

Iranian Authorities Deported  
63 Pakistani Immigrants via  
Mir Javeh-Taftan Border Crossing  
Near Chagai District as 50 of the  
63 Deportees Were From Punjab,  
7 From Sindh and 6 From  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

# IRAN NEWS

Health Ministry Announced on  
Monday That the Number of Deaths  
From the Coronavirus Pandemic in  
Iran Increased to **144,783** With  
**Two** More Iranians Killed by the  
Deadly Virus Over the Past 24 Hours

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## Sanctions Root Causes of Insecurity, Crises

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says Iran and China consider unilateralism and cruel sanctions as the root causes of existing crises and spread of insecurity and stress the need for multilateralism as well as worldwide justice.

Raisi made the remarks in an op-ed article published in the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

"As two living and dynamic human civilizations, Iran and China were connected to each other via the historic Silk Road, and ascertained the fact that prosperity and happiness as desirable popular goals can only be achieved through interaction and cooperation," he wrote.

He noted that Tehran and Beijing, which have signed a 25-year agreement to develop mutual cooperation in various fields, enjoy a host of commonalities, pursue similar approaches a propos international developments, are opposed to imperialism as well as unilateralism, and stress the need for respect for other countries' rights and national interests.

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## Tehran Reiterates No Direct Talks With U.S.



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry rejected any direct contact between Tehran and Washington, stressing, however, that Iran employs all of its diplomatic capacities for the removal of the sanction. Speaking to reporters at a press conference on Monday, Nasser Kanaani said Iran's official policy regarding the talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal is "commitment to the negotiation course and table" and the necessity for the removal of all cruel sanctions against Tehran.

Highlighting Iran's goodwill in the course of negotiations and its commitment to the continuation of the talks, the spokesman expressed hope that the other parties would prove their goodwill in practice as well.

"We have no direct contact with the U.S. government," Kanaani underlined, noting that Iran employs all of its diplomatic capacities to fulfill its interests, particularly for the purpose of lifting the sanctions.

He also stressed that Iran welcomes the efforts of the governments that have played a role in the sanctions removal talks with goodwill.

Touching upon President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to China, he said that that President Raisi's visit to Beijing will create a leap in cooperation between Iran and China.

"President's visit to China at the head of the high-ranking political and economic delegation is a very important development in bilateral relations between Iran and China. His visit will be carried out at the invitation of the President of China and important issues in various political, economic, commercial and cultural fields will be discussed. The visit of the president to China is of particular importance and indicates the existence of the political will among the leaders of the two countries to expand bilateral relations," Kanaani said in his weekly press conference on Monday.

Referring to Iran-China 25-year comprehensive cooperation program, he added, "The president's visit to China can create a suitable leap in the implementation of the plans and projects foreseen and included in this program. The program is a road map for cooperation between the two countries, and in this regard, several agreements have been prepared and are being finalized, and good documents will be signed between Iran and China within the framework of this trip."

Speaking about Iran's reaction to not being invited to attend the Munich Security Conference (MSC), the spokesman said, "The purpose of holding the Munich Security Conference is to help deepen security in the regional and global spheres. Not inviting some countries is a selective action with political motives which indicates the continuation of the wrong approach in relation to the developments related to Iran and is contrary to the principle of neutrality. Especially a country like Iran, which has an important, decisive and undeniable role in the field of regional and international security, and this action means wrong calculation and continuation of wrong behaviors."

## Hamas Says Resistance Will Vanquish Zionists' Aggression

GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has strongly condemned the latest Israeli airstrikes on the besieged Gaza Strip, saying the ongoing Israeli aggression is doomed to failure due to steadfastness and resistance of the Palestinian nation.

"The resistance front will remain the protective shield of our people. The ongoing aggression is bound to fail in the face of our people's revolution, steadfastness and resistance," Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesman, said in a statement on Monday morning.

It came after the Israeli military carried out a new round of airstrikes on the besieged Palestinian coastal enclave. "The Zionist bombardment of Gaza coincided with acts of aggression against Nablus and al-Quds, confirming that we are facing a campaign of hostilities against our entire nation. We salute the fighters of the al-Qassam Brigades, who repelled the Zionist enemy's raids on the Gaza Strip, and confused the Occupation army and its settlers," Qassem said.

The Israeli military said in a statement that it targeted in the early hours of Monday morning a Hamas underground facility, alleging that "the resistance movement used for the production of rocket materials in the central Gaza Strip."

It further claimed that the airstrikes were in response to a rocket launch from the Palestinian enclave on Saturday evening.

Meanwhile, rocket warning sirens blared in southern Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip, including Sderot and Kibbutz Nir Am. Alerts also sounded in Kibbutz Ruhama, located about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) east of Sderot.

The Palestinian Shehab news agency reported that Israeli military aircraft launched 10 raids on a "resistance site" west of Gaza City. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

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## Tehran, Moscow Discussing Technical Issues of Oil, Gas Swap Deal

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia are still in talks over a potential agreement that will allow the delivery of Russian oil and natural gas supplies via Iran to other countries under a swap arrangement.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow on Saturday, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak described a potential swap agreement on oil and gas supplies between Iran and Russia as a "promising project".

"Technical possibilities are being addressed, which is why this is regarded as a promising project," said Novak.

He had earlier indicated that a first stage of the agreement could allow Russia to offer up to 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 5 million metric tons of oil to Iran for delivery of the same amount to other countries in the region under a swap arrangement.

Under a similar arrangement, Iran currently imports natural gas from Turkmenistan for consumption in its northeast while delivering from its own supplies to Azerbaijan in the northwest.

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## Foreign Debt Falls More Than 41%

TEHRAN (MNA) - The latest data released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) show that the country's foreign debt stood at \$6.425 billion at the end of the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (November 21, 2022), down more than 41 percent from \$9.067 billion at the end of the previous year (March 20).

Based on the CBI data, from the total foreign debt, \$4.676 billion was mid-term and long-term debts while \$1.749 billion was short-term debts, IRIB reported.

External debt is the portion of a country's debt that is borrowed from foreign lenders including commercial banks, governments, or international financial institutions. These loans, including interest, must usually be paid in the currency in which the loan was made.

Foreign debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the ratio between the debt a country owes to non-resident creditors and its nominal GDP.

The ratio of Iran's foreign debt to GDP is very insignificant and considering this figure, Iran is among the countries with the lowest amount of foreign debt in the world due to the U.S. sanctions and their consequent financial restrictions.

Having external debts is an important economic indicator globally, but it is not currently important for Iran since the country has almost no foreign debts.

Iran's external debt has been falling in recent years following a downward trend.

## CBI Posts Economic Growth of 3.6% for September Quarter

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Figures by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) show the country's economy continued to grow in the second quarter of the calendar year that started in March 2022 despite continued economic pressure caused by American sanctions.

CBI figures published on Sunday showed that Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 3.6% in the three months to September 22, 2022 compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

The figures showed the non-oil sector of the Iranian economy had also expanded by 3.1% year on year in the September quarter.

The CBI uses fixed prices reported in 2016 as a baseline for its GDP calculations.

The figures, covered in a report by the official IRNA agency, showed that Iran's jobless rate was 8.9% in the quarter to September while the population of the country rose by 0.8% from the same quarter in 2021 to reach 84.7 million.

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## Tehran Seeks Indian Investment, Activation of Chabahar Port

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's Ambassador to India Iraj Ilahi said Iran is looking for more investment from New Delhi and the activation of Chabahar Port.

"Concerning connectivity, India and Iran are partners in Chabahar. We're looking for investment from India and activation of Chabahar. India and Iran are the main founders and partners of the International North-South Transportation Corridor. We're looking forward to the future," Ilahi told Asian News International.

The Iranian envoy mentioned that Iran and India have had a longstanding relationship throughout history.

"Energy and connectivity are two key pillars of our ties. We believe that despite the sanctions, autonomic strategies of India are a key support for restarting cooperation and trade in energy," he said.

The envoy added that Iran, India and Russia are the main partners in the INSTC project.

Speaking at the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ilahi said, "India is of special importance to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The recent cordial meeting between the president of Iran and PM Modi is proof of this."

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# No in Iran-Iraq Trade Ties

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The chairman of the Iran-Iraq joint chamber of commerce rejected news regarding a halt or disruption in Iran-Iraq trade ties, saying that it has been psychological warfare.

Speaking to IRNA, Yahya Al-e Eshaq said Iran and Iraq enjoy strong all-out relations. He added that new US banking sanctions would bring about limitations for transactions in dollars.

By creating a balance in the dinar-dollar exchange rate in Iraq, the problems will be solved, he noted.

## Gov't Prioritizes Boosting Cultural Ties With Muslim Neighboring States

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN - Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasized that Cultural relations with Muslim neighboring countries are the priority of the government's plans.**

Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, left for Ashgabat in order to participate in Iran's cultural week programs in Turkmenistan.

Iran's cultural week in Turkmenistan will be held from February 12 to 14, 2023 with the joint cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's embassy and Iran's cultural attaché office, and the Ministry of Culture of Turkmenistan.

This cultural event with the presence of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Minister of Culture of Turkmenistan, and selected Iranian artists will be held for 3 days in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan.



Mohammad Mahdi Esmaili, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance said regarding his trip to Turkmenistan and his participation in Iran's cultural week in this country: "Cultural relations with neighboring, friendly and Muslim countries are the priority of the government, and this year we have had regular relations with all these countries."

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance added: "At the invitation of the Minister of Culture of Turkmenistan, I am going to this country to participate in the Iran Cultural Week in Turkmenistan, and we hope that during this trip we will have new agreements in all fields, especially the field of culture and art."

## IRGC Says Safeguarding Iran's National Interests Its Clear-Cut Strategy

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has lauded the Iranian nation's massive turnout in Saturday rallies to mark the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, saying protecting the country's national interests and meeting people's needs are its clear-cut strategy.

In a statement on Sunday, the IRGC said the "enthusiastic and admirable" participation of millions of people in the rallies once again challenged the enemy's miscalculation concerning Iranians.

It noted that safeguarding the country's "national interests and responding to the needs of the people and the government are a definite and inescapable strategy of this revolutionary and popular institution."

It added that the delusional enemies faced a "strategic shock" and a "humiliating defeat" following the glorious presence of the Iranian people in the rallies, particularly given the enemies' efforts to provoke despair and prevent Iranians from attending the marches.

The IRGC forces are fully aware of the enemies' covert and overt conspiracies aimed at making the country focus on minor issues and deflect from the people's problems, it said.

The statement, however, declared the defeat of the enemy's strategy in this regard, commending the nation's understanding, rationality and wisdom and vowing to proceed with efforts to serve them in various fields.

The mass rallies on the 22nd of Bahman in the Iranian Calendar, which falls on February 11, are held each year with patriotic fervor across Iran to mark the anniversary of the overthrow of the US-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979.

## President Raisi Meets Leader Ahead of His China Visit

TEHRAN (MNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi met and held talks with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Monday.

Ahead of his planned visit to China, President Raisi attended a meeting with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Raisi briefed Ayatollah Khamenei about the goals of this trip and the planned meetings.

In this meeting, the Leader wished success to the president and expressed his satisfaction with the plans.

Ebrahim Raisi will pay a state visit to China from February 14 to 16 at the invitation of President Xi Jinping.

During his visit, the high-ranking delegations of the two countries will hold negotiations and some cooperation documents will be signed.



## President to Implement Strategic Partnership Deal With China

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi seeks to operationalize a 25-year partnership agreement with China during his upcoming state visit to Beijing, the president's deputy chief of staff for political affairs says.

Speaking on television on Sunday night, Mohammad Jamshidi said that President Raisi's three-day visit to China later this week will have both economic and politico-strategic dimensions.

Iran, he said, pursues extensive economic cooperation with China based on the partnership agreement, which was signed in March 2021, in an attempt to strengthen long-standing economic and political alliance between the two countries.

"During a visit by the Chinese deputy prime minister to Iran, negotiations were held in various committees and now we are ready to implement them," he said.

"We have advanced the mechanisms for implementing the comprehensive agreement between Iran and China, which was a deal on paper at the beginning of this administration's term. The agreement's finalization will be followed up during this trip."

Jamshidi also said that China's President Xi Jinping had invited Raisi to visit Beijing last September, during the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of State Council in the Uzbek city of Samarkand.

This will be the first state visit to China by an Iranian president in the past two decades, he noted.

The official also said that the Raisi administration's strategy revolves around the policy of "economic convergence", especially with Asian countries.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Raisi will set off for Beijing on Monday evening.

Raisi will also participate in a joint meeting of Iranian and Chinese businessmen and economic activists. He will then meet with Iranians residing in China as well as top Chinese intellectuals.

## FM Receives Omani Sultan's Message to President Raisi

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has received a message from Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq written to the Islamic Republic President Ebrahim Raisi.

The message was submitted to Amirabdollahian during his Sunday meeting with Omani ambassador to Tehran.

In the meeting, the two sides exchanged views about the recent situation of bilateral ties.

## IOTC at Forefront of Economic War on Iran Oil Industry

TEHRAN (Shana) - Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) is at the forefront of the country's economic battle, and its operations management staff, along with other departments, has shone brightly under the sanctions, said the IOTC caretaker.

According to IOTC, Abbas Gharibi said in a meeting: "The Iranian Oil Terminals Company, as a mission-oriented organization, despite the challenges and bottlenecks caused by international sanctions, has been able to fulfill its main mission and assigned duties in the fields of crude oil and gas condensate storage and export in a safe, timely manner and in compliance with the requirements and standards."

He considered the successes to be the result of the ability, effort and commitment of the employees of IOTC and the effective support of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), and added: "The company's effort is to be able to play its key role as an agile, capable and excellent company better and more successfully than in previous years and to provide stable satisfaction to customers, shareholders and key stakeholders."

## ESCO Leading Company in "Home-Made" Parts and Equipment in Steel Industry

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The new CEO of Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) Mr. Mehdi Koohi in his fourth day in office as the CEO of the company while being accompanied by his deputies and senior managers visited Workshops 46, 47 and 48 of the company to get acquainted with the performance and capabilities of these workshops which are active in manufacture of parts and equipment.

According to the report, during the visit Mr. Koohi said that this mega industrial complex is founder of steel production in the country and it is considered as the promoter of the culture of steel industry in the country. He added that planning for the growth of ESCO to reach the top of the progress is duty of each one of them, noting that of course on this course, there are challenges but he believes capable human capital of ESCO can



remove all challenges and hurdle through synergy and empathy among them to attain sustainable achievements.

He added manufacture of a series of parts and equipment in the workshops of ESCO is source of pride for the steel industry and it is the exact sign of knowledge-based and jihadi management.

Koohi stated that ESCO is a national pride and honor and it should be run nationally. He further said that the achievements which are today mentioned as the knowledge-based have been implemented in ESCO and self-sufficiency in the required fields are provided by the company to meet its domestic needs as well as for the cement industry.

He reiterated that the company will spare no effort to materialize its goals which are value creation and reducing the final cost through using raw material from the domestic sources.

## KSC Moves Up 3 Places In the Top 100 Companies List

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Khorasan Steel Complex Company (KSC) moved up three places in the recent annual rankings of the top 110 companies of the company which was announced by the Industrial Management Institute.

According to the public relations of the company, during the 25th conference on ranking the top 100 companies of the country, IMI-100, which was held by Industrial Management Institute, Khorasan Steel Complex ranked 71 as the company moved up three places comparing to the last year's rankings.

The ranking of the top 100 companies is conducted based on their fiscal year performance of the company as KSC had a considerable performance in this fiscal year and ranking comparing to the preceding year.

Industrial Management Institute is in charge of this ranking which is aimed to encourage companies to improve their performance. The ranking introduces top 500 influential companies of the year and the top 100 companies are chosen from the list of 500 companies.

## 2.4m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 2,420,018 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$757m on its physical market.



According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,041,442 tons of commodities valued at more than \$527m.

On this floor the IME sold 1,002,530 tons of cement, 585,000 tons of iron ore, 399,552 tons of steel, 38,000 tons of sponge iron, 10,190 tons of aluminum, 6,120 tons of copper, 1,100 tons of zinc and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 373,730 tons of commodities worth more than \$224m.

Commodities traded on this floor included 102,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 101,837 tons of polymeric products, 67,905 tons of bitumen, 51,000 tons of lube cut, 36,920 tons of chemicals, 11,020 tons of sulfur, 3,070 tons of base oil, 500 tons of petroleum products and 190 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 4,845 tons of commodities on its side market.

## Caretaker of Iran Alloy Steel Co. Appointed



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - In a decree, the board of directors of Iran Alloy Steel Company appointed Mohammad Kamalzadeh as the caretaker of the company.

According to the public relations of the company, board of directors in their voting elected Mr. Kamalzadeh as the caretaker of the company. He was previously a board of directors.

It is worth noting that Iran Alloy Steel Company is one of the biggest producers of alloy steel in Iran and the Middle East and is one of the most modern alloy steel producing companies in the world which has had favorable performance in the past years in different fields of production and sales.





# Mapna Group Vision for Development and Progress of Country



In recent years, MAPNA Group with entering the developmental fields like entering has expanded its activities in some fields like fields like electric car charging stations and industrial standardizing has expanded its activities.

## Development of electric car charging stations in the country with the participation of MAPNA Group and the private sector

MAPNA's entry into the field of electrification and especially the development of electric car charging stations is an issue that has been considered in recent years not only in the future vision of this industrial group, but also in the practical validation of MAPNA's environmental and social responsibilities as well as moving towards a possible future and in line with the developed countries of the world which are considered as the major concerns of the group. MAPNA Group's investment and partnership with the private and public sector in different cities of the country to set up 20 electric car charging stations is the beginning of the development of the country's electric infrastructure, and in this way MAPNA welcomes the cooperation and participation of the private sector which are enthusiast and hopeful for the technological and knowledge-based future of the country.

## Simultaneous development of charging station with electric vehicle

Less pollution, less need for maintenance costs and greater economic efficiency can be among the factors that encourage both consumers and city management to use or popularize electric cars. Public use of electric cars, despite all these advantages, requires the development of accessible infrastructures in the whole country. Just as the infrastructural capacity of gasoline, diesel and gas fuels in the entire country has been developed over the past few decades in cities and intercity routes, the infrastructure of car and electric motor power supply needs to be developed in the same way; This means that citizens are sure of the existence of an infrastructure network to charge and support their car's energy supply, and it is obvious that one of the necessities of providing such conditions is to set up an electric car charging station. Based on this, MAPNA Group has a grand policy of electrification. At the level of the country as well as responding to these needs (which will grow even more in the future) has stepped into this arena. Electric vehicle engine and battery technology and the development of infrastructure such as charging stations are among the measures in this area. On the other hand, MAPNA has declared its full readiness to cooperate with private, government and public sectors for the development of charging stations.

## The best places for a car charging station

In order to start this big project, MAPNA is initially implementing a plan to set up 20 electric car charging stations in different cities of the country with its own direct investment. The land for the construction of these stations, such as the charging stations in Tehran (Milad Tower) and Mashhad, is provided by the municipalities or provided by the private sector. For example, the first electric car charging station built in partnership with MAPNA and the private sector is located in "Mizban" Hotel in Babolsar. All kinds of public and high-traffic places such as shopping centers, public parking lots, accommodation centers such as hotels and guest houses, intercity resorts, entertainment centers, gas stations - with the special safety issues required for these places - roadside parks and... There are a variety of public places that can accept electric car chargers with MAPNA's direct investment and in different sizes and shapes according to the place.

## MAPNA's partnership with the private sector

In this partnership model, MAPNA undertakes the provision of chargers, shelters (protective roofs), software and network systems, installation, commissioning, support, guarantees, operation and maintenance, which will not cost the private sector. On the other hand, the private sector can include the branching of electricity, internet, land and committed protection of the site, which in the form of a joint work, apart from serving the citizens who own electric cars, will be a constructive cooperation for the parties, the city and the country.

## Why investment and partnership with MAPNA?

The first and perhaps the most important advantage of cooperation and partnership with a large industrial brand is the prosperity of private sector businesses and especially the development of new revenue generation models and the provision of services based on innovative infrastructure. Other characteristics of this type of partnership, which is aimed at the future, will be leading in the provision of electrification services and charging stations for electric cars; Because considering the fuel and energy situation in Iran, it is inevitable to move towards the use of electric energy for transportation. Also, it seems that with the expansion of the import of electric cars and the spread of electric motors in the not too distant future, the use of these vehicles and the provision of services related to them will also have special economic plans, so it is not out of mind to be a pioneer in such businesses. It will have great commercial advantages. Also, investors being recognized as leading brands in their business field is one of the hidden benefits that will lead to good reputation and profitability over time.

## MAPNA's engineering power in the development of electrification

The inevitability of electrification, the movement of the world in the direction of electric transportation and the attention of different countries to the development of related industries prompted MAPNA Group to introduce the subject of electrification as one of its new businesses and to start its studies and projects in this field. Electrification had started in the past in MAPNA Group and in big projects. For example, one of the most important projects in this field is the passenger locomotive that MAPNA produced with Siemens standards. "Iran Safir" and "MAP24" freight diesel electric locomotives also have such characteristics. This means that in this type of locomotive, the mechanical driving forces have been converted into electric propulsion and it is the electric power that plays the role of the propellant. The technology of electric cars is not the same as the technology of internal combustion cars. The electric drive with the highest global quality in Iran and with the country's high standard engineering power is completely attainable. In electric cars, the battery must be mounted on the car with the most up-to-date technology, the most power and the least weight. MAPNA Group, which is recently launching a battery factory (MIDCO), has the ability to supply batteries for electric cars in a completely self-reliant manner. Also, MAPNA has taken significant measures in the field of participation in the production of electric cars. In its latest action, this industrial group has started the electric car production contract jointly with Kerman Motor, and this car will come to the market by the end of next year. MAPNA has also provided the construction of electric buses with the participation of Aqab Afshan Company as a solution for public and clean transportation, and in cooperation with Zamiat, it is also in the process of producing and providing electric vans.

## Why has MAPNA moved towards electrification?

High efficiency, easier control, better control quality and less emission of environmental pollution are among the advantages of electrification in transportation systems, and this is the reason for the popularity of this technology and the world's trend towards electrification. Except for the mentioned cases, among the reasons that MAPNA Group led to electrification, it is the necessity of smartization. Because smartization is pointless without infrastructural and network movement towards electrical technologies. In simpler words, electrification will lead to smartization, and the intelligent platform in industries is one of the requirements of the future world. Wider possibility to manage energy resources is one of the other motivations of MAPNA Group in the development of the electrification industry. Energy sources for fossil fuel vehicles are limited. Fuels such as gasoline, gas and diesel are the only direct sources of energy production in cars. But when the car engine



works with electric energy, different sources have the ability to generate energy for it. Sources such as wind, water, solar, steam and gas energy, etc., which cause the diversity of energy production from different sources. The diversity of energy storage methods can also be considered as one of MAPNA's attention-grabbing capabilities in paying serious attention to the electrification category. When a system enters the electrification phase, it makes it possible to store the generated electricity and manage its consumption in a timely manner. There are various methods for storing electrical energy. One of these ways is using Battery Energy Storage System. From this point of view, the electric car itself is considered an energy storage; Because these types of cars can not only be charged during the night - when the network needs less electricity - but can also be considered as a source of electrical energy storage. The vehicle can be used as a storage device to manage the network load. In this way, using the Vehicle to Grid system, you can charge the car during off-peak hours and use the energy stored in the car at other times at home or at work. Finally, we can say that the network infrastructure completes the entire chain. Electric vehicle supply and demand. Both of these are necessary and necessary, and one cannot expect the wide spread of electric cars without expanding the infrastructure, and vice versa. In this way, MAPNA Group is not in charge of the complete electrification of the car and the development of the charging network, but in principle as a provider of macro solutions. And the developer of technical knowledge and infrastructure has entered this field. The expertise and knowledge in MAPNA Group in the field of electricity industry has made possible the trust and confidence required for the design and management of the electrification network in this group, and despite this, it is very important to pay attention to the fact that the development of electrification and the use of electric vehicles in the country, it has various trustees and stakeholders and requires the determination and serious participation of various institutions, and MAPNA is only one of the players in the field of electrification.

## Aviation industry in MAPNA Group

MAPNA Group has entered this arena with full knowledge of the challenges and deficiencies in the field of supply, construction and repair in

the aviation industry. In this way, the trust and confidence in the knowledge capacity, infrastructure and capabilities of the internal specialists in Mapna Group, as well as relying on valuable experiences in the field of gas turbine construction, made the start and continuation of this path with self-confidence.

## Aviation industry services and products

Mapna Group's aviation industry activities are focused in two areas: maintenance and repairs of aircraft engines, and design and manufacture of required parts and tools. Services provided in the field of maintenance and repairs include maintenance, repair and overhaul of the engine, repair of parts, creation of test cells and related laboratories, and engine rental. MAPNA Group has the ability to design and manufacture related parts and tools in the aviation and airport industry.

## MAPNA is a pioneer in industrial standardization

In this regard, MAPNA has received ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001, HSE-MS, ISO TS 2263, ISO 29001, ISO 14031, ISO 10015 and ISO 10004 certifications and the process of obtaining other required standards in other cases also continues. Also, according to the requirement of MAPNA Group, all main subsidiaries of MAPNA Group are also required to obtain IMS quality management standards certificates according to their application. Mohammad Rahim Soltani, Director of Quality Assurance and Excellence of MAPNA Group Company, about the process of obtaining MAPNA standard certificates in various fields. He says: "Deputy of Systems and Information of MAPNA Group as the custodian of the implementation of the standards, measures and infrastructure necessary for establishment, It has provided the promotion and maintenance of the required standards. Usually, if we want to move towards obtaining a standard for a specific product or service, we ourselves come to the conclusion in the investigations that we need a standard in this area, or the related unit of that area comes to this conclusion and announces the issue. Soltani explains the process of moving towards receiving the standard in the field of CSR as follows: "In the issue of social responsibility, in a joint activity with the communication and market unit, we came to the conclusion that we need to receive the ISO 26000 standard, which is the standard of social responsibility". The process is either carried out by the quality assurance unit or by the unit that intends to do its work based on the existing standards, as a result of which the unit moves towards going through the processes. "For each of the standard topics, we have regulations, guidelines and processes based on which we check compliance with the requirements, although these standards are checked and implemented in the relevant units in more detail" It seems that this statement has been accepted as one of the established processes in MAPNA Group to obtain the required standards. When reviewing MAPNA's record and performance in the field of standardization, it should be remembered that in terms of quality assurance, MAPNA is one of the few companies that It has a certificate of two-level standards, and in addition to the MAPNA group companies, five of the MAPNA Group companies have cement and crystal statues, which shows the level of maturity of the MAPNA Group in this field. In general, a look at the different units of the MAPNA Group shows that most of the standards required by organization and if there is a need to obtain a new standard at the group level, the working group will review its systems and information, and if approved, the group and competent authorities will proceed with the process. MAPNA Group also, as an international set of standards, usually from companies in the technical field, it obtains these standards from licensed companies, and in this way, MAPNA is one of the largest companies in the country that has obtained two-level certifications in the standard and is the second It has the status of a statue of excellence in the country. The establishment of these standards has improved the



performance and quality of products and services on par with reputable international companies and is the best way to achieve excellence in different business industries of MAPNA Group. A path that provides us with the best lessons for having a better business by using up-to-date management processes and methods.



## France Hits Out at Black Panther Over Depiction of Its Army

PARIS (Dispatches) – France’s defense minister condemned the latest instalment of Marvel’s Black Panther franchise, which depicts French troops caught trying to steal resources belonging to the fictional African kingdom of Wakanda.

“I strongly condemn this false and deceptive representation of our armed forces,” Sebastien Lecornu wrote on Twitter, responding to a clip from the November movie posted by a journalist.

The scene turns on a group of bound French soldiers being brought into a UN meeting, embarrassing Paris’ ambassador to the world body, after they were caught on a secret mission to a Wakandan base in Mali.



## NATO Urged to Hold Emergency Summit Over Nord Stream Blasts

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - NATO should hold an emergency meeting to discuss recent findings about September explosions at the Nord Stream gas pipelines, Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1970, said in a blog post on Wednesday, citing an unidentified source, that U.S. navy divers had destroyed the pipelines, with explosives on the orders of President Joe Biden.

The White House dismissed as “utterly false and complete fiction” the claim that the United States was behind explosions of the Nord Stream gas pipelines, which send Russian gas to Germany.



## UN Admits Aid Failure for Syria As Quake Toll Hits 33,000



ANKARA (Dispatches) - The United Nations denounced Sunday the failure to deliver desperately needed aid to war-torn regions of Syria, while warning the death toll of more than 33,000 from the earthquake that also struck Turkey is set to rise far higher.

A UN convoy with supplies for northwest Syria arrived via Turkey, but the agency’s relief chief Martin Griffiths said much more was needed for millions whose homes were destroyed.

“We have so far failed the people in northwest Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn’t arrived,” Griffiths said on Twitter.

Assessing the damage in southern Turkey on Saturday, when the toll stood at 28,000, Griffiths had told Sky News he expected the death toll to “double or more” as chances of finding survivors fade with every passing day.

Supplies have been slow to arrive in Syria, where years of conflict have ravaged the healthcare system, and parts of the country remain under the control of rebels battling the government of President Bashar al-Assad, which is under Western sanctions.

A 10-truck UN convoy crossed into northwest Syria via the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, according to an AFP correspondent, carrying shelter kits including plastic sheeting, ropes and screws and nails, as well as blankets, mattresses and carpets.

Bab al-Hawa is the only point for international aid to reach people in rebel-held areas of Syria after nearly 12 years of civil war, after other crossings were closed under pressure from China and Russia.

The World Health Organization chief met Assad in Damascus on Sunday and said the Syrian leader had voiced readiness for more border crossings to help bring aid into the rebel-held northwest.

“He was open to considering additional cross-border access points for this emergency,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters.

Assad said he looked forward to further “efficient cooperation” with the UN agency to improve the shortage in supplies, equipment and medicines, his presidency said.

UN special envoy to Syria, Geir Pedersen, was also in Damascus on Sunday carrying a message to set aside politics.

“We are mobilising funding and we are trying to tell everyone to put politics aside,” he said.

“This is a time to unite behind a common effort to support the Syrian people.”

Assad had also thanked the United Arab Emirates for providing “huge relief and humanitarian aid” with pledges of tens of millions of dollars in aid as well.

But security concerns prompted the suspension of some rescue operations, and dozens of people have been arrested for looting or trying to defraud victims in the aftermath of the quake in Turkey, according to state media.

An Israeli emergency relief organisation said Sunday it had suspended its earthquake rescue operation in Turkey and returned home because of a “significant” security threat to its staff.

Miraculous tales of survival still emerged, though experts caution that hopes for finding people alive in the devastation dim with each passing day.

Almost 160 hours after the quake, several more people were rescued, including an eight-year-old boy in Gaziantep, and a 63-year-old woman in Hatay, state media reported.

The United Nations has warned that at least 870,000 people urgently need hot meals across Turkey and Syria. In Syria alone, up to 5.3 million people may have been made homeless.

## Abbas Urges World support For Palestinians

CAIRO (Dispatches) - Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas accused Israel of having “crossed all red lines” in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, and urged world leaders to put an end to its actions.

The international community must “protect” the Palestinian people and “put a stop to Israeli aggression... (and) unilateral actions”, the head of the Palestinian Authority told an Arab League meeting in Cairo.

“Israeli intransigence and practices have crossed all red lines”, he said at the gathering attended by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Jordan’s King Abdullah II. Last year was the deadliest year in the West Bank since the United Nations started tracking casualties in the territory in 2005.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has seen at least 43 Palestinians -- including attackers, militants and civilians -- killed this year, according to AFP figures.

Nine Israeli civilians including three children, and one Ukrainian have been killed over the same period, according to an AFP tally based on official statements.

In a video address, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres affirmed the international body’s “clear position against unilateral actions,” citing “illegal settlements in east Jerusalem” in particular.

Sisi -- whose country retains its traditional role as a Middle East mediator - vowed to “continue to work with the two sides of the conflict to revive the political process and restore calm in the West Bank and Gaza”.

Abdullah, whose country acts as custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, said Arab leaders “must galvanise efforts to support the resilience of our brothers” in the Palestinian territories.

US President Joe Biden told Abdullah last week that Washington supports a “two-state solution” in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

“Mr. Biden tells me he supports a two-state solution, but then does nothing at all,” Abbas added.

A two-state solution would mean the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, as well as the partition of Jerusalem, which Israel refuses as it considers the city its undivided capital.



### Thousands March in Nicaragua in Support of Gov’t Opponents’ Expulsion

MANAGUA (Dispatches) - Several thousand pro-government demonstrators marched in Nicaragua in support of the expulsion of 222 critics of President Daniel Ortega’s government, which has called them “traitors to the homeland.”

The Central American nation released the detained dissidents and exiled them to the United States on Thursday, a move welcomed by Washington, which has imposed sanctions over Ortega’s crackdown on the political opposition.

The pro-government demonstrators passed through the streets of the capital Managua waving flags of Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba and Ortega’s ruling party, and chanting pro-administration and anti-opposition slogans.

Some even carried balloons in the shape of an airplane, in reference to the chartered flight that transported the detainees to Washington.

“We are marching in celebration of the deportation of all the criminals who were detained, people who were coup plotters.... What they were doing here was damaging Nicaragua’s image,” Walter Martinez told AFP.

Ortega is “a democratic president,” he added.

Since 2007, the leader has engaged in increasingly authoritarian practices, quashing presidential term limits and seizing control of all branches of the state.

The freed detainees had been arrested in a wave of repression that followed 2018 protests demanding Ortega cede power.

A Nicaraguan court official this month said the 222 prisoners were “deported” and called them “traitors to the homeland.”

Nicaragua’s legislature has moved to strip the dissidents of their citizenship, which must be voted on later this year to become law.

Spain has offered them citizenship.

A US official said everyone in the group — including former presidential candidates, ministers and diplomats -- had consented to travel to the United States, except two who chose to stay in Nicaragua.

Catholic bishop Rolando Alvarez, who refused to leave Nicaragua, on Friday was sentenced to 26 years in prison, stripped of his citizenship and fined.

## Former Cyprus FM Elected Youngest President

NICOSIA (Dispatches) - Former foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides was on Sunday elected president of the Republic of Cyprus, becoming at 49 the youngest leader of the divided Mediterranean island nation.

The seasoned politician gained 51.92 percent of the vote in a run-off Sunday, closely beating out communist-backed career diplomat Andreas Mavroyiannis who took 48.08 percent of ballots.

Widely tapped as a favourite even before last Sunday’s first round of voting, he is seen as an independent backed by centrist parties that take a hard line on moribund UN-backed talks on ending the island’s decades-old division.

His candidature sparked a schism within the conservative ruling DISY party, whose candidate Averof Neofytou was booted out of the race after coming in third place in the first round -- a first in the party’s history.

Christodoulides served as government spokesman then foreign minister under outgoing President Nicos Anastasiades, but quit as minister last June to enter the race.

Christodoulides later found himself in the uncomfortable position of wooing votes from DISY, after Neofytou failed to make the run-off.

DISY would usually be expected to urge its supporters to vote against a communist-backed candidate, but Christodoulides is despised by many

in the party as a “traitor” who put personal ambition over the interests of the party and the island.

With a doctorate in political science from the University of Athens, the career politician has also studied in Malta and New York.

He launched his diplomatic career in 1999, climbing up the ranks until he became foreign minister in 2018.

He previously considered that the main problems facing the Cypriot electorate were “the cost of living and housing, immigration and the Cyprus problem”, referring to the island’s division.

Talks have been in deep freeze since 2017 to resolve the division that resulted from Turkey’s 1974 invasion and occupation of the northern third of the island in response to a Greek-sponsored coup.

Christodoulides has long taken a hawkish stance on peace talks.

He has moreover said he is open to forming alliances with extreme-right parties such as ELAM, ultra-nationalists who came in fourth place with six percent of the vote.

Christodoulides has also vowed a “zero-tolerance” approach to corruption as the island continues to deal with the fall-out from a cash-for-passports scandal that plagued the previous administration.

Despite having been foreign minister in that cabinet, he managed to escape untainted by the scandal.



## NATO Chief’s Departure Plan Re-Launches Succession Race

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The NATO alliance confirmed Sunday that its long-serving chief would leave office in October, launching a new round of speculation about his successor.

Diplomats in Brussels say there is no consensus as to who should replace former Norwegian prime minister Jens Stoltenberg as the Western alliance’s top civilian official.

Some allies were considering a plan to extend his already nine-year-old term to oversee NATO’s response to the crisis unleashed by Russia’s war against Ukraine. But, on Sunday, shortly after Stoltenberg returned from high-level meetings in Washington, his spokeswoman confirmed that he would leave office later this year.

“The mandate of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has been extended three times and he has served for a total of almost nine years,” spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said.

“The secretary general’s term comes to an end in October of this year and he has no intention to seek another extension of his mandate.”

The 63-year-old’s decision to go will shine a light on the race among senior European officials to replace him, with governments already discreetly floating candidates in news media leaks.

The secretary general has always been a European, even if in practice Washington has the decisive vote on his -- or maybe, this time, on her -- nomination.

And although the daily job is one of coordination and seeking consensus among the 30 allies, the choice itself will be seen as symbolic of NATO’s direction.

The last time Stoltenberg’s future was in question -- in February 2022, when he was named future head of the Norwegian central bank, only later to withdraw -- speculation focused on women.

For seven decades the alliance has been headed by a series of western European men, and many observers thought it was time that a woman and or an easterner take charge.

The last four NATO chiefs were seemingly picked as an anti-clockwise tour of the North Sea coast, a Briton being succeeded by a Dutchman followed by a Dane and now a Norwegian.

Meanwhile, the alliance’s strategic focus has shifted to the eastern flank, where newer alliance members on the Baltic and Black Sea coasts face off against an aggressive Russia.



# How to Protect Our Memory?

LONDON (Dispatches) - A handful of factors, such as education, income and job type, may increase the likelihood that people in their mid-50s will still be mentally sharp, a new study finds.

An analysis of data from more than 7,000 U.S. adults showed that these factors could explain nearly 40% of the differences in the amount of cognitive ability people had lost by age 54. Education, in particular whether a person had finished college, made the biggest difference in cognitive abilities such as memory, judgment and focus, Ohio State University scientists reported Wednesday in a scientific journal.

The researchers analyzed data from the University of Michigan's health and retirement study, which has been tracking more than 20,000 participants for more than 20 years. The study's database includes information on participants' income, occupation and education, along with personal information such as marital history, religion, depression and cognitive abilities, as well as body mass index, activity levels, smoking history and other physical health details.

The data the researchers included in their analyses came from a single set of 7,068 adults who were 54 to 65 years old in 1996 and then 20 years later.

Study co-author Hui Zheng, a professor of sociology, suspects that the reason people with a college degree do better cognitively in their 50s is they are more likely to end up with a career that makes them use their brains.

"If you have a job that is mentally stimulating, you're lucky, because you're using your brain all the time," he said. "The more mental challenges in your job, the better."

Still, going to college in our 20s isn't the only way to avoid cognitive declines before people hit their mid-50s. Previous research has shown that having hobbies and interests that stimulate the brain, such as learning a new language, painting and writing, can also be protective.

While the researchers analyzed a wide range of things that influence our brain health as we age, the study didn't address the influence of genetics, which could play a significant role in cognitive function, experts say.

There has been previous research showing that education, household wealth and access to health care are connected to the brain's resilience, said Dr. Thomas Wisniewski, a neuropathologist and the director of the NYU Langone Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and its Center for Cognitive Neurology.

Still, apart from genetics, the finding that factors that people can mostly control might explain as much as 40% of the differences in the loss of cognitive abilities at age 54 is "good news," he said.

The Ohio study indicated that lifestyle factors — such as maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding smoking and participating in vigorous exercise — had little impact on the rate of cognitive decline after age 54. However, Wisniewski, who was not involved in the study, isn't convinced that "there's nothing you can do about it."

"That's not true in my experience as a clinician and it's not what's been shown in other studies," he said.

When it comes to slowing cognitive decline, physical activity and a healthy diet can be highly beneficial, Wisniewski said. Managing medical conditions such as obstructive sleep apnea, diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol are also protective.

To illustrate the power of vigorous physical activity even in people in their 70s, he points to one of his recent papers that described two patients who had been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment and who also had biological markers that suggested they would develop Alzheimer's disease.



# Turkey Tremor Evokes Questions Over Building Standards

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - The apartments they once industriously spent so long saving up for, decorating and making comfortable now lie in a heap of rubble after a violent quake hit Turkey.

New and old buildings, some constructed only six months ago, fell apart. Others flattened like concrete pancakes.

The full extent of the damage is unknown from Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor and ceaseless aftershocks, which unleashed catastrophe in Turkey and Syria, killing more than 23,000 people.

Turkey's death toll rises every day. In parallel, so has fury over why, in a country with multiple fault lines and a history of major jolts, building quality is so poor that buildings fall apart like paper.

Experts say Turkey has the regulations in place to prevent such a catastrophe. But they are only applied loosely by construction companies, the largest of which are often close to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Officials say 12,141 buildings were either destroyed or seriously damaged in Turkey.

Since the first quake was so huge, "damage was to be expected, but not the type of damage that you are seeing now", said Mustafa Erdik, a professor at Istanbul-based Bogazici University.

Even if a building topples, people can usually hide until searchers can rescue them, he said.

But this time, he added, buildings suffered "a pancake collapse".

"The floors are piling on top of each other," Erdik, also part of the Turkish Earthquake Foundation said, which means the chances of being found alive are slim.

The causes are usually linked to the poor quality of the concrete, which sometimes is mixed with too much water and gravel, and too little concrete, according to Zihni Tekin, a consultant at Istanbul Technical University.

Other reasons include steel rods that are too thin to support the columns, which limit the building's strength, the engineer said.

But Tekin also blamed engineers and architects' low quality of education, despite private universities appearing across Turkey.

Turkish officials have also gambled by easing regulations.

Turkey's rules on construction, based on California's, have been regularly revised since a 1999 tremor in northwestern Turkey.

The last revision came in 2018.

"On paper, standards are respected, with contracts entrusted to private companies in charge of checking them," Istanbul architect Aykut Koksall said.

But oversight of these agreements is lax, he added, giving builders greater leeway in following -- or not -- the rules.

Heavy bureaucratic procedures also end up diluting who is responsible if or when something goes wrong, Erdik said.

"The steps and signatories are so many that at the end, it is difficult to identify who is responsible."

To fix this issue, he recommends imposing an insurance on all actors against malpractice that guarantees victims compensation by guilty contractors.

"That's how it is elsewhere in the world and it should be in Turkey," he said.

The clear negligence and greed shown by some contractors has sparked fury, especially after luxury flats built within the last 20 years crumbled like a pack of cards.

Many hope this quake will finally lead to better monitoring.



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## Italy's Jan Consumer Confidence Worsens

ROME (Dispatches) - Italy's economic sentiment in January provided mixed signals: consumer confidence worsened while business confidence improved for the third month in a row. The country's harmonised index of consumer prices (HICP) decelerated in January. The positive differential with the euro area average decreased, according to the official statistical agency Istat.

The country's seasonally- and calendar-adjusted, chained volume

measure of gross domestic product (GDP) in the month decreased by 0.1 per cent with respect to the previous quarter. In 2022, the GDP growth rate was 3.9, higher than euro area average growth rate.

On the supply side, after three consecutive falls industrial production increased by 1.6 per cent in December. However, in the fourth quarter of 2022, the index decreased by 0.9 per cent with respect to the previous three months.



## Global Economic Growth May Be Reaching a Turning Point

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Global economic growth may be reaching a "turning point", supported by falling inflation and China's reopening, International Monetary Fund managing director Kristalina Georgieva said.

"While this is encouraging, the balance of risks remains tilted to the downside. China's recovery could stall [and] inflation could remain higher than expected," said Ms Georgieva, who was speaking at the seventh Arab Fiscal Forum in Dubai.

"Russia's war in Ukraine could escalate, causing further fragmentation of the global economy."

Last month, the fund raised its global economic growth estimate for this year to 2.9 per cent from a previous forecast of 2.7 per cent. The IMF expects global inflation to decline to 6.6 per cent in 2023 from 8.8 per cent last year. It is expected to fall further to 4.3 per cent next year.

"China's reopening is helping, as well as resilient labor markets and consumer spending in the US and the EU," said Ms Georgieva.

The Middle East and North Africa region is forecast to grow by 3.2 per cent this year, following a 5.4 per cent expansion in 2022, as the OPEC+ group of countries sticks to an oil output cut of 2 million barrels per day.

OPEC+ announced a reduction of its collective output in October last year amid growing signs of an economic slowdown and Covid-19 curbs in China, the world's second-largest economy and top crude importer.

Brent, the benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, surged to \$90 a barrel last month after China reopened its borders after nearly three years of adhering to a strict zero-Covid policy. The global benchmark has since given up some gains and was last trading at \$86.39 on Friday.

"For oil importers, the challenges would continue. Public debt is a particular concern, with several economies in the region facing elevated debt-to-GDP ratios — some close to 90 per cent," Ms Georgieva said.

Inflation in the Mena region is expected to surpass 10 per cent for the fourth consecutive year in 2023 on higher food prices and currency depreciations, the IMF said.

"We expect inflation to gradually decline as commodity prices settle and tighter monetary and fiscal policies have their intended effect. For the Gulf Co-operation Council countries, we expect inflation to remain contained," Ms Georgieva said.

However, the war in Ukraine and climate disasters could worsen food shortages for the "most vulnerable", she added.

"Tighter global or domestic financial conditions could lead to high borrowing costs and, in some cases, a financing crunch," she said.

"Domestically, delays in much-needed reforms could weigh on regional prospects and government finances."

Last week, Moody's Investors Service downgraded Egypt's credit rating to B3 from B2 owing to the country's reduced external buffers and shock absorption capacity as it pursues economic reforms in line with its IMF program.

In 2022, Egypt, the Arab World's third-largest economy, agreed to a \$3 billion rescue plan with the fund that is contingent on the country introducing a flexible foreign exchange regime and reducing the state's footprint in the economy to allow more room for the private sector. Inflation in the country soared in 2022, exacerbated by the fallout from the war in Ukraine, prompting the Central Bank of Egypt to raise interest by 800 basis points.

## Kazakhstan Delays Oil Pipeline Restart

ASTANA (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan has delayed the startup of crude oil exports from its giant Tengiz oilfield by way of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, four sources told Reuters.

Kazakhstan energy company Kazmunaigaz (KMG) has pushed back the restart of crude oil exports from the giant Tengiz oilfield after BP declared force majeure on crude oil loadings from the Ceyhan port.

"Force majeure was declared in Ceyhan, and (Tengiz) crude supplies to BTC were put on hold," a market source told Reuters. Kazakhstan has banned the export of fuels, including gasoline, diesel, and other oil products, for four months beginning on February 18, the country's Finance Ministry said earlier in the week, in order to ensure enough domestic supply.

Operations at Turkey's Ceyhan crude oil port were first disrupted by the dual earthquakes in the country earlier in the week, then by seasonal inclement weather.

The BTC pipeline has the capacity to move 1.2 million barrels of oil per day, according to BP's website.

This year, KMG was hoping to send 1.5 million tons of crude oil through the BTC pipeline as a way of bypassing Russia, with KMG planning on beginning oil shipments this month from its Tengiz oilfield, which it co-owns in part with Chevron. Damage assessments and repairs are currently still in progress at the Ceyhan terminal, sources told Reuters on Friday, with exports from the BTC pipeline possibly resuming on Sunday unless issues are found.

The Ceyhan port was damaged and a fire broke out after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit Turkey, killing thousands. Bloomberg sources estimated on Thursday that shipments of Azeri crude oil through the Ceyhan port wouldn't resume until late next week.

## Proposed U.S. Ban on Chinese Buying U.S. Property Violates Market Rules

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The United States is violating the principles of market economy and international trade rules in considering a ban on Chinese citizens buying property in the United States, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

"Generalizing the concept of national security and politicizing economic, trade and investment issues violate the rules of market economy and international trade rules," spokesperson Mao Ning said at a regular press briefing.

Mao was responding to a question when asked about Texas and Florida considering a ban on Chinese citizens in the United States from buying property.

Texas, Florida, Arkansas and several other states are weighing legislation that would bar Chinese citizens from buying real estate, according to several reports, as tensions rise between the United States and China over national security issues.

"I want to stress that China-U.S. economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial in nature. Over the years, Chinese enterprises have invested in the United States and made important contributions to promoting domestic employment and economic development in the United States," said Mao.

The move comes as the United States proposes increased retaliatory measures after a Chinese spy balloon was shot down after entering U.S. airspace.

## Quake Impact on Turkey's Growth Unlikely to Be As Much as in 1999

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The impact of last week's massive earthquakes on Turkey's economic growth is unlikely to be as pronounced as after the quake that hit the country in 1999, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Director Mahmoud Mohieldin said.

A pair of earthquakes devastated southeastern Turkey and severely hit northern Syria, leaving a trail of destruction across the region. Thousands of buildings, including homes and hospitals, were flattened in the 10 provinces affected by the tremors last Monday.

The disaster inflicted heavy damage on roads, pipelines, and other infrastructure in the area, where some 13.5 million people live.

The earthquakes will add billions of dollars of spending to Ankara's budget and are expected to cut economic growth by two percentage points this year, officials and economists have said.

While officials say the extent of the destruction is not yet clear, they believe rebuilding will stretch Turkey's budget. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said there would be a rapid reconstruction of infrastructure and houses.

After the initial impact over the next few months, public and private sector investments in rebuilding could boost gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the future, IMF's Mohieldin told reporters on the sidelines of the Arab Fiscal Forum on Sunday.

His remarks were echoed by Wolfango Piccoli, managing director of consultancy Teneo Intelligence, who last week said the earthquake is unlikely to inflict severe damage to the economy compared to one of similar magnitude in 1999 that struck Turkey's northwest industrial heartland.

Addressing the same event, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the earthquakes "brought tremendous tragedy on people but also a very significant impact on the Turkish economy."

Turkey has been coping with soaring inflation and depreciation in the Turkish lira. As a result, the government has endorsed a new economic model aimed at eventually shifting from chronic deficits to a current account surplus.

It also aims at lowering inflation, which dropped to nearly 58% in January, through more robust exports, production, investment and low-interest rates. Inflation had hit as high as 85.5% in October, a 24-year high.

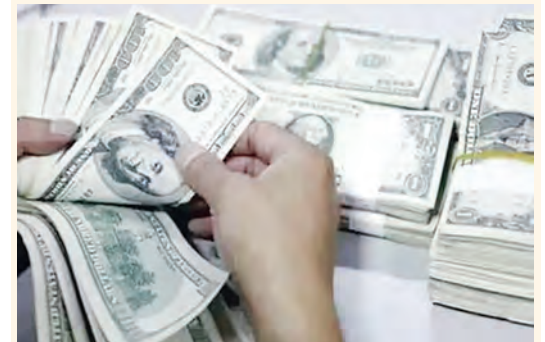
Last year, the country's slashed its benchmark policy rate by five percentage points to 9%, citing the signs of economic slowdown. However, it held the rates steady last month and will hold its next meeting on Feb. 23.

Turkey is known for having much lower debt levels than most countries. However, earthquake damage is also expected to hit production in the affected region, which is estimated to account for 9.3% of the country's GDP.

The 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.

Separately, a senior official told Reuters last week that growth could be 1 or 2 percentage points below the targeted 5%, saying that some of the investment resources foreseen in the budget will need to be used for these areas.

## India's Forex Reserves Decline After Three Weeks Rise



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - India's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$1.494 billion to \$575.267 billion in the week ending on February 3, according to the Reserve Bank of India's latest data. This decline snapped the previous three straight weeks' rise in overall reserves.

During the week that ended on January 27, the reserves rose by \$3.03 billion to \$576.761. According to RBI's latest data, India's foreign currency assets, the biggest component of the forex reserves, declined by \$1.323 billion to \$507.695 billion.

Gold reserves declined by \$246 million to \$43.781 billion. At the start of last year -- 2022, the overall forex reserves were at about \$633 billion. Much of the decline can be attributed to RBI's intervention and a rise in the cost of imported goods.

In October 2021, the country's foreign exchange reserves reportedly touched an all-time high of about \$645 billion. Typically, the RBI, from time to time, intervenes in the market through liquidity management, including through the selling of dollars, with a view to preventing a steep depreciation in the rupee.

Meanwhile, in the Economic Survey for 2022-23 tabled in the Parliament on January 31, the government said foreign exchange reserves are comfortable and external debt is low.

# Central Bank Gold Buying Spikes by 152%

LONDON (Dispatches)- Central banks closed out 2022 with reported net purchases of 28 tons of gold in December. Including large unreported purchases, this brought total central bank gold buying in 2022 to 1,136 tons. It was the second-highest level of net purchases on record, dating back to 1950, and the 13th straight year of net central bank gold purchases.

China officially started buying gold again in November and made another large purchase of 30 tons in December. That raised China's total gold reserves to over 2,000 tons for the first time.

The Chinese central bank accumulated 1,448 tons of gold between 2002 and 2019, and then suddenly went silent. Many speculate that the Chinese continued to add gold to its holdings off the books during those silent years.

There has always been speculation that China holds far more gold than it officially reveals. As Jim Rickards pointed out on Mises Daily back in 2015, many people speculate that China keeps several thousand tons of gold "off the books" in a separate entity called the State Administration for Foreign Exchange (SAFE).

The Central Bank of Türkiye (Turkey) continued its consistent buying in December, adding another 25 tons to its swelling gold reserves. Over the course of 2022, Turkey added about 150 tons of gold to its hoard.

Croatia bought 2 tons of gold after having not reported any changes in its gold reserves since 2001.

After a pause in November, the Reserve Bank of India resumed purchasing gold in December, with a modest 1-ton purchase. India ranks as the ninth largest gold-holding country in the world. Since resuming buying in late 2017, the Reserve Bank of India has purchased over 200 tons of gold. In August 2020,



there were reports that the RBI was considering significantly raising its gold reserves.

These purchases were partially offset by large sales by Kazakhstan (29 tons) and Uzbekistan (1 ton). It is not uncommon for banks that buy from domestic production — such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan — to switch between buying and selling.

December purchases brought the total net increase in central bank gold reserves in Q4 to 417 tons. Through the second half of 2022, central banks bought 862 tons of gold.

The total increase in reserves was a combination of reported buying, along with an estimate for significant unreported buying. Central banks that often fail to report purchases include China and Russia. Many analysts believe China is the mystery buyer stockpiling gold to minimize exposure to the dollar. According to the World Gold Council, "Should more information about this unreported activity become available, these estimates may be revised."

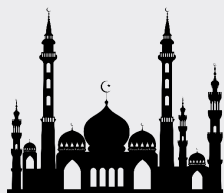
Total 2022 central bank purchases of 1,136 tons represented a 152% increase from 2021. It was the highest level of annual net central bank gold purchases since the suspension of dollar convertibility into gold in 1971, and the second-highest annual total on record. (The record was in 1967.)

According to the World Gold Council, there are two main drivers behind central bank gold buying — its performance during times of crisis and its role as a long-term store of value.

It's hardly surprising then that in a year scarred by geopolitical uncertainty and rampant inflation, central banks opted to continue adding gold to their coffers and at an accelerated pace."

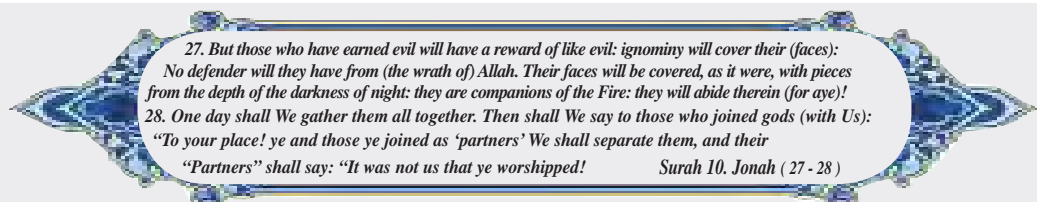
World Gold Council global head of research Juan Carlos Artigas told Kitco News that the big purchases underscore the fact that gold remains an important asset in the global monetary system.





PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:18
■ Evening (Maghreb)	18:03
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:27
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:51



# Oil Rebound More Likely This Year, \$100 a Barrel Possible, OPEC sources say

LONDON (Dispatches) - Oil may resume its rally in 2023 as Chinese demand recovers after COVID curbs were scrapped and lack of investment limits growth in supply, OPEC country officials told Reuters, with a growing number seeing a possible return to \$100 a barrel.

In 2022, oil soared above \$100 for the first time since 2014 as demand recovered from COVID-19 lockdowns in much of the world and Russia's invasion of Ukraine added to supply concerns. But Brent crude ended the year close to \$86 on fears of global recession.

A move back above \$100 for a prolonged period would earn more revenue for OPEC members, whose economies mostly depend on oil income, and be a setback for industrialised economies trying to control inflation and interest rates.

To support the market, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, known as OPEC+, in October agreed to cut production by 2 million barrels per day, about 2% of world demand.

After 2022's volatility, which sent Brent crude close to its all-time high of \$147 soon after the Ukraine war began, so far in 2023 Brent is up slightly at just over \$86, helped by Russia's plan to cut output in March.

OPEC and OPEC+ do not publish oil price forecasts and do not have a price target. Officials and ministers from OPEC and OPEC+, are often reluctant to discuss the direction of prices on the record.

In rare public comments on Feb. 8, Iran's national representative to OPEC, Afshin Javan, said oil may rebound to around \$100 in the second half of the year, adding that OPEC+ was likely to keep its current output policy at its next meeting.

Reuters spoke privately to five more OPEC country officials about the prospect of \$100 oil. Of these, three saw oil as more likely to rally in 2023 than decline, with two predicting prices heading back to \$100.

"It should be said that the shadow of the energy crisis will continue to dominate the world and the general trend of global oil prices will increase," said one of the OPEC sources.

"In my opinion, the return of Brent crude to above \$100 at some time in 2023 is not unexpected."

Consensus in the industry currently is for lower prices in 2022. A Reuters survey of 30 economists and analysts forecast Brent would average \$89.37 a barrel in 2023, down from \$99 in 2022. Goldman Sachs lowered its 2023 Brent forecast to \$92.

The sudden lifting of China's COVID restrictions is likely to boost oil demand growth in 2023, after the country was estimated to have posted a small decline in 2022 for the first time in years.

OPEC sources also see a lack of investment to increase supply supporting prices. OPEC members are pumping almost 1 million bpd less than their target, according to the group's own figures and other estimates.

While non-OPEC producers are still expected to pump more in 2023, the forecast of an increase of 1.5 million bpd falls short of expected demand growth of 2.2 million bpd, according to OPEC forecasts.



"Even with the additional supplies coming from here and there, still the market will witness a lack of supply compared to the demand," another OPEC source said. "There is more upward than downward pressure on the market."

The OPEC+ cut agreed in October applies for the whole of 2023. The head of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, on Feb. 5 urged producers to reconsider their output policies "if demand goes up very strongly."

So far they have no plan to change direction. Key OPEC+ ministers at a Feb. 1 meeting endorsed the existing policy, after which a source said the key message was OPEC+ is staying the course until the end of the deal.

Two OPEC+ delegates told Reuters on Friday that OPEC+ plans no action after Russia announced output cuts.

Another OPEC source agreed that prices may head back to \$100 in 2023, although the prospects for economic growth were the main risk.

"Everything will depend on the economy - if there is improvement in China of course, we will maybe arrive back to \$100," he said. A crude price between \$85 and \$100 is "good for everybody," he added.

The IEA, which represents 31 countries including top consumer the United States, did not immediately reply on Friday to a request for comment on what \$100 oil would mean for its members. In November, Birol said \$100 oil was a real risk for the global economy.

As well as recession risks, those OPEC sources who envisage lower prices in 2023 said it was unclear how much demand would come from China and whether it would impose lockdowns again to contain COVID flareups.

"There are still uncertainties about economic growth, inflation and China's reopening," said the second OPEC source who sees lower prices this year.

## Sanctions Root...

FROM PAGE 1

"Both countries view unilateralism and coercive measures, including oppressive sanctions, as the main root of the crises and insecurity, and call for collective efforts in order to obtain genuine multilateralism, besides worldwide justice, international equality and a balanced world order," the Iranian president said.

"The basic interests and rights of nations, including the right to development, are non-negotiable. Any attempt by arrogant powers to politicize issues and consequently deprive nations, at the expense of exploitation of international mechanisms, is condemned," Raisi noted.

"Iran, given its Islamic teachings and respect for all religions, is fiercely opposed to extremism and terrorism and consider them as contrary to pure Islam and human progress. Pure Islam is against terrorism, extremist and Takfiri ideology. We believe that the only way to ensure security is to rely on regional actors. Experience has shown that foreign intervention only leads to the exacerbation of insecurity and spread of terrorism in the West Asia region," he said.

"Iran's valuable experience in the fight against Daesh Takfiri terrorists, and success to prevent its spread to other parts of the world clearly showed that Iran is a guarantor of peace and stability and uses its military prowess only to deter arrogant powers.

"The Islamic Republic seeks maximum interaction with all countries of the world, especially friendly powers like China. Beijing has always shown how a country can develop without exercise of colonialism — something which is characteristic of Western powers — and help others develop as well. The Islamic Republic of Iran values such an approach," Raisi commented.

The Iranian president went on to describe China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative as a large-scale project, which will spur development and will serve as a cultural and industrial turning point.

"Nowadays, Iran has made major breakthroughs in various fields of science, such as stem cells, space industries, biotechnology, nanotechnology and nuclear technology.

"Political independence, military might to ensure security, educated manpower, low cost of production, energy reserves, transit location and industrial infrastructure are only part of Iran's capacities that can be tapped in order to deepen the strategic partnership between Iran and China," Raisi said.

The spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry Hua Chunying announced on Sunday that the Iranian president will pay a state visit to China from February 14 to 16 at the official invitation of his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

## Tehran, Moscow...

FROM PAGE 1

Negotiations on a swap agreement between Iran and Russia gained a fresh momentum in early 2022 after Russia's exports of gas to Europe came under Western sanctions because of the war in Ukraine.

Experts say an option under a swap arrangement with Russia would be for Iran to import Russian gas through Turkmenistan or Azerbaijan to boost supplies in its populous north and to increase exports to Iraq and Turkey.

Reports have suggested that Iran and Russia could start to implement a first phase of their gas swap agreement through Turkmenistan's pipelines by March this year.

Meanwhile Iran and Russia are cooperating in banking and are planning to ramp up the share of national currencies in mutual settlements, Russian deputy foreign minister, Andrei Rudenko, said.

"We are continuing to work with Iran, while promoting trade transactions in national currencies. The share of such settlements exceeded 60% in 2021. The positive trend continued last year," Rudenko said Friday in an interview with Interfax.

"The interaction with Iran has been actively developing at the level of central banks and credit institutions," he added.

"The establishment of a direct communication channel between Russian and Iranian banks through synchronization of national financial messaging systems, the SPFS and the SEPAM, was put on paper in late January of this year," he said.

## CBI Posts...

FROM PAGE 1

They showed that money supply in Iran had grown 15.8% year on year in the September quarter last year.

The CBI said Iran's foreign debt was at \$6.904 billion in September 2022. That comes as another report published by the IIRB News on Sunday said Iran's foreign debt had dropped by \$2.6 billion to \$6.42 billion in November.

Iran has reported consecutive periods of quarterly growth in its economy since mid-2021, more than two years after the US imposed sanctions on the country's energy, banking and trade relations with the rest of the world.

Experts say the sanctions have given Iran an opportunity to diversify its economy away from oil by encouraging increased activity in domestic manufacturing and agriculture.

## Goldman Sachs: Oil Prices Won't Hit \$100 Until December

LONDON (Dispatches) - Goldman Sachs still expects Brent Crude prices to hit \$100 per barrel this year, but only in December compared to earlier expectations of \$100 oil as soon as mid-2023, the bank said in a new note in which it cut its average Brent price to \$92 a barrel this year from \$98.

Despite the cut in oil price forecasts, Goldman Sachs is still one of the most bullish Wall Street banks on crude oil and commodities in general. Goldman continues to believe that there is a new supercycle in the making.

However, higher expected supply from Russia and the United States could lead to a slight surplus of 150,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2023, according to Goldman's note quoted by Bloomberg.

"On the demand side, downgrades in Europe, the United States, and Asia excluding China — reflecting a warm winter and the loss of distillate-based gas-to-oil switching — offset much of the China upgrade," the bank said, as carried by Reuters.

Goldman Sachs expects China's oil demand to grow by 1.1 million bpd this year, after the reopening from Covid restrictions.

For next year, the bank sees Brent Crude prices averaging \$100 per barrel, down from its previous projection of an average of \$105 a barrel Brent.

"This adjustment reflects a modest softening to our 2023 balance," Goldman's strategists wrote in the note, commenting on the downgrade.

In January, Goldman Sachs said that solid growth in global oil demand was set to drive oil prices to above \$100 this year and Brent Crude could trade at \$105 per barrel by the fourth quarter.

In mid-December, Goldman predicted that supply shortages and insufficient investment in new supply would result in a bumper year for commodities in 2023. Commodities are set to be the best-performing asset class in 2023, the bank's strategists said. The first quarter of 2023 could be more underwhelming than the rest of the year due to the expected slowdown in economies, but the low levels of investment in oil, gas, and key metals will continue to underpin what Goldman has called a new supercycle in commodities.

## Corruption Endangers World's Shrinking Fisheries

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - As Indonesia's fisheries minister, Edhy Prabowo was tasked with protecting one of his country's most precious resources: baby lobsters so tiny one can fit on the tip of a finger.

The waters off the nation's many islands and archipelagos had once teemed with lobster. But overfishing in recent decades decimated the crustacean's population, so much so that fishermen turned to catching the hatchlings. They scooped them up by the thousand and shipped them to Vietnamese lobster farms, where the babies are raised to adulthood and sold mostly to dealers in China to meet its enormous demand for seafood.

Concerned that such harvesting was harming lobster populations, Indonesia's fishing ministry in 2016 prohibited the export of the tiny crustaceans. Shortly after taking office, Prabowo lifted the ban. Court documents show that just a month later, in June of 2020, the minister accepted a \$77,000 bribe from a seafood supplier to grant it a permit to sell the hatchlings abroad.

The money kept flowing. In his short stint as minister, Prabowo accepted bribes of nearly \$2 million. He was arrested in 2020 by Indonesian authorities, having used the graft to purchase 26 road bikes, Old Navy children's clothes, Louis Vuitton bags, Rolex watches and two luxury pens. Prabowo, 50, was sentenced to five years in prison for corruption. His attorney declined to comment.

Prabowo's case is not an outlier. It's emblematic of the corruption plaguing dozens of coastal developing countries that are key in managing some of the world's most threatened fishing grounds, according to experts and a review of criminal case files and media reports by the AP.

At least 45 government officials have been accused of corruption in the past two decades, the AP found. The allegations range from high-ranking officials like Prabowo accepting large payments from fishing companies to obtain lucrative contracts to low-level civil servants accepting a few thousand dollars to ignore fishermen bringing illegal catch ashore.

## Tehran Seeks...

FROM PAGE 1

The Iranian envoy called India and Iran natural partners, citing historical ties between the two countries.

"Commonalities and historical ties of India and Iran, and their independent approaches, as well as their complimentary economic capacities, have turned them into natural partners," he said.

Ilahi stressed that energy has been an important area and external pressure is there but India's strategic autonomy is still the biggest support for the continuation of this cooperation. Connectivity has been another field of cooperation between Iran and India.

Indian Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, the chief guest at the event, said, "India and Iran share incomparable civilizational links. It is believed that

Indians and Iranians belonged to one family before the Indo-Aryan civilization and lived together with one common language."

"There seems little doubt that the Indus Valley Civilization had contact with the contemporary civilization of Iran. There was trade between the coast of southern Iran and India through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. This link grew as our civilization progressed," he added.

Sonowal noted that India and Iran are strong partners in the region for enhancing connectivity through the International North-South Transportation Corridor.

"INSTC holds a promising future and Chabahar Port will play a vital role in the corridor," he said.

## Hamas Says...

FROM PAGE 1

The report added that the strikes led to huge explosions, which caused material damage to residential buildings.

The Israeli military artillery units also targeted two monitoring points, one east of Beit Hanoun and another east of Khan Yunis.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces have killed a young Palestinian man during a raid in the West Bank city of Nablus, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said, only a few hours after another young Palestinian died from wounds sustained earlier in the day when Israeli military forces raided the northern West Bank city of Jenin.

Palestinian media outlets identified the victim as Amir Bustami, saying he lost his life after the ambulance crew and medical staff could not revive him.



## Scheffler Leads Rahm and Taylor by Two at Phoenix Open

PHOENIX (Dispatches) - American Scottie Scheffler takes a two-shot lead over Jon Rahm and Nick Taylor into the final round of the Phoenix Open, where he's in search of a title repeat and a chance to regain the world number one ranking. Scheffler, who started the round tied for the lead with Canadian Adam Hadwin, had four birdies in a three-under par 68 for a 13-under par total of 200 at TPC Scottsdale. That was two clear of third-ranked Spaniard Jon Rahm, who also carded a 68, and Canada's Taylor, who posted a 67.

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## Southampton Sack Jones With Club in Last Place

LONDON (Dispatches) - Southampton parted ways with manager Nathan Jones after the Welshman won just one Premier League game during his three-month tenure to leave the south-coast club rooted at the bottom of the standings. Jones is the second Saints manager to lose his job this season after the former Luton Town boss was appointed in November as Ralph Hasenhuetl's replacement a few days before the World Cup break.

# Kings Spoil Mavs' Doncic-Irving Debut

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - De'Aaron Fox scored 14 of his 36 points in overtime to lead the Sacramento Kings to a 133-128 victory over the visiting Dallas Mavericks and gain a split of a back-to-back set.

Domantas Sabonis recorded 22 points and 14 rebounds before fouling out and Terence Davis tallied 22 points off the bench as Sacramento won for the third time in the past four games. Kevin Huerter scored all 15 of his points in the second half, Trey Lyles added 14 points and Harrison Barnes had 13 for the Kings.

Kyrie Irving had 28 points and seven assists for Dallas and Luka Doncic added 27 points and nine rebounds in the first contest of their highly anticipated pairing. Irving was acquired from the Brooklyn Nets earlier this week and Doncic missed the previous four games -- including Irving's first two -- due to a heel injury.

Josh Green scored 23 points and Christian Wood added 15 for the Mavericks, who had a three-game winning streak halted. Dallas beat the Kings 122-114 on Friday in a game it never trailed.

### 76ers 101, Nets 98

Joel Embiid scored 37 points and hit a pair of go-ahead free throws with 5.2 seconds remaining as Philadelphia rallied down the stretch for a victory over Brooklyn in New York.

The Sixers outscored the Nets 16-4 over the final 7:20 and beat Brooklyn for the third time in as many meetings when Spencer Dinwiddie's potentially game-tying, 32-foot 3-point attempt was ruled on replay to be after the final buzzer.

James Harden added 29 points in a hostile return to Brooklyn, getting booed every time he touched the ball after he was granted a trade from the Nets to the Sixers last year. Mikal Bridges scored 23 points in his Nets debut after being obtained from the Phoenix Suns on Thursday for Kevin Durant. Joe Harris added 18 for the Nets, Cam Thomas contributed 14 and Cameron Johnson chipped in 12 after being acquired with Bridges.

### Heat 107, Magic 103 (OT)

Tyler Herro scored 23 points and Jimmy Butler collected 22 points, seven rebounds and six assists to fuel visiting Miami to an overtime victory over Orlando.

Gabe Vincent scored 20 points and Bam Adebayo recorded 13 points and



17 rebounds for the Heat, who overcame a 17-point deficit to secure their ninth win in a row in their home state. Included in that stretch was a 110-105 victory over Orlando on Jan. 27.

Markelle Fultz scored 17 points and rookie Paolo Banchero contributed 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Magic. Wendell Carter Jr. scored all 14 of his points in the first half, while Jalen Suggs and Moritz Wagner each finished with 14. Gary Harris missed a 3-point attempt with six seconds left in OT and Banchero reeled in the loose ball before inadvertently stepping out of bounds. Miami was able to secure the win from there.

### Lakers 109, Warriors 103

Rui Hachimura hit two key hoops down the stretch, joining fellow newcomers D'Angelo Russell and Jarred Vanderbilt in double-figure scoring as Los Angeles held off host Golden State in San Francisco.

Dennis Schroder had a team-high 26 points and Anthony Davis put up a 13-point, 16-rebound double-double with three blocks for the Lakers, who snapped a three-game losing streak. The Lakers moved within 2 1/2 games of the ninth-seeded Warriors in the tightly bunched Western Conference playoff race.

LeBron James sat out his second straight game with a sore left foot. Stephen Curry missed his third in a row with an injured left knee. Jordan Poole totaled 29 points for the Warriors, including the team's first 17 in the fourth quarter.

### Hawks 125, Spurs 106

Trae Young produced 24 points and a season-high 17 assists to lead a balanced offensive attack as Atlanta turned it on in the second half for a win over visiting San Antonio.

The Hawks rallied from six points down in the second period to take a one-point advantage at halftime. Atlanta put the game away in the third period, when it outscored the Spurs by 15 points, and cruised to its fourth win in six games.

## Makhachev Takes the Belt

PERTH (Dispatches) - Billed as a battle between the two best pound-for-pound fighters on the planet, the UFC lightweight title bout between Islam Makhachev and Alexander Volkanovski did not disappoint and though Makhachev prevailed, the debate is far from over.

Australian Volkanovski, who holds the organisation's featherweight belt, displayed immense durability in front of his home crowd as he pushed the bigger, taller Russian all the way before losing the bout on the judges' scorecards.

"We fight not just for the belt, but for who is going to be the best fighter in the world, that is why it was such a hard fight," Makhachev said in his post-fight press conference.

The decision may have been unanimous but it was not as convincing as Makhachev might have liked, and before the combatants left the octagon fans and other fighters were calling for a rematch as soon as possible.

"That was one of the most competitive fights in the history of the sport," former two-weight champion Henry Cejudo posted on Twitter.

After submitting Charles Oliveira to claim the lightweight belt last October, Makhachev called out Volkanovski, UFC champion at featherweight, a division 10 pounds below the organisation's 155-pound lightweight mark and widely regarded as one of the sport's pound-for-pound greats.

The showdown in Perth swung in the fourth round as Makhachev was able to take the fight to the mat early in the fourth round and use his fearsome grappling to wear out his smaller challenger, setting up his decision victory.

"Why am I the best right now? Because I beat the best fighter in the world. That's why I deserve this more - and if somebody wants to be the best, I am ready. Come in," Makhachev said defiantly.

Despite losing at the RAC Arena, Volkanovski is still convinced he could be the man to take down Makhachev.



# Rashford Strikes Again as Man Utd Defeat Leeds

LEEDS (Dispatches) - Marcus Rashford extended his hot streak with the late goal that inspired Manchester United's 2-0 win against old rivals Leeds.

After Rashford scored to spark United's comeback from two goals down in Wednesday's 2-2 draw with Leeds, Rashford tormented the Yorkshire club once again.

Rashford netted with 10 minutes left at Elland Road to make it four successive Premier League games with a goal for the England forward, who has scored in eight of his last nine appearances in the competition.

Following Alejandro Garnacho's frustrated reaction to being substituted on Wednesday, the Argentine teenager made amends as he came off the bench to seal

United's hard-fought victory five minutes after Rashford's goal.

United's win was just their second in their last five league games, although they have now lost just once in their last 17 matches in all competitions.

Erik ten Hag's side moved up to second place, although Manchester City would go back above them if they beat Aston Villa.

More importantly, United are seven points clear of fifth placed Tottenham in the race to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish.

The clash was marred by offensive taunts from the stands, with Leeds fans singing about the 1958 Munich air crash that killed several United players and their rivals in the away end responding by chanting about the deaths of two Leeds fans in Istanbul in 2000.

## Odermatt Outguns Kilde for Downhill Gold

PARIS (Dispatches) - Marco Odermatt scorched to gold in the men's downhill at the World Ski Championships in Courchevel to ensure a Swiss speed double after Jasmine Flury's shock win in the women's race.

Odermatt, who has yet to win a downhill on the World Cup circuit -- having notched up seven second places, laid down a near-perfect run on L'Eclipse piste to clock a winning time of 1min 47.05sec.

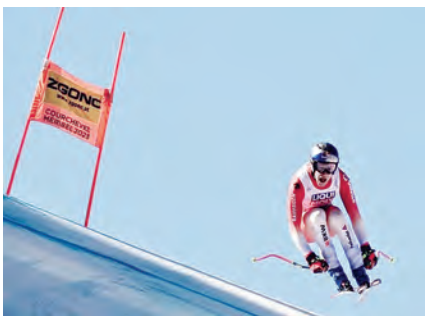
Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde won his second silver of the championships, at 0.48sec, after his second place in Thursday's super-G. Unheralded Canadian Cameron Alexander claimed bronze (+0.89).

"It was for me the perfect run, maybe the best downhill I have ever shown," said Odermatt, the runaway leader in the World Cup overall standings thanks to his domination of the super G and strength in the giant slalom.

"We did another great battle, I guess. But just one can win. He (Kilde) would deserve the gold medal as well, but today it was on my side.

"I felt it was a perfect run, when you look and you know some fast skiers had already been down, I knew it was good."

Hitting speeds of 125km/h (78mph) and negotiating jumps up to 50 metres long, Odermatt was in control after the initial gliding section, aggressively holding his line in an exemplary display of speed skiing in bright, sunny conditions.



## Brentford Equalizer At Arsenal Not Properly Checked by VAR Officials

LONDON (Dispatches) - The body responsible for refereeing in the Premier League admitted on Sunday that Brentford's equalising goal in a 1-1 draw at Premier League leaders Arsenal was not properly checked for offside by the VAR officials.

The Gunners dropped what could be two huge points in the title race when Ivan Toney headed in after a scramble inside the Arsenal area.

A lengthy VAR check took place after the goal to examine whether Ethan Pinnock was offside and interfering with play earlier in the move.

But VAR officials then missed the fact Christian Norgaard was in an offside position when he hooked the ball across for Toney to equalise.

Brentford's goal was not the only controversy of a bad Saturday for officiating in the Premier League.

Brighton had a goal wrongly ruled out in their 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace.

Pervis Estupinan's strike was disallowed after a VAR review deemed the Ecuadorian to be offside.

However, the lines drawn by the VAR official to determine the offside used the wrong Palace defender with Marc Guehi stood behind James Tomkins.

"PGMOL can confirm its Chief Refereeing Officer Howard Webb has contacted both Arsenal and Brighton & Hove Albion to acknowledge and explain the significant errors in the VAR process in their respective Premier League fixtures on Saturday," said a statement issued by PGMOL.

