invading.



## Meloni Says France Risks Undermining EU Unity on Ukraine

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni accused France of jeopardising EU unity on Ukraine by organising a Franco-German dinner in Paris with the Ukrainian president that excluded other European allies.

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met Volodymyr Zelenskiy on Wednesday evening on the eve of an EU summit, where the Ukrainian leader called for more weapons in the fight against the Russian invasion.

The nationalist Italian leader has already dismissed the Paris dinner as "inappropriate" and doubled down on her criticism on Friday, saying it was vital for the 27-nation European Union to show a unified face in the crisis.

"What was right was the photo of Zelenskiy with the 27 (EU leaders). Anticipating that unity with a meeting in Paris was politically wrong," she said at the end of the summit, suggesting Macron's initiative might undermine support for Kyiv.

"It is not easy for any of us to handle the Ukraine issue with public opinion. What we do, we do because it is right but perhaps not the easiest thing in terms of consensus," she added.

Opinion polls in Italy have consistently shown only lukewarm support for Ukraine, with one recent IPSOS survey saying just 30% of Italians backed sending weapons or air defence systems to Kyiv against 63% in Britain, 52% in France and 48% in Germany.

Meloni's predecessor, former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi, worked closely with Macron and Scholz on formulating an EU response to the Russian invasion and the three men travelled together to Kyiv last June to see Zelenskiy.

However, the warm ties cooled considerably last October after Meloni, a eurosceptic conservative, took power. But she warned France and Germany, the eurozone's two biggest economies, not to try to impose their policies on the rest of the bloc.

## Britain, Malta Sign Deal Covering Defense, Migration

VALLETTA (Dispatches) - Britain and its former Mediterranean colony Malta signed a wide-ranging cooperation agreement covering areas including security and defense, migration, education, health and trade.

The agreement was signed during a short visit to the island by British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, who met Foreign Minister Ian Borg.

Malta gained independence from Britain in 1964 and the two countries have traditionally enjoyed a close friendship. They were allies in areas such as taxation policy in the European Union before Britain left the bloc.

No details of the Bilateral Cooperation Framework Agreement were given, but Britain has over the years trained officers of the Maltese armed forces in its military academies. It has also awarded scholarships to Maltese students and provided specialised medical care to Maltese patients.

Earlier this week, Britain also signed an export and investment partnership with Italy, its first with a EU member since it left the bloc, and a joint statement of intent on bilateral defence cooperation.

Britain and Malta have worked together on migration. Malta is on the main migration route across the Mediterranean from Libya to Europe, with many migrants then attempting to carry on to the UK.

"We want to prevent people traffickers from harvesting money from some of the most desperate people in the world," Cleverly told media.

He said that the UK supported Maltese initiatives in the United Nations and within the Commonwealth in the development of small island states.

Cleverly said the two sides had also discussed Ukraine and relations between the UK and the EU. He praised Malta, as current president of the UN Security Council, for planning to organise an event to mark Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Cleverly also laid flowers at a makeshift memorial to murdered anti-corruption journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia opposite the law courts in Valletta.

Caruana Galizia was killed by a car bomb in 2017. Two brothers were sentenced to 40 years in prison in October after admitting her murder. Malta government officials have so far not made any official visit to the memorial.



## Moldovan Gov't Quits Amid Economic Turmoil, Russia Tensions



CHISINAU (Dispatches) - Moldova's pro-Western government resigned after a turbulent 18 months in power marked by economic turmoil and the spillover effects of Russia's war in neighboring Ukraine.

President Maia Sandu accepted Prime Minister's Natalia Gavrilita's resignation and nominated 48-year-old presidential aide and former interior minister Dorin Recean to replace her.

Recean, who is expected to quickly win parliamentary approval, said he would press on with Moldova's bid to join the European Union and revive the economy. "The new government will have three priorities: Order and discipline, a new life and economy, and peace and stability," Recean, a defence adviser to Sandu and secretary of Moldova's security council, told a news briefing.

His challenges include dealing with what Moldova portrays as attempts by Russia to destabilise the tiny former Soviet republic of 2.5 million people which borders Ukraine and NATO and EU member Romania.

Russia, which has troops in Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria, has bristled at the possibility of former Soviet republics joining the EU.

Tensions rose further on Friday when Chisinau said a Russian missile had violated Moldovan airspace before hitting Ukraine, and summoned Russia's ambassador to protest.

The foreign ministry condemned "the latest unfriendly actions and statements against Moldova" and said they were "absolutely unacceptable." Sandu thanked the outgoing government for its efforts in what she was "a time of so many crises."

"In spite of unprecedented challenges, the country was governed responsibly, with a lot of attention and dedicated work. We have stability, peace and development - where others wanted war and bankruptcy."

Gavrilita became prime minister in August 2021 after her pro-European Party of Action and Solidarity secured a majority in parliament with a mandate to clean up corruption. EU leaders accepted Moldova as a membership candidate last year in a diplomatic triumph for Sandu. The government had been mapping out reforms to accelerate accession to the 27-nation bloc and working on diversifying its energy supply.



## What We Know And Don't Know About The Chinese Balloon

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) - The U.S. shooting down of what Washington says was a Chinese spy balloon and Beijing says was a civilian scientific vessel accidentally blown off course has fuelled widespread questions, including about the balloon itself.

More is likely to be learned about the balloon after the U.S. military recovers its remnants from the ocean off the coast of South Carolina.

Here's what we know, and don't know, about the balloon that has triggered a dramatic diplomatic dispute between the two powers:

The head of North American Aerospace Defense Command, General Glen VanHerck, described the balloon as being 200 feet (61 metres) high, with a surveillance payload the size of a regional passenger jet that likely weighed in excess of a couple thousand pounds.

Civilians viewing the balloon from the ground described it as a giant white orb as it floated about 60,000 feet (18,300 meters) above the central United States, an altitude roughly twice that of civilian air traffic.

U.S. officials said they had been tracking the high-altitude for some time and that it drifted over the United States for at least seven days.

China's foreign ministry said the balloon was mainly used for meteorological purposes and had limited self-steering ability. It said it was affected by the weather and unexpectedly drifted into U.S. airspace.

The ministry has also said it has no information to share about what company or entity owns the balloon.

Kaymont, a U.S. firm that makes and distributes weather balloons globally, said the size, payload and flight time exceeded the capabilities of typical weather balloons that are made of latex.

"A typical weather forecasting balloon will have a lightweight radiosonde payload that is about 200 grams in weight. The balloon at release will be about 1.4 metres and will burst around 6 metres in diameter, and the flight time will be between 90-120 minutes," Jesse Geffen, a Kaymont account manager, told Reuters.

"Photographic payloads (high altitude photography and videography) may be carried by larger balloons, but wouldn't even be a third of the size of the balloon that flew over the country."

In China, the manufacture of weather balloons is dominated by a subsidiary of state chemical giant ChemChina, Zhuzhou R&D Institute for Rubber & Plastics (Zhuzhou Rubber), which makes 75% of high-altitude balloons used by the China Meteorological Administration, the country's regulator of state-owned firms said in a statement last year.

Smaller players include Guangzhou Double-One Weather Equipment Company, whose company's chairman Lin Xiuping told Reuters that her firm and Zhuzhou Rubber were capable of making balloons that could fly at the height the Chinese balloon was flying at over the United States.

She said, however, that Guangzhou Double-One was not the manufacturer of that balloon.

An employee that answered the phone at Zhuzhou Rubber's headquarters said the U.S. balloon had nothing to do with the company and declined to accept further questions.

Kaymont said the balloon was likely made of plastic film, not latex. Some descriptions thus far of the balloon debris being retrieved from the Atlantic Ocean say that there has been plastic.

By looks and by size, it resembles balloons made by U.S. firm Aerostar, whose own balloon was mistaken for the Chinese one while flying over Memphis.

Aerostar is an aerospace and defense contractor that supplies stratospheric balloons to the likes of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) made out of polyethylene film that can fly for over 200 days and carry hundreds of pounds.



## Glacier Lakes Swollen By Global Warming Threaten Millions

PARIS (Dispatches) - Violent flooding from glacier lakes formed or enlarged by climate change threatens at least 15 million people worldwide, most of them in four countries, researchers said.

More than nine million people across so-called High Mountain Asia live in the path of potential glacial lake outburst floods, including five million in northern India and Pakistan, they reported in Nature Communications.

China and Peru are also especially exposed to the danger of abrupt flooding from melting glaciers, according to the study, the first global assessment of areas most at risk.

The volume of lakes formed as glaciers worldwide disintegrate due to global warming has jumped by 50 percent in 30 years, according to a 2020 study based on satellite data.

Earth's average surface temperature has risen nearly 1.2 degrees Celsius since preindustrial times, but high-mountain regions around the world have warmed at twice that pace.

Glacier lakes are particularly unstable because they are most often dammed by ice or sediment composed of loose rock and debris. When accumulating water bursts through these accidental barriers, massive flooding can occur downstream.

This kind of flooding has been responsible for thousands of deaths in the last century, as well as the destruction of communities, infrastructure and livestock.

"It's not the areas with the largest number or most rapidly growing lakes that are most dangerous," said lead author Caroline Taylor, a doctoral student at Newcastle University in England.

"Instead, it is the number of people, their proximity to a glacial lake, and, importantly, their ability to cope with a flood that determines the potential danger," she explained.

Thousands of people, for example, have been killed by glacier lake outburst floods in High Mountain Asia but only a handful in North America's Pacific Northwest, even though that region has twice as many glacial lakes.

To carry out the study, Taylor and her colleagues compared three sets of data: the number and condition of lakes fed by melt-water, the number of people living within 50 kilometres of a glacial lake basin, and how prepared communities are to cope with disaster should it arrive.

Some 90 million people across 30 countries live in 1,089 glacial lake basins, they found. 15 million of them reside within one kilometre of the track an outburst flood would take.

Pakistan is home to more than 7,000 glaciers in the spectacular Himalaya, Hindu Kush and Karakoram mountain ranges, more than anywhere else on Earth outside the poles.

Last summer, on the heels of a two-month heat wave and during sustained rains that followed, raging torrents from melting glaciers in northern Pakistan ripped up thousands of kilometres of roads and railway tracks, destroyed bridges, and washed away entire villages.

In Peru, a 41-year-old farmer who lives in mountains near the city of Huaraz has filed suit against the German firm RWE, saying its greenhouse gas emissions are partly responsible for the melting of nearby glaciers.

Last year a delegation of German judges visited the region to determine what risk the expanding lake below the Palcacocha glacier poses to city of Huaraz and its 120,000 inhabitants.

Half of the Earth's 215,000 glaciers and a quarter of their mass will melt away by the end of the century even if global warming can be capped at 1.5 degrees Celsius, the ambitious Paris Agreement target that many scientists now say is beyond reach, a recent study found.

Over the past century, a third of global sea-level rises came from glacier melt, according to earlier research.



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## Persian Gulf Nations to Remain Major Oil Suppliers to India for a Long Time

BENGALURU (Dispatches) – India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, has diversified its sources of energy imports but will continue to buy most of its oil from the Middle East for a long time, the South Asian country's oil minister said.

"I continue to maintain that the Gulf, countries of the gulf, will continue to be major suppliers and account for a large percentage of our imports for a long time to come," Hardeep Singh Puri told reporters at India Energy Week.

He also said India will consider buying oil from Iran and Venezuela if sanctions are lifted and would continue purchases from Russia if prices "continue to be good".

India has diversified its sources of oil imports to 39 countries from 27 two years ago, he said. Rising purchases of Russian oil have reduced the share of supplies of India's crude imports from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to the lowest in more than a decade. OPEC Secretary-General Haitham Al Ghais has invited India to be a part of an OPEC seminar, Puri added.



## Earthquakes to Disrupt Turkey's Growth, Stretch Budget

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Massive earthquakes in Turkey will add billions of dollars of spending to Ankara's budget and cut economic growth by up 2 percentage points this year, officials and economists said, as the government reels from massive destruction in the aftermath of the catastrophe.

Over 14,014 people were confirmed to have been killed and 63,794 others injured in Turkey by earthquakes that struck on Monday, leaving a trail of destruction across the region.

Thousands of buildings, including homes and hospitals, roads, pipelines and other infrastructure, have sustained heavy damage in the area, where some 13.4 million people used to live.

While officials say the extent of the destruction is not yet clear, they believe rebuilding will stretch Turkey's budget.

"There will be billions of dollars of damage," one senior official told Reuters, adding there would need to be a rapid reconstruction of infrastructure, houses and factories.

Meanwhile, ratings agency Fitch also said yesterday that the earthquake that has devastated Turkey's and Syria could cause economic losses exceeding \$4 billion.

"Economic losses are hard to estimate as the situation is evolving, but they appear likely to exceed" \$2 billion and could reach \$4 billion "or more," Fitch Ratings said.

Insured losses will be much lower, possibly around \$1 billion, due to low insurance coverage in the area, it added.

Turkey has been beset for years by soaring inflation and currency crashes while the government put into effect a new economic model, which yielded desired results.

The country's Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati said back in January that the government would continue to pursue policies that prioritize economic growth and jobs in 2023, a year he said would see a further drop in inflation and an increase in household income.

He promised at the time a continuation of policies that prioritize investment, employment, production and exports in 2023, part of the economic model that the government introduced in late 2021 that aims at flipping Turkey's persistent trade deficits, a major component of the current account.

The model relies on targeted loans and low-interest rates and also aims at eventually helping reduce inflation, which hit a 24-year high in October but moderated over the last two months and is expected to decrease significantly this year.

Turkey also has much lower debt levels than most countries but years of FX reserve depletion and erosion of the central bank have left their mark.

Earthquake damage is also expected to hit production in the affected region, which accounts for 9.3% of Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP).

Indicating the extent of the disruption, electricity use in Turkey dropped 11% on Monday, compared to a week earlier, Energy Exchange Istanbul (EPIAS) data showed.

That disruption could hit economic growth this year.

Three economists calculated GDP growth could drop 0.6 to 2 percentage points under a scenario where production in the region drops 50%, which they said would take six to 12 months to recover.

## Malaysia's 2022 GDP Set to Post Highest Growth in ASEAN

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to hit 8.4 per cent in 2022 compared with 3.1 per cent in 2021, marking the highest growth among the ASEAN countries, said Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd.

Additionally, the GDP growth for the fourth quarter of 2022 (4Q 2022) is expected to reach 5.7 per cent.

Bank Islam chief economist Firdaos Rosli said this would be a better-than-expected forecast despite the political turmoil which began in early 2020 and subsided in the 15th General Election (GE15) in November last year, which culminated in the formation of a multi-coalitional government.

"Furthermore, the ringgit reached a historical high of RM4.746 in early November 2022, pressured by the widening interest rates and bond yield differentials. "We posit that such compelling growth was bolstered by the continued expansion in the domestic demand and a firmer recovery in the labor market, aside from the low-base effect factor," he said in a note today.

Firdaos said that although the Malaysian economy would continue to grow in 2023 amid a global slowdown, a recession would be less probable to occur as the country's macroeconomic fundamentals remain solid.

He said that private consumption would continue to be the primary driver of economic growth throughout the year, in addition to China's reopening prospect that could help limit the decline.

Firdaos also noted that private investment would remain contentious despite the overnight policy rate being lower than during the pre-pandemic levels.

"That said, we project our economy to grow by 4.5 per cent in 2023 sans the impact of China's economic reopening and subsidy rationalisation.

"For the record, the latest multilateral development banks' (forecasts) project Malaysia to grow between 4.0 per cent and 4.4 per cent in 2023," he said.

Moving forward, Firdaos opined that sustaining Malaysia's post-pandemic growth rates would be key amid the global slowdown and impending state elections to ensure the government gains ample fiscal headroom to undertake reforms in the future.

Hence, he said the short-term policy goals would be more prominent than long-term ones in the coming weeks.

"The government is expected to outline some of these goals when re-tableting Budget 2023, and the remaining ones in the review of the 12th Malaysia Plan in 3Q 2023.



## Russia's Current Account Surplus Shrinks 58.2% in Jan as Exports Fall

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Lower export volumes saw Russia's current account surplus shrink 58.2% to \$8 billion in January, the central bank said, squeezing Russia's capital buffers at a time when Moscow is ramping up budget spending.

Russia's current account surplus hit a record high in 2022, as a fall in imports and robust oil and gas exports kept foreign money flowing in despite Western efforts to isolate the Russian economy over the conflict in Ukraine.

But Moscow is now contending with sharply lower export revenues, down 35.1% year-on-year in January, in part due to price caps and embargoes on Russian oil and gas products.

"The significant reduction in the surplus of the balance of goods and services as a result of the decrease in the cost volume of exports of goods played a decisive role," the central bank said.

Energy revenues were particularly low in January, down 46.4%. The slumping revenues combined with soaring expenditure to push Russia's federal budget to a deficit of 1.76 trillion roubles (\$24.2 billion) in the first month of the year.

The current account, a measure of the difference between all money coming into a country through trade, investment and transfers, and what flows back out, had stood at \$19.1 billion in January 2021.

Higher commodity prices throughout 2022 helped push the current account last year to \$227.4 billion, up 86% from 2021, the central bank said last month.

## Brazil Minister Backs Lula on Rates But Is Focused on Economy

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazil's Finance Minister Fernando Haddad agrees with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's view that interest rates need to drop, but is focused on the new government's agenda rather than taking on the central bank, an Economy Ministry source said.

Leftist Lula again raised his concerns about Brazil's benchmark interest rate level, which stands at 13.75%, during a closed political meeting with Haddad, Luciano Bivar, a federal deputy who was present, told Reuters.

But Haddad had focused instead on the new Brazilian government's economic agenda, highlighting a new fiscal framework to be presented in April and tax reforms, Bivar said.

"The President showed discomfort over the central bank's actions, but Haddad preferred to focus on the government's agenda with Congress, the creation of the fiscal framework and tax reform," Bivar said.

Representatives for Lula and Haddad had no immediate comment on their discussions during the political meeting.

Haddad's stance of keeping out of the debate stirred by Lula's attacks on the central bank does not mean he disagrees with the leftist president's views, the Economy Ministry source told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Lula has repeatedly criticized Brazil's benchmark interest rate level as a major drag on the country's economic growth and has indicated that it should aim for higher inflation.

Haddad's economic policy secretary has previously said the issue is not being discussed in the ministry.

When they kept Brazil's benchmark interest at a six-year high last week, central bank policymakers signalled that interest rates could remain unchanged for longer than markets expected due to fiscal risks under Lula.

But when the minutes from the rate-setting meeting later mentioned the government's fiscal plans presented by Haddad as possibly mitigating risks, he went public to say that the bank's tone was now "more friendly".

A second official at the economy ministry said Lula's criticisms of the central bank are not a topic of internal discussion, despite concerns that they generate market uncertainty and hinder efforts to lower interest rates.

When Haddad met with senators from Lula's Workers Party (PT) on Tuesday, the interest rate debate was not discussed, two sources who asked not to be named told Reuters.

## U.S. Weekly Jobless Claims Increase, Labor Market Remains Tight

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits increased more than expected last week, but the underlying trend continued to point to a tight labor market.

The jobs market has remained resilient despite growing economic headwinds from the Federal Reserve's interest rate increases. While labor market strength keeps the U.S. central policy on its monetary policy tightening path, it also suggests that a much anticipated recession is nowhere near.

"We would be crying wolf if we said we thought there was a recession signal in the weekly unemployment claims data this week," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWDBONDS in New York. "Recession is not around the corner with layoffs this low, and the downturn, if it is coming at all, is months away."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 13,000 to a seasonally adjusted 196,000 for the week ended Feb. 4, the Labor Department said on Thursday. That was the first increase in claims since the second last week of December. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 190,000 claims for the latest week.

The four-week moving average of claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it strips out week-to-week volatility, fell 2,500 to 189,250, the lowest level since last April. Unadjusted claims rose 9,628 to 234,654 last week.

There was a jump in claims in California as well as notable increases in Ohio and Illinois. Those rises offset decreases in Georgia, New Jersey and Texas.

Claims have remained low despite high-profile layoffs in the technology industry as well as the interest rate-sensitive finance and housing sectors. Walt Disney (DIS.N) and Zoom Video Communications (ZM.O) added to the growing list of companies laying off workers, announcing 7,000 and 1,300 jobs cuts, respectively, this week.

Economists say most of the companies, especially in the technology industry, overhired during the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted that small businesses continued to seek workers.

There is anecdotal evidence that companies are generally reluctant to lay off workers after experiencing difficulties recruiting during the pandemic.

Workers remain scarce in some industries. There were 1.9 job openings for every unemployed person in December, government data showed last week. According to an Institute for Supply Management survey last Friday, some services businesses in January reported they were "unable to hire qualified labor," saying that "supply is thin."

## S&P Warns of Possible Economic Blow, Hit to Japan Inc



TOKYO (Reuters) - A future Bank of Japan (BOJ) interest rate hike could affect the country's sovereign debt rating if firms struggle to absorb rising funding costs, an official at S&P Global Ratings said.

Higher borrowing costs could also lead to a downturn in long-term economic growth, S&P said.

Japanese bond yields have crept up on market expectations the BOJ will phase out its yield control policy and start raising interest rates under a new governor who succeeds incumbent Haruhiko Kuroda in April.

While further rises in long-term interest rates could increase Japan's already large debt burden, such factors are already taken into account in the current "A+" sovereign debt rating, said Kim Eng Tan, senior director of S&P's sovereign ratings team in Asia-Pacific.

The bigger concern is whether Japanese firms, accustomed to many years of ultra-low interest rates, could absorb higher funding costs that come from tighter monetary policy, he told Reuters in an interview.

S&P expects the BOJ to tighten policy only gradually with the near-term impact on the economy likely limited, Tan added.

But the longer-term effect on Japanese firms and the broader economy is a concern as "we're now at a stage where interest rates seem to be rising, and there's quite a bit of uncertainty about how far it will go before it stabilises again," he said. Even a 1-2 percentage point increase in interest rates would have a big impact on Japanese firms, particularly those in the service-sector with low profits or high debt, Tan said.

"They've been used to a very low interest rate environment for quite a while. So it is really the impact on the economy that could potentially have an impact on our ratings," he said.

S&P currently assigns an "A+" long-term and "A-1" short-term sovereign debt ratings on Japan. The outlook on the long-term rating is stable.



## Dynamic Society Entitled To Criticize, Demand

TABRIZ (IRNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has underlined that the rightful demands of people should be heard because a dynamic society is entitled to criticize, complain, and demand.

Addressing rally-goers in the city of Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Province, on the occasion of the Bahman 22nd (February 11) commemoration of the 44th victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Qalibaf said that

efficiency depends on meeting people's demands because the Islamic Revolution has its roots in the religion of Islam; so, we should not make wrong decisions to pave the way for enemies to pursue their plots. If we have some weak points, we should not conceal them under the guise of religion; so, we should have the ability to resolve problems in our decision-making system, the speaker noted.



## Lost Russian Oil Revenue Is Bonanza for Shippers, Refiners

LONDON (Dispatches) - Western sanctions on Russia have significantly reduced state oil revenues and diverted tens of billions of dollars towards shipping and refining firms, some with Russian connections.

Most of the winners from the sanctions are based in China, India, Greece and the United Arab Emirates, at least 20 trading and banking sources said. A handful are partly owned by Russian companies.

None of the firms is breaching sanctions, the sources told Reuters, but they have benefited from measures designed by the European Union and the United States to reduce the revenues of what they call Russian President Vladimir Putin's war machine.

As the Ukraine conflict heads into a second year, the calculations show that Russia's income has dropped but the volume of exports has remained relatively stable despite sanctions.

Putin told the West that sanctions would trigger an energy price rally. Instead, international benchmark Brent oil prices have fallen to \$80 per barrel from a near-all-time high of \$139 in March 2022, weeks after the start of the war.

Before Moscow's invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24 last year, Brent traded at around \$65-\$85 per barrel.

After the Group of Seven (G7) industrialized nations imposed a price cap on Russian oil in December, Moscow's oil export revenues fell by 40% year-on-year in January, Russia's finance ministry said.

"Low official oil price meant that the Russian state budget has suffered in recent weeks," Sergey Vakulenko, non-resident fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said.

Vakulenko was a former head of strategy at Russian energy major Gazprom Neft. He left the firm and Russia days after the start of the war.

"Judging by the customs statistics, some of the benefit was captured by refiners in India and China, but the main beneficiaries must be oil shippers, intermediaries and the Russian oil companies," he added.

Sanctions on Russia - probably the harshest imposed on an individual state - include outright bans on purchases of Russian energy by the United States and the EU, as well as bans on the shipping of Russian crude anywhere in the world unless it is sold at or below \$60 per barrel.

Russia has diverted most crude and refined products to Asia by offering steep discounts to buyers in China and India versus competing grades from the Middle East, for instance.

The ban on shipping and the price cap have made buyers wary and forced Russia to pay for transportation of crude as it does not have enough tankers to carry all of its exports.

As of late January, Russian oil firms were offering discounts of \$15-\$20 per barrel for crude to buyers in India and China, according to at least 10 of the traders who are involved in operations and an invoice seen by Reuters. All of the sources asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

In addition, Russian sellers have also paid \$15-\$20 per barrel to shipping companies to take crude from Russia to China or India, according to the 10 traders and the invoice.

As a result, Russian companies received only \$49.48 per barrel of Urals at Russian ports in January, down 42% year-on-year and just 60% of the European Brent benchmark price, according to the Russian Finance Ministry.

By comparison, a U.S exporter of Mars crude - a grade similar to Urals - would pay about \$5-\$7 per barrel for shipping a cargo to India. Given a discount of \$1.6 per barrel versus the U.S. benchmark WTI, a U.S. exporter would collect some \$66 per barrel at a U.S. port, or 90% of the benchmark price.

With output of 10.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2022 and exports of crude and refined products of 7.0 million bpd, the discount and additional costs would see producers' revenues falling by tens of billions of dollars in 2023.

The head of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Fatih Birol, said on Sunday the price cap reduced Moscow's revenue by \$8 billion in January alone.

However, because some lost revenues are captured by Russian firms, the exact hit to earnings of producers and the state is difficult to quantify.

As a further complication, some Russian oil grades, including Pacific grade ESPO, are also worth more than Urals.

The Russian energy and finance ministries declined to comment on the impact.

Lower revenues have coincided with higher profits for some intermediaries, experts including Vakulenko and traders in Russian oil say.

After decades of low profits or losses, sections of the global shipping industry are enjoying a financial boom from moving Russian oil.

Those companies include Russian state shipper Sovcomflot, led by Putin's ally Sergei Frank, and Greek shipping firms TMS Tankers Management, Stealth Maritime, Kyklades Maritime, Dynacom, Delta Tankers, NGM Energy and New Shipping.

Some Greek and Norwegian tanker owners sold their old ships at record prices to shipping firms such as Fractal Shipping, with owners in Dubai.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have refused to condemn Russia's war in Ukraine and have broadened cooperation with Moscow despite Washington's pressure.

All shipping companies declined to comment on any profits they make from Russian oil.

### Israel Involved in...

FROM PAGE 1

In a statement on January 29, the Iranian Defense Ministry announced that one of its workshop complexes in Isfahan had come under attack from a number of Micro Aerial Vehicles (MAVs), but the complex's air defenses successfully repelled the attack.

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

Iran's Nour News, affiliated with the country's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), further reported that anti-Iran terrorists operating in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region were involved in the drone strike.

It said the terrorists, ordered by a foreign intelligence service, smuggled the constituent parts of a micro aerial vehicle and explosive materials from the Kurdistan region into Iran through far-flung and arduous routes, and handed them over to a liaison in a border city in the northwestern part of the country.

Israel has over the years threatened on numerous occasions to carry out attacks against Iranian facilities and infrastructure, with Tehran casting Tel Aviv's threats as part of the regime's psychological warfare against the Islamic Republic.

### IAEA Accused of...

FROM PAGE 1

The IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, in a leaked confidential report on February 1, accused Iran of making an undeclared change to the interconnection between the two clusters of advanced machines enriching uranium to up to 60% purity at its Fordow plant.

The accusation came despite a letter sent by Iran to the IAEA back in November, informing the agency of a decision to start enriching uranium to the purity level of 60% at its Fordow nuclear facility.

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

In an interview with Iran's state TV on February 3, Eslami warned that the IAEA chief's "unprofessional and unacceptable" behavior would harm his reputation and that of the agency.

He added that Iran objects to the political issues dictated by Grossi and has written a "letter to the agency that an inspector... who has inspected our facilities, has made a mistake and given an incorrect report."

### Iran Drone Power...

FROM PAGE 1

Iranian experts have made giant strides in boosting defense power by producing various equipment, including different types of drones.

"Ninety countries seek to buy Iran-made drones, and Westerners and the arrogant countries cannot tolerate this," an advisor to Iran's intelligence minister said on Wednesday while addressing a local ceremony in Qazvin.

Today, Western states, the US, and the Israeli regime cannot stand Iran's "defense might" in the region, he added.

The remarks come as a recently-published article in the American National Interest magazine acknowledged that decades-long US sanctions against Iran have failed to disrupt its drone program.

"For years, the United States has imposed sanctions against Iran's military complex and manufacturing base, including entities like IAIO [Quds Aviation and Aerospace Industries Organization], HESA [Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries Corporation] ... Nevertheless, Iran's aerospace sector and drone industry have continued to expand and thrive," Eric Lob and Edward Riehle wrote.

"Iran has manufactured and operated military drones since the Iran-Iraq War in the mid-1980s. With over thirty-three models, Iran's highly developed, sophisticated military drone complex comprises one of the four pillars of its security strategy and force structure," they added.

"Drones have increasingly offered an asymmetric advantage to Iran," they pointed out, adding, "Drones have also enabled Iran to project power and earn profits, showcase technology and enhance prestige, strengthen alliances in the Middle East and beyond."

### Iranian Automaker...

FROM PAGE 1

Last December, the Iranian Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, stated that Tehran was considering collaborative automotive manufacture with Moscow.

According to Autostat data, there were 10,400 Iran Khodro cars in Russia as of July 2022, represented by the Samand model (a Class C sedan) based on the Peugeot 405.

Meanwhile Russia will reportedly replace German-made hydropower-plant turbines with Iranian-made ones as Western sanctions have halted operations of Siemens in Russia since February 2022.

In a report on Thursday, RT said Russia has begun producing Iranian-designed parts to replace Siemens turbines in the plants. The sanctions have impeded the servicing of German-made equipment.

Russia is currently capable of producing small and medium turbines, but turbines with a large capacity of between 100-120 megawatts were assembled at a

Siemens factory inside Russia.

Back in October 2022, an Iranian official said that as per a contract, Iran will supply Russia with 40 turbines to help its gas industry.

Russia and Iran have in recent months underscored the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation as both are under strict US sanctions.

Meanwhile the Russian diplomat said Iran's stance towards the Crimean peninsula and other new regions that Russia annexed does not affect Tehran-Moscow relations and the development of bilateral cooperation.

Dedov commented on Tehran's position regarding Russia's annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia regions following referendums on their annexation to Russia in those four regions.

Iran's stance regarding the Crimean peninsula and other new regions that annexed Russia does not affect

Tehran-Moscow relations and the development of bilateral cooperation.

Earlier, the Iranian Foreign Minister had told TRT World that despite enjoying good relations with Moscow, Tehran does not recognize the annexation of Crimea and four new regions to Russia.

The Russian envoy further emphasized that Moscow is well aware of Tehran's position and that the Iranian top diplomat's remarks are nothing new.

From the very beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine, Iran has adopted a balanced position, and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran has repeatedly emphasized that the policies of the United States and NATO were to blame for the crisis, Dedov also noted.

On September 30, Russian President Vladimir Putin proclaimed the annexation of four Ukrainian regions at a signing ceremony in the Kremlin.

### Iran Hopes Bilateral...

FROM PAGE 1

He underscored that solidarity between the two fraternal neighboring countries was based on various commonalities and linkages which paved the way for a stronger relationship. He added that the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries would reach more than two billion dollars this year. Shedding light on the expansion of cooperation between the two countries, he also identified the energy sector, saying that his country stands ready to expand cooperation in the energy sector.

Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi, while speaking, underscored that Pakistan-Iran relations had remained strong throughout history.

He said Pakistan and Iran enjoyed linguistic bonds and the Persian language had a strong influence in South Asia. While talking about the economic ties, he highlighted that MoUs for the establishment of six border markets had been signed. He added that Pakistan and Iran had also opened additional border crossing points, which would help enhance people-to-people contacts and facilitate the border movement.

In his remarks, Sohail Mahmood stated that while Pakistan-Iran diplomatic relations were 76 years old, the ties between the two countries went back centuries, based on immutable bonds of common faith, history and linguistic affinities.

He said the cultural dimension was the most manifest, as could be seen in a strong Persian imprint on Pakistan's civilizational heritage. "Pakistan-Iran ties were reinforced by a shared commitment to deepen the relationship in its multiple aspects. The two sides' mutual interests ranged from enhanced bilateral trade to energy cooperation to coordination on regional and international issues," he said.

He said the people of Pakistan appreciated Iran's principled support for the just

cause of Kashmir. He said the two countries also shared a crucial stake in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan as that would help advance the agenda of regional economic integration and connectivity.

Amina Khan, while dilating on the subject, stated that Pakistan-Iran relations are "time-tested" and based on bonds of brotherhood, mutual respect, and support for each other in times of difficulty. She said the "Treaty of Friendship", signed between the two countries in 1950, was a reflection of this relationship.

Cultural Counsellor Khazai, in his remarks, said Iran and Pakistan had close historical, cultural, religious, lingual and brotherly ties, adding that by virtue of strong cultural affiliations, the two countries could be called as "one homeland, one country". He further said Iran and Pakistan both had a lot of potential to boost bilateral relations and cultural cooperation could play a major role in bringing the two nations even closer.

Riffat Masood, in her remarks, said the neighbourhood between the two countries was important and in that context, Pakistan and Iran must make efforts towards knowing each other better.

"We must focus on the present and also recognise that there are interdependencies between Iran and Pakistan," she said, adding that trade with Iran would bring more dividends to Pakistan.

Khalid Mahmood was of the view that Iran has been a "time-tested" friend and the bonds of brotherhood continue to strengthen. "It was important to accelerate the pace of the initiatives aimed at expanding economic engagement," he added.

### U.S. Targets...

FROM PAGE 1

"Iran is increasingly turning to buyers in East Asia to sell its petrochemical and petroleum products, in violation of U.S. sanctions," Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson said in the statement.

Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Thursday's move targeted firms the Treasury accused of being involved in facilitating the sale and shipment

of petroleum and petrochemicals on behalf of Triliance Petrochemical Co. Ltd., which was hit with sanctions by Washington in 2020.

Among the Iranian companies targeted were petrochemical producer Amir Kabir Petrochemical Co. (AKPC), its subsidiary Simorgh Petrochemical Co. and four subsidiaries of previously sanctioned Marun Petrochemical Co.

Treasury said Triliance has purchased millions of

dollars worth of low-density polyethylene produced by AKPC for shipment to buyers in China.

Treasury accused Singapore-based Asia Fuel PTE. Ltd., which was also targeted, of facilitating the shipment of petroleum products worth millions of dollars to customers in East Asia.

Sense Shipping and Trading SDN. BHD. in Malaysia and Singapore-based Unicious Energy PTE. Ltd. were also hit with sanctions.



## Man United, Palace Charged By FA for Mass Confrontation

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United and Crystal Palace have been charged following a "mass confrontation" between their players during last weekend's Premier League, the Football Association said.

The incident took place in the 67th minute of the Feb. 4 game, which United won 2-1 at home, as Casemiro was shown a straight red card for grabbing Will Hughes by the throat when both teams clashed following a tackle on Antony.

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## Thiago Silva Agrees Contract Terms With Chelsea

LONDON (Dispatches) - Thiago Silva has agreed terms with Chelsea over a new contract.

The London Evening Standard says the Blues have verbally agreed a new 12-month contract with Thiago Silva, extending his career beyond his 39th birthday.

The Brazil international has opted to stay in west London until the summer of 2024 as his form continues to defy his age, making 24 appearances for his club in all competitions this season.

# Bucks Win Ninth Straight as Lakers Rest LeBron James

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 38 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and dished six assists and the Milwaukee Bucks matched their longest winning streak of the season with a ninth consecutive victory, beating the host Los Angeles Lakers 115-106.

Khris Middleton scored 22 points off the Milwaukee bench, and Jrue Holiday finished with 18 points, seven rebounds and seven assists.

Playing without LeBron James -- sitting out to rest an ankle injury inflamed after he set the NBA's all-time scoring record on Tuesday -- the Lakers got a team-high 25 points from Dennis Schroder. Anthony Davis finished with 23 points and 16 rebounds.

The Bucks overcame an eight-point halftime deficit, blitzing the short-handed Lakers in the third quarter with a 38-23 advantage. Antetokounmpo fueled the pivotal period with 5-of-7 shooting from the floor, leading to 15 points.

### Nets 116, Bulls 105

Spencer Dinwiddie made his return to the Nets a successful one, scoring 25 points as Brooklyn pulled away down the stretch against visiting Chicago in New York.

Dinwiddie, acquired along with Dorian Finney-Smith from Dallas for Kyrie Irving on Monday, also handed out six assists and tied a career high with four steals. Cam Thomas added 20 points and Joe Harris scored 18 as the Nets won their first game without Kevin Durant, who was traded to Phoenix in a four-team deal that was officially announced an hour before tipoff.

Zach LaVine 38 points for Chicago, which missed 21 of 26 3-point tries. Nikola Vucevic added 15 points and 17 rebounds and DeMar DeRozan finished with 14 points.

## NBA Stars, Legends Hail Scoring King LeBron

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - NBA legends and current stars hailed LeBron James as the league's greatest player after the 38-year-old Los Angeles Lakers superstar became the competition's all-time scoring leader.

James eclipsed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the NBA points record by sinking a fadeaway jump shot late in the third quarter of a 133-130 home loss to Oklahoma City on Tuesday to reach 38,388 career points, one more than iconic big man Abdul-Jabbar's total.

"It's a towering achievement that speaks to his sustained excellence over 20 seasons in the league," NBA commissioner Adam Silver said.

"And quite amazingly, LeBron continues to play at an elite level and his basketball history is still being written."

Retired Lakers legend Magic Johnson, a former Abdul-Jabbar teammate on LA's "Showtime" championship clubs of the 1980s, was amazed to see James topple the scoring mark.

"Wow, never in my lifetime did I think I would see two NBA athletes score over 38,000 points!" Johnson tweeted.

"I still remember when my Showtime teammate, the legendary Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, broke the record. It was an honor to be the guy to pass it to him and cement his legacy!"

Kevin Love, a former Cleveland Cavaliers and 2012 US Olympic teammate of James, used the "goat" emoji — for Greatest Of All Time — in heralding the feat.

"True greatness. Incredibly grateful to have witnessed and been a part of your journey," Love tweeted. "History made. 38,388 (goat)."

It can't be contested that LeBron has been the greatest for the longest time," Love said in a social media video from James's former club.

"The fact he has been able to do what he has done for 19 years, I don't think anybody will be able to do that again."

Brooklyn's Kevin Durant, who twice beat James and the Cavs in the NBA Finals while with Golden State, said James has motivated others in his journey from a poor youth in Akron, Ohio, to a global sports icon.



### Magic 115, Nuggets 104

Wendell Carter Jr. scored 19 points as host Orlando beat Denver.

Cole Anthony and Bol Bol scored 17 apiece as the Magic won for the third time in four games.

Denver's Aaron Gordon scored a season-high 37 points and added 13 rebounds, and Nikola Jokic had 29 points and 12 rebounds. Jamal Murray missed his third straight game and second due to right knee inflammation.

### Hawks 116, Suns 107

Trae Young collected 36 points, 12 assists and seven rebounds to fuel host Atlanta to victory over short-handed Phoenix.

Young made 10 of 18 field goals -- including 5 of 8 from 3-point range -- and 11 of 12 from the foul line. Atlanta's Dejounte Murray tallied 19 points, eight rebounds and five assists while John Collins added 16 points to send Atlanta to its third win in five games.

Clint Capela pulled down 17 rebounds.

Phoenix's Josh Okogie, a former Georgia Tech standout, scored 25 points off the bench. Deandre Ayton added 23 on 10-of-15 shooting. Ish Wainwright scored 17 points and Chris Paul added 15 points and eight assists for the Suns, who saw their three-game winning streak come to a halt.

## Djokovic On Indian Wells Entry List

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic was named on the entry list for the upcoming Indian Wells tennis tournament, but he is expected to be barred from travelling to the United States to compete due to his ongoing refusal to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

The Serbian world number one is a five-time champion at the ATP 1000 event but has not played a match on the hard courts in the Southern California desert since 2019.

The United States has in place a vaccine requirement for foreign air travellers that is not expected to be lifted before main draw action kicks off on March 9.

US President Joe Biden's administration last month said it would lift Covid-19 emergency declarations on May 11, nearly three years after the United States imposed sweeping pandemic measures to curb the spread of the illness.

Indian Wells tournament director Tommy Haas recently said that it would be a "disgrace" if Djokovic was not allowed to compete at Indian Wells and other tournaments in the United States this year.

Haas said Indian Wells organisers would do everything to help Djokovic's chances of playing.



# Lloris Faces Up to Seven Weeks Out

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper Hugo Lloris faces up to seven weeks on the sidelines after suffering a knee injury, the club's assistant manager Cristian Stellini confirmed.

The former France international, who captains Spurs, suffered the injury in Sunday's 1-0 win against Premier League champions Manchester City.

Fraser Forster will now step up to the number one position as north London club Spurs, fifth in the Premier League, enter a pivotal part of the season. Tottenham visit Leicester on Saturday before resuming their Champions League campaign against AC Milan next week.

Stellini spoke to the press on Thursday in the absence of Antonio Conte, who was pictured on the training ground after returning from gallbladder surgery.

"We are all disappointed about Hugo and his injury but we have a good, experienced goalkeeper in Fraser Forster with a great experience in the Premier League and good experience in the Champions League," he said.

"We have a tough five weeks in front of us. We trust in Fraser so we are happy to play with him in the squad and also we say to Hugo 'see you soon'. He needs a good recovery, maybe between five and seven weeks to be back with us."

Forster, who signed from Southampton on a free transfer last year, has played just four times for Spurs so far and has made only one Premier League appearance, in the 2-2 draw with Brentford on December 26.

Lloris, 36, retired from international football following the recent World Cup in Qatar.

## Crawford Upsets Favorites to Win World Super-G

PARIS (Dispatches) - Canada's James Crawford upset a loaded field to snatch a surprise super-G gold at the World Ski Championships in Courchevel.

Crawford, who won alpine combined bronze at last year's Beijing Olympics, clocked 1min 07.22sec down L'Ecluse piste in the French resort.

"It's been a long time since I've dreamed of being on the top step at a world stage. I've been teasing myself with it the last couple of years with a couple of World Cup podiums and Olympic Games bronze," said Crawford.

"To be able to come out today and put down a run worthy of winning was an amazing experience. I'm going to cherish this day for a long time."

That time was enough to edge fancied Norwegian Aleksander Aamodt Kilde into silver by just one-hundredth of a second -- that translates into 27 centimetres.

France's Alexis Pinturault, fresh from winning alpine combined gold on Tuesday, again thrilled his home Courchevel crowd by taking bronze, at 0.26sec.

"I'm super satisfied to take my first world champs medal," said Kilde, one part of alpine skiing's glamour couple alongside US star Mikaela Shiffrin, who claimed silver in the women's super-G Wednesday with the same bib number nine.

"It's been a weight on my shoulders for many, many years. It's been one of my biggest goals. It would have been even better if it was in gold, but I feel like I won the silver medal and didn't lose the gold medal today and that's what I have to think about and continue to fight for that gold."

Pinturault said a second medal on home snow, just 10 minutes on skis from the hotel which his parents run and where he grew up, was "extraordinary".



## FIFA Use Club World Cup to Trial Referee Microphones

RABAT (Dispatches) - The ongoing Club World Cup is being used as a trial run for another potential refereeing revolution in football, with fans in the stadium able to hear officials explain decisions taken following VAR reviews.

Referees being hooked up with microphones is nothing new in other sports such as the NFL, but it is only now being tested in football, just as the sport is still getting used to Video Assistant Referees and semi-automated offside technology.

And so Uruguayan referee Andres Matonte was able to succinctly explain why he awarded a late penalty to Real Madrid after coming across to review a possible foul in the box during the Spanish club's 4-1 win over Al Ahly in the semi-final in Rabat on Wednesday.

"Penalty decision, foul by number 17", Matonte told spectators on looking at the challenge by Al Ahly's Amr El Solia on Real forward Vinicius Junior. Luka Modric's kick was then saved.

Matonte's exchanges with the Video Assistant Referee remained confidential, but his brief announcement was relayed over loudspeakers in the stadium, to the delight of the crowd, with the majority of fans backing the European champions.

The International Football Association Board, the sport's lawmakers, approved the trial last month with English FA chief executive Mark Bullingham -- who sits on the board -- saying it was "important in terms of transparency".

FIFA are considering further trials at the Under-20 World Cup, scheduled to take place in Indonesia in May and June.

