Iranian Heavy Oil Price Increased By \$2.45 in January to Register a **3.1-Percent Increase Compared to** December 2022, According to **OPEC's Latest Monthly Report Published on February 14**



3

Shutting Down of

DOMESTIC



4

Zelensky Calls for

INTERNATIONAL

Deputy of the Regional Centre on **Urban Water Management** (RCUWM-Tehran) Under the Auspices of UNESCO, Alireza Salamat Said Tehran Will Host the 13th Summit of UNESCO Urban Management Center on Feb.22

Antetokounmpo Injury

Scare as Bucks Roll to

12th Straight Win

> SEE PAGE 8

8

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2023 - BAHMAN 30, 1401

SPORTS



Iran Offers \$40b Worth of **Oil Projects to China**

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has offered some \$40 billion worth of investment projects in its petroleum sector to China during a recent visit by President Ebrahim Raisi to Beijing, according to the Iranian Oil Ministry's deputy for international affairs.

Ahmad Assadzadeh said in remarks published that a bulk of projects offered to China will be in the downstream sector of the Iranian oil and gas industry.

Assadzadeh said that projects will include the construction of methanol to olefins (MTO) units as well as petrochemical refinery complexes in southern Iran.

"The important thing is that the Chinese side does believe in cooperating with us despite the oppressive American sanctions against our country," he was quoted as saying in an interview with the state TV.

The official said that in addition to the investment projects, Iran is also seeking to obtain a \$20 billion finance package from China to expedite development works in its petroleum sector. See Page 7

Iran Rejects UK Daily's Baseless Accusations

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's chargé d'affaires to the UK has reacted to a recently-published comment in The Telegraph, rejecting the accusations leveled against Iran in the article as "baseless and fabricated."

In a series of tweets, Mehdi Hosseini Matin rejected the comments, made by two UK parliamentarians, Stephen Crabb and Steve McCabe, who are chairmen of Friends of Israel parliamentary groups in the Conservative and Labour parties, respectively.

Titled "Iranian terror is a clear and present danger to the UK," the article was published online on February 12, leveling accusations, particularly against the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The article is "full of false, baseless & fabricated accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran," Hosseini Matin wrote.

The IRGC was "the only organization that fought against terrorism in the region; in circumstances that the danger was so close to Europe and no one dared to stand against it," the envoy said, stressing, "The IRGC still is the main fighter in combating terrorism in the region." See Page 7



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei criticized Muslim leaders for failing to stand firm against Israel, stressing that Iran will continue to support the Palestinian nation in any way it can. "If the Islamic governments had stood firm on the issue of Palestine from the first day and resisted, the situation in the West Asian region would certainly have been different and the Islamic Ummah would have been stronger

and more united today," he told a group of foreign representatives and ambassadors and participants of an international Qur'an contest in Tehran on Saturday.

The Leader made the statements on the occasion of Eid al-Mab'ath, which marks the day Prophet Muhammad (Peace upon Him) was chosen as God's messenger.

"If the Islamic countries had followed the teachings of the Ba'that, the evil Zionist regime would not have been able to commit atrocities and crimes against the oppressed Palestinians before the eyes of the Islamic nation," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the Iranian nation and its Islamic establishment will continue to fulfill their duties with regard to Palestine. He touched on the clear positions of the Islamic Republic in support of the oppressed Palestinians, saying Iran "has no reservations in openly supporting and defending the Palestinian nation."

"The Islamic establishment will continue to help the Palestinians in any way it can," the Leader added. He touched on the enemies' focus on Iranophobia, saying "unfortunately, the governments that are obliged to help the Palestinian nation themselves have joined the Iranophobia project of the enemies of Islam".

Since the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei said, the enemies have lined up against the Iranian nation with military, economic, political and propaganda war, but the people of Iran have thwarted all conspiracies of the domineering powers with their exemplary perseverance.

Ayatollah Khamenei described the issue of Palestine as one of the important weaknesses and wounds of the Islamic Ummah.

"A nation and a country is being subjected to endless and daily oppression before the watching eyes of the Islamic world by a barbaric, evil and wicked regime and Islamic countries with all their wealth, capacity and ability only look and even some of these countries, especially recently, collaborate with this bloodthirsty regime." The end result, Ayatollah Khamenei said, is the weakening the countries which keep silent in the face of crimes

and cooperate with the Zionists.

Iran Exports to EU Rise 15% in 2022

TEHRAN (MNA) - The value of Iran's export to the European Union (EU)'s member states rose 15 percent in 2022, as compared to the previous year, according to the data released by the European Union's statistics office Eurostat. The Eurostat's data show that Iran exported commodities

worth €1.055 billion to the union in 2022, while the figure was ⊕22 million in 2021, IRNA reported.

The EU's export to Iran also rose seven percent to €4.183 billion from €3.931 billion.

According to the Eurostat, the total value of trade between Iran and the European Union reached €5.238 billion in January-December 2022, while the figure was €3.931 billion in 2021.

Among European countries, Germany was Iran's top trading partner in 2022, accounting for about 35 percent of Iran's trade with the European Union. Germany exported € .582 billion worth of goods to Iran while importing €278 million worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic. The country's total trade with Iran was 1.860 billion euros. Italy was Iran's second trading partner with the total trade between the two countries standing at €712 million. Italy exported €51 million worth of goods to Iran while the imports stood at €161 million. See Page 7

Iran Vows More Aid to **Quake-Stricken Syria**

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Pirhossein Kolivand says the country will continue to send more humanitarian aid to quake-hit areas in Syria, vowing to facilitate the dispatch of international relief to the Syrian people.

In a Thursday meeting with President of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Khaled Hboubati, the IRCS head said despite a powerful earthquake in the northwestern Iranian city of Khoy on January 28, Iran rushed to help the Syrian and Turkish people affected by a devastating tremor on February 6 given cordial relations with the two countries. At least three people were killed and more than 1,500 injured in the 5.9-magnitude quake with multiple aftershocks near the city of Khoy in the province of West Azarbaijan. It caused structural damage and the destruction of many homes in the city and its surroundings.

See Page 7

Iran Allocates €400m To Importers From

Sokhan Gostar Institute



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The situation has reached a point where America. France and several other countries, claiming to solve the problems of Muslims, have given themselves the right to interfere in the Islamic world, while they are helpless and unable to solve their problems and manage their countries."

The Leader said important political issues such as Palestine and the US interference should be the focus of the Islamic Ummah in any situation.

He also expressed sorrow over the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, which has left many victims, saying all Muslims should share their pain and tribulation.

Feb.11 Rallies a Proper Response to Enemies

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - The secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has hailed the mass participation of Iranians in nationwide rallies in celebration of the 44th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, stating that the people's epic presence gave a proper response to false speculation that the time was up for the Islamic establishment.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks during a televised speech at a ceremony in the Lebanese capital city of Beirut in commemoration of the martyred military commanders of Hezbollah.

"Western media outlets take no notice of the millions-strong marches across Iran on the anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and instead focused on gatherings and riots that had drawn a small number of people and sought to instigate them," Nasrallah said.

He added, "All those who bet on the downfall of Iran's Islamic establishment, especially the Zionist regime, are mistaken in their calculations and must be reminded that their wishful dream will never come true. The latest [Bahman 22nd] demonstrations across the country marking the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution gave a strong and proper response to enemies and those who spuriously alleged that the Islamic establishment's days are numbered."

Nasrallah noted that the United States has been developing a series of plots since 2019 in order to bring Lebanon back under its control and dominance; however, it has failed in such bids. See Page 7

Blocked Funds in

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has offered some €400 million (\$427 million) from its resources blocked in Iraq because of US sanctions to importers in the country more than two weeks after reports suggested that authorities were planning to use the funds for imports of food and medicine from the Arab country.

A CBI statement released on Wednesday said that some €100 million from blocked funds in Iraq had been supplied to NIMA, a government-controlled exchange market where importers can obtain hard currency at prices that are lower than the unofficial market in Iran. The statement said some €300 million from the same funds had been allocated to importers in NIMA over the past few days. It said the allocation was a first in more than a year and had been made possible thanks to a recent easing of restrictions on Iran's access to its funds in Iraq.

A November report by the semi-official ISNA news agency said that nearly \$6 billion worth of funds have been accumulated in an account in the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) for Iranian exports of energy to the Arab country in recent years. The report said that total Iranian overseas resources that remain inaccessible because of US sanctions on Iran's banking relations with other countries amount to around \$50 billion. Local media reports in late January had suggested that Iran's ministry of trade had asked food, pharmaceutical and health industries in the country to submit a list of priorities for imports from Iraq using funds blocked in the TBI.

DOMESTIC

Two Foreign Nationals Involved In Riots Arrested in Zahedan

Tehran Rejects Claim About Presence of Al-Qaeda Leader in Iran

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has categorically dismissed claims made by the US administration about the presence of a leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist group in Iran, saying linking the terror outfit to Iran is "absurd" as those who created al-Qaeda and Daesh are to blame for the spread of terrorism across the world.

Amirabdollahian made the remark in a post on his Twitter account after U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price claimed that Seif al-Adel, the new leader of al-Qaeda, was based in Iran, without providing any evidence to substantiate the allegation.

"I advise White House to stop the failed Iranophobia game. Linking Al-Qaeda to Iran is patently absurd and baseless. Those who created Al-Qaeda and DAESH must be held accountable for spreading terrorism worldwide. Don't give false address!" the top Iranian diplomat noted.

Price accused Iran at a press briefing on Wednesday of "offering safe haven to al-Qaeda," and providing "support for terrorism."

Asked by a reporter what the United States would do if Adel was in Iran, the US State Department spokesman said Washington was determined not to allow threats to emerge and would closely coordinate with its European allies to confront "all the challenges Iran poses.'

The US claim comes as Iran, which is one of the biggest victims of terrorism, has been lauded as one of the pioneers in the fight against terrorism in the West Asia region.



Washington, as the main supporter of anti-Iran terrorism, has in numerous reports been proved to have created, trained and supported Daesh and other terror outfits to wreak havoc across the oil-rich region to plunder its resources.

Meanwhile, Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York also rejected Price's claim about the presence of the al-Qaeda leader in the country, saying the propagation of such misinformation could potentially hinder efforts to combat terrorism.

'The global network of al-Qaeda was dismantled after the death of Osama Bin Laden and the organization is no longer in existence but its extremist ideology still persists. The emergence of ISIS (Daesh) has taken the place of Al-Qaeda and has given rise to a new form of terrorism," the mission tweeted, referring to the terrorist group's founder who was killed in 2011.

"It is worth noting that the address for the so-called newly appointed Al-Qaeda leader is incorrect. This misinformation could potentially hinder efforts to combat terrorism," it added

Tehran, Ashgabat to **Boost Trade Transaction**



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare said that expanding commercial cooperation in the field of rail and road transportation and increasing commercial exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan are on the agenda.

The 15th Exclusive exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran is being held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, from Tuesday, February 15, for three days. In this exhibition, more than 90 Iranian companies are present in the fields of agriculture and food industry, construction industry, cement, oil and energy, petrochemical products, auto spare parts, technical and engineering services, medicine, and medical equipment.

Soulat Mortazavi, Minister of Cooperatives

Iran, Japan Ink MOU on Qeshm Utility Projects

QESHM (IP) - The chairman of the board of directors and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Qeshm Island Free Zone Organization, south of Iran, announced the signing of a joint memorandum between the water, electricity and utilities company of this island with the Japanese government.

Åfshar Fath-Ullahi, CEO of Qeshm Island Free Zone Organization, discussed the numerous economic and tourism capacities of Qeshm Island in the meeting with Kazutoshi Aikawa, the Japanese ambassador to Tehran. The Japanese diplomat welcomed the development of cooperation with Iran by describing the characteristics of Qeshm as distinctive.

The beautiful Island of Oeshm overlooks the Strait of Hormuz and serves as the inlet to the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. This island, which is the largest island in the Persian Gulf, is one of the most strategic islands due to its proximity to the Indian Ocean, the presence of oil and gas resources, petrochemical and refinery units and offshore equipment, and having port facilities for large ships (in the Panamax category) is one of the most strategic islands in Iran and the Persian Gulf.

The natural and historical features of this island have also made Qeshm one of the main tourist destinations in Iran. Due to its location in a key point of the North-South transit corridor, having access to the East-West international flight corridor, and its port facilities, which is in a way considered as complement Shahid Rajaei Port, this area plays a prominent role in global trade and commerce.

Ambassador Meets Italy Parliament Foreign Relations Commission Chief

ROMA (IRNA) - Iran ambassador to Italy met and conferred with head of Italian Parliament's Foreign Relations Commission and his deputy, proposing a parliamentary delegation to visit Iran to pave path for



cooperation and regional and international developments were the main topics of the bilateral discussion.

The Iranian diplomat in Rome said that the Parliaments are symbols of democracy in different countries

Iran, Oman FMs Talk on Phone

ZAHEDAN (IP) - An informed source in Sistan and Baluchistan said that two foreigners who have entered Iran illegally and had played an important role in the riots of this province were arrested on Thursday.

A security official in Southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan on the condition of anonymity told that two foreigners who entered Iran illegally and played an important role in the past months' unrest in the province

were arrested on Thursday. To ensure the securing safety of the people of Sistan and Baluchistan province,

Law Enforcement organizations started a plan to arrest illegal immigrants in this province.

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Ministers of foreign affairs of Iran and Oman in a phone talk on Thursday evening spoke about latest status of Iran-world powers nuclear talks to terminate sanctions.

The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hossein Amirabdollahian and his counterpart from the Sultanate of Oman Sayyid Badr Albusaidi after exchanging viewpoints on currently halted nuclear talks spoke about bilateral ties, regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Regional Countries Warned About Sinister U.S. Policies

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran warns the countries of the region about Washington's dangerously ill-intentioned and divisive policies targeting the regional nations and their relations.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the remarks in reaction to a joint statement by the United States and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The thoroughly anti-Iranian statement was issued by American and GCC officials during a meeting of the so-called "Working Group on Iran" at the council's headquarters in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Wednesday. It saw the countries in question accusing Iran of leading "destabilizing policies," "supporting terrorism," "weapons proliferation...in the region and around the world," and "nuclear provocations."

Kanaani roundly rejected the accusations that were leveled against the Islamic Republic in the statement, describing them as "oft-repeated" and "tedious."

He considered the issuance of such statements to be in line with the US regime's age-old strategy of sowing division among the countries of the region.

The official went on by citing many instances of the United States' "destructive" and "interventionist" policies in the region, which had worked to disrupt regional stability and security.

The spokesperson enumerated the US's sales of millions of dollars worth of weapons to the regional states, its "support for Takfiri terrorism," its "continued all-out backing of the Zionist regime [of Israel]'s crimes against the oppressed Palestinian people," and Washington's contribution to the years-long devastating war against the Yemeni nation.

Addressing the allegations targeting Iran's nuclear work, Kanaani said the Islamic Republic would carry on with its peaceful nuclear energy program and "constructive" cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), notwithstanding existing political pressures and propagandist smear campaigns.

The Islamic Republic, he continued, believes in regional diplomacy and endeavor toward the resolution of regional crises through political solutions.

The official, meanwhile, referred to the country's favorable and growing ties with its neighbors, expressing hope that the countries of the region would travel down the path of regional peace, security, and sustainable development while remaining cautious about the United States' "self-serving intentions and sinister policies" targeting the region.

Labour and Social Welfare met with Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan on Thursday.

Appreciating Turkmenistan's cooperation in holding an exclusive exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ashgabat, he said that the special approach of the 13th government of Iran in the field of foreign policy is paying special attention to its neighbors, adding: "The cooperation between the two countries should be more than ever in the past in all fields, especially in the economic, commercial, and infrastructure fields.

Mortazavi pointed out that the basis for the increase of trade exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan is ready, and added: "Expansion of trade cooperation in the field of rail and road transport and increase of trade exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan are on the agenda.

The deputy head of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan also said in this meeting: "The joint economic commission of the two countries is a suitable place to examine the solutions for the development of economic relations and to remove obstacles to cooperation."

Rashid Meredov, emphasizing the need to develop the road and rail transport infrastructure of the two countries, said: "The Islamic Republic of Iran is a suitable platform for the access of Central Asia to the countries of the Persian Gulf.'

constructive dialogue and interactions.

Ambassador Mohammad-Reza Sabouri made the proposal in his Tuesday afternoon meeting with the Head of Italian Parliament's

Foreign Relations Commission Giulio Tremonti and his deputy Lia Ouartapelle.

The latest status of bilateral ties, with focus on parliamentary

Ambassador Sabouri also expressed hope that an Italian parliamentary delegation comprised of representatives from different political fractions, and especially the members of Iran-Italy

Parliamentary Group will visit Iran to focus on commonalties between the two nations, and pave the path for bilateral constructive negotiations.

In Appalling U.S. Jail Abuse, Inmate Frozen to Death

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top human rights official says at an Alabama jail an inmate was deliberately frozen to death after he was placed in a walk-in freezer for hours, yet no human rights mechanism dares to question such an instance of appalling abuse in the United States.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, made the remarks on Thursday, after leaked CCTV footage of the jail revealed mentally-ill Anthony Mitchell, 33, froze to death after he was purportedly locked inside the walk-in freezer while in police custody. "In yet another appalling instance of jail abuse in the U.S., a man froze to death after being restrained in a freezer! And the fact that no human rights mechanisms dare to pose a question, or unmask the depth of the matter is just terrifying!," Iran's rights chief tweeted.

On January 12, Mitchell, who had a history of mental health problems and drug addiction, was arrested for attempted murder after allegedly threatening to harm himself and others. He was then transported to Walker County Jail. Two weeks later. on January 26, he died at a local hospital after he was taken there for evaluation and, according to a statement by the sheriff's office, "became unresponsive at the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased." However, leaked CCTV footage from the jail shows a different story, and his family and protesters are demanding answers. The footage shows authorities carrying Mitchell's near-lifeless body, which appears frozen, out of the jail and shoved into a vehicle to be taken to the hospital.

Commander Highlights Iranian Navy's **Powerful Presence in High Seas**

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said the country's naval forces are at a high level of power and have active presence in international waters

Speaking at a meeting in Tehran, the senior commander said the Navy is actively present in the world's oceans and has raised the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran in faraway waters.

Rear Admiral Irani referred to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's emphasis on enhancing maritime security and said, "Today, thanks to the efforts of the country's youths, the Navy is at a high level of power and strength.'

Elsewhere in his remarks, the commander highlighted the importance of utilizing the capacities of seas in the country's economic growth and development.

Last month, Rear Admiral Irani said plans are underway to dispatch naval forces to the Panama Canal as Iranian servicemen are approaching the coasts of the Americas.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2023

DOMESTIC

IRAN NEWS



Noon (Zohr)	12:18
Evening (Maghreb)	18:08
Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	05:21
Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:45

Shutting Down of INSTEX Not So Important

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of Iran-Switzerland Joint Chamber of **Commerce Sharif Nezam Mafi believes shut down of the Instrument** in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) is not so important because in the current condition it was unable to boost Iran's trade.

Speaking to ILNA and touching upon the effect of shutting down od INSTEX by Europe on trade between Iran and Switzerland, Nezam Mafi said that in fact INSTEX due to sanctions restrictions has been a pretext for lack of free trade and in the current condition is makes no difference. He added that INSTEX was an idea which was never materialized practically and it was the outcome of a restriction and one could not expect it to ease economy and free trade, he added therefore this mechanism is not so much important because in the current climate, the INSTEX structure also was unable to do special thing to boost the trade volume.

Established in January 2019 by the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, INSTEX's shareholders later came to include the governments of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Sweden, and Norway.

On exports of oil products to Switzerland, he said that the exports of oil products in exports are not significant because due to the banking problems due to the U.S. sanctions, Swiss companies do not work with Iran.

On the possibility of gas export to Switzerland, he said that currently Switzerland needs gas considerably and Iran had signed an agreement with Switzerland for gas exports which was not implemented.

On the trade relation between Switzerland and Iran, Nezam Mafi said that the trade relation between the two states is old and their economy are complementary because technology and



different economic process of Switzerland are welcomed in Iran and Swiss companies have active presence in Iran. He added that Iran's market is known for Swiss companies and if one day we can export gas and oil products, Switzerland can be a suitable market.

He noted that the major trade of Iran with Switzerland is grain, medical equipment and medicines and some famous Swiss testing, inspection and certification companies like Cotechna are working in Iran.

He added that Iran is the only country which can export gas to Europe with direct pipeline to replace Russia's gas but in the geopolitical and political world it is impossible otherwise Iran can replace Russia and political problems do not it happen.

Nezam Mafi said that recent sanctions imposed by Europe has not too much impact on Iran-Switzerland trade, adding that because Swiss officials do not make decisions based on the domestic issues of the countries but due to the EU's approach especially Germany's approach to these issues, Switzerland will be forced in the future to adopt policies in compliance with EU.

He added that although Switzerland is not an EU member state, it cannot act against the move of Europe because European countries are Switzerland's important trade partner despite neutrality of this country. Therefore Switzerland will be affected by the policies of EU and Germany, he added.

LSEZ Unveils Contracts for Construction of 2 Giant Petrochemical Projects IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Surah 10, Jonah (33 - 34

TEHRAN – On the sidelines of the exhibition on supporting home-made in the petrochemical industry and in line with the ultimate horizon of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone (LSEZ), contracts

33. Thus is the word of thy Lord proved true against those who rebel: Verily they will not believe.

"It is Allah Who originates creation and repeats it: then how are ye deluded away (from the truth)?"

34. Say: "Of your 'partners', can any originate creation and repeat it?"



for construction of two giant petrochemical projects for investment in the zone were unveiled.

According to the public relations of the LSEZ, annual production of 5m tons of different petrochemical products has been set for the ultimate horizon of the zone. To this end, 400 hectares of land of this industrial center has been earmarked for construction of petrochemical centers in the zone.

With the consultations and talks of the CEO of Lamerd Special Economic Zone Eng. Fattahi and representative of towns of Lamerd and Mehr to Majlis Dr. Mousavi, two giant petrochemical projects, namely, Siglo Investment Company and Almas Negin Petrochemical Company with investment of 37,000b rials as well as \$180b, will create a great development in the field of economy and industry of the region in line with the national interests.

With establishment of these petrochemical industries, 500 people directly and 3500 indirectly will be active in the zone. Vicinity of LSEZ to the gas fields and port of Assalouyeh as well as to Parsian Port in Hormozgan Province is the valuable advantage for LSEZ and petrochemical activists.

Ban on iPhone 14 Cuts Iran's 6-Month Import Bill by \$1b

TEHRAN (PressTV) - An outright ban imposed by Iran on the imports of Apple's iPhone 14 models would cut the country's six-month import bill by at least \$1 billion, according to figures of a report published in the Iranian media.

The Thursday report by Tasnim News agency said that Iran had allocated some \$850 million to imports of iPhone 13 models in the six calendar months to late March 2022.

It said the figure could have increased by more than 15% this year given the price of the new models. Mobile phones are largely imported into Iran by

private companies who obtain hard currency at a government-controlled secondary exchange market.

Iran stopped registering new orders for imports of iPhone 14 models in mid-summer. The Iranian customs office said earlier this week that it had expanded the ban to cover imports by passengers and postal services as of February 29.

That comes as Iranian trade ministry authorities had indicated in December that limited mobile registry services would be available for iPhone 14 models imported by passengers and certain individuals.

Imports of iPhones made by US-based company Apple accounted for nearly 32% of Iran's \$4.4 billion worth of mobile phone imports in the year to March last year.

In remarks in September 2020, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had called for a ban on excessive imports of luxury products, including a certain phone model manufactured in the US, into Iran amid sanctions that had affected the country's financial resources.

Iraq Will Still Depend on Iran Energy, Trade Routes

TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian businessman has rejected media reports suggesting that Iraq will be able to end its reliance on gas imports from Iran by attracting investments from the United States as he insists that the Arab country is to continue to depend on

MAPNA Group, Bidboland Gas Power Plant Sign MoU on Cooperation IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – In the 🖡 second day of the fourth exhibition on support to domestic-made in the petrochemical industry,



MAPNA Group signed a MoU with Bidboland medium scale gas power plant to cooperate on provision and transport of required equipment of the power station with using MGT-40 gas turbines.

According to reports, the MoU, which was signed by the head of marketing and sales of MAPNA Group Mr Abolrahim Kazemi and the CEO of Persian Gulf Bidboland Gas Refining Company Mr. Mahmoud Aminnejad, is aimed at broadening joint cooperation between the two companies. The medium scale gas power station of Persian Gulf Bid-Boland Gas Refinery with the nominal capacity of 42 megawatts is located in the town of Behbahan in

Khuzestan Province. According to the details of the MoU, MAPNA Group is to provide equipment for the gas unit and some extra equipment of the power station in the engineering sector and to build 20 kilovolt post and expansion of the existing GIS post, as well as providing spare parts and special tools.

It is worth noting that the agreement has been

baskets of goods among the needy people in the underprivileged provinces concurrent with auspicious Mabaath (the day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was chosen by God as Prophet).Referring to the activities of the Abshare Atefeha International Charity NGO, director of the NGO Ms. Fatemeh Choupani said: "This group started its activities in Mashhad after obtaining a license from the Interior Ministry in 2010, and during this time, it has taken good measures in relation to eradicating poverty and deprivation."Referring to the goals of this group in the form of helping orphans, female breadwinners of households, creating employment and helping the disabled and reterans below 10%, she said: "After nearly 22 years since the establishment of this collection, 950 agencies and branches have been set up all over the country. 12,000 personnel work in this complex, all of whom are women."The director of the Eliminating Deprivation Headquarters in the south of the country pointed out that 1,320,000 benefactors are working with this group and continued: Payment of cash and non-cash aid, helping terminally ill patients is another part of the services of this group, in addition to the fact that 12,000 doctors also provide free medical services. Choupani added: On the eve of the Mabaath of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on Wednesday, February 15, 500 sets of dowries were distributed among the poor couples under the cover of this scheme and 5000 livelihood packages were also distributed in the underprivileged, adding that these donations were distributed in the poor areas of the province and it will be continued among the underprivileged and underprivileged people in underprivileged areas. She also acknowledged that the total value of dowry and basket of goods is more than 7 billion tomans and were donated to underprivileged and underprivileged people.Support of 1.32m Benefactors from

hedirector ofthe Eliminating Deprivation Headquarters in thesouthern country nnounced the distribution of dowryand donating

Country

High Ambition, Reputation of Muslims

and Shiites of Iran

thanked the benefactors of this foundation and stated that during the outbreak of the coronavirus, while the charity centers were facing economic problems and lack of financial resources, Abshare Atefeha Charity saw an increase in donations and added: : The foundation has tried to build trust. During these years, it has been a bridge between benefactors and the underprivileged."She then touched upon the monthly donations allocated by the charity to its undercover members, and said 11,000 households receive baskets of goods from Abshare Atefeha every month, and various people are among the benefactors of the charity, adding that these people are from Kamran Tafti, a TV and cinema actor who has personally visited the branches of the charity in different parts of the country, to a simple worker who work every month for the NGO without getting salary.She pointed out: "The Abshare Atefeha Charity, considering its mission, organizes monthly maneuvers, and Wednesday's maneuver was on the occasion of Mabaath of Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH).The director of the Eliminating Deprivation Headquarters of the Abshare Atefeha NGO in southern country said: This dowry and basket of goods were sent to the provinces of Kohkiloye and Boyer Ahmad, Bushehr, Lorestan, Khuzestan, Hormozgan and other deprived

Abshare Atefeha International Charity NGO Eliminating Deprivation HQ in the Southern

bshare Atefeha International Charity NGO

Choupani pointed to the support of the NGO and added: 450,000 of the mentioned people have been supported by this group after verification of their poverty, and by the way there are 1.3m people who are in the country and abroad who are supporting the programs of the NGO. The director of the Eliminating Deprivation Headquarters of the NGO in southern country stated: "Around 12,000 doctors have become members of this charity and provide free visit and surgery services to our dependents.

Monthly Support of Abshare Atefeha Charity From 11,000 Tehrani Households

The director of headquarters of southern country of the charity

provinces in the sould of the country."Honorable guests were presen in this maneuver, and an interview was prepared about them as follows:

The representative of Tehran, Ray, Shemiranat, Pardis and Islamshahr to Mailis announced i

n the Islamic Council: "We have about 40,000 jihadi groups, many of which are active in providing services in deprived areas, empowering women and creating employment."Zohre Elahian told IRNA reporter on the sidelines of a prophetic exercise in Shahr-e Aftab, in south of Tehran: "We have many people's organizations that are spontaneously and sincerely engaged in serving the disadvantaged."She added: "Many of the women who were covered by Abshare Atefeha are now self-employed and sometimes have up to 100 workers under their management. It puts under the radius and makes the mental health of the person and prevents many of the daily problems of the society."This member of the parliament stated "We support such jihadi works in the Majlis and we created a project called the non-governmental organization faction, which is the special task of this faction to support these people's jihadi organizations."Referring to the plans of the parliament and the government in order to solve the problems of the people, she pointed out: "For the first time, the president, the assistant of the government's popularization, has been determined that this issue shows the government's determination to s olve the problems." Elahian pointed out: "During the 44 years of the Islamic Revolution, wherever there was a problem, it was solved with the widespread participation of the people, and the people deserve to be provided with multiple services."The secretary of the faction of the deprived areas in Majlis announced the distribution of five thousand food and livelihood packages among the deprived in the south of the country.Saloomeh Zariah announced it on Wednesday on the sidelines of the prophetic maneuvers that was held in Tehran's Shahr-e Aftab.

Iran for energy and trade for years to come.

Hamid Hosseini, a former member of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, said on Wednesday that Iraq will need increased volumes of natural gas in the years to come to respond to rising demand for energy in its household and manufacturing sectors.

"We will remain an exporter of electricity and natural gas to Iraq for years to come," Hosseini told the ILNA news agency. He said, however, that Iraq may be able to increase its own gas production to respond to part of the demand for fuel in its power plants.

The comments came a day after Fuad Hussein, the Iraqi minister of foreign affairs, told Bloomberg Television that Iraq has had "good discussions" with US companies and officials about gas investments in the country to help it end reliance on imports from Iran. Iraq has secured rounds of waivers from US sanctions on Iran to be able to import gas from its western neighbor. The country also relies on Iran for a considerable part of its demand for electricity.

However, Hosseini said that Iraq will also need to rely on Iran for its trade demands in the future, adding that ports in the country will not be able to respond to a growing demand for imports of goods and products.

"Iraq has no option but to import 20-25 million tons of its demands either via the Iranian transit routes or through buying Iranian products," he said, adding that it would be impossible to imagine an Iraqi market without the presence of Iran as a main player.

No Change in Price of **Chemical Fertilizers** IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The public relations of Shiraz Petrochemicals Company says there will be no hike in the price of chemical fertilizers next.

prepared for a one-year term.



According to the statement of the public relations of Shiraz Petrochemicals Company, the price of chemical fertilizers for farmers is not to increase next year. It reiterated that misunderstanding about some articles of the next year budget has led to this assumption that the price of the chemical fertilizers is to increase next year for the farmers and it is wrong.

It reiterated that the price of urea fertilizer for farmers will not increase next year. The CEO of Ghadir Investment Company Dr. Maziar Hosseini said that farmers are unable to buy their fertilizers on the mercantile exchange and the rise in the price of urea will inflict damages on the farmers and therefore farmers are not to buy fertilizers directly from the mercantile exchange and the organization for supporting farmers will be in charge of providing fertilizers for farmers and it will supply required amount of urea to the farmers and this will be also an amendment to the approval of the government cabinet in 2020.

INTERNATIONAL

N. Korea Threatens Unprecedented Action Over Allied Military Drills

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea threatened to take "unprecedentedly constant, strong responses" if South Korea and the United States press ahead with planned military drills, accusing the allies of raising tensions in the region.

In a statement carried by state media KCNA, the North's foreign ministry also said it would consider additional military action if the U.N. Security Council, under the influence of the United States, continues to pressure Pyongyang. The statement came as South Korea and the United States gear up for annual military exercises as part of efforts to better counter North Korea's growing nuclear and missile threats. The allies will stage tabletop exercises in Washington next week aimed at improving operations of American nuclear assets and hold regular springtime Freedom Shield drills next month in South Korea, Seoul's defence ministry said on Friday.

Zelensky Calls for Speeding **Up Support for Ukraine**



MUNICH (Dispatches) - Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky urged world leaders today to speed up support at the opening of the Munich Security Conference, as European allies renewed vows to back Kyiv ahead of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion.

Western backers have delivered an array of weaponry to Ukraine since the outbreak of the war and pledged more, but Kyiv fears crucial supplies will arrive too slowly to defend against major new offensives.

"We need to hurry up," Zelensky told the start of the three-day gathering via video link. "We need speed --- speed of our agreements, speed of our delivery... speed of decisions to limit Russian potential".

There is no "alternative", as people's lives were on the line, he said.

The key annual conference comes just days ahead of the February 24 anniversary of Moscow sending its forces into the country, unleashing war in Europe for the first time in decades.

It is being attended by the leaders of France and Germany, as well as US Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, China's top diplomat Wang Yi and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg.

Russian delegates including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who was a regular attendee at Munich in the past, have not been invited.

Zelensky also insisted that there was "no alternative" to Ukraine triumphing in its fight against President

holds a presidential election.

Vladimir Putin's troops, and no choice but for Kyiv to eventually join the EU and NATO.

Speaking to the forum after Zelensky, French President Emmanuel Macron urged allies to "intensify our support" for Ukraine to aid its forces in launching a counter-offensive.

While insisting he did not want to see a drawn-out war, he said France was ready for a "prolonged conflict" and it was not the right time for dialogue with Moscow.

"We have a Russia which has chosen war, which has chosen to intensify the war, and which has chosen to go as far as committing war crimes and to attacking civilian

and much of the international LAGOS (Dispatches) - Police fired teargas to disperse because we only used teargas to disperse the crowd," community," said Martin. a senior police officer told AFP.

Martin told AFP.

He said the blockage on the road had been cleared to allow for "free flow" of traffic.

A transporter, Bawo Adegbenro, said unrest started when commercial bus drivers refused to accept the old 500 and 1,000 bills from commuters.

"Many people were stranded as they could not get a bus to their destination. This led to the riots in Ojota which the police have now quelled," he told AFP.

"I have packed my own bus in the garage until it is barricaded roads in unrest just days before Nigeria safe to work.' President Muhammadu Buhari in a Thursday

Similar protests broke out in the Agege, Ikotu, Iyana-Iba, Ipaja and Abule-Egba areas as angry

China Declares Decisive Victory Over COVID-19

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's top leaders declared a "decisive victory" over COVID-19, claiming the world's lowest fatality rate, although experts have questioned Beijing's data as the coronavirus tore across the country after largely being kept at bay for three years.

China abruptly ended its zero-COVID policy in early December, with 80% of its 1.4 billion population becoming infected, a prominent government scientist said last month.

Though there were widespread reports of packed hospital wards and mortuaries, China recorded only about 80,000 COVID deaths in hospitals in the two months after dropping its curbs.

Death Toll Rises Above 41,000 In Turkey, Syria Quake

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The death toll from the earthquake that has devastated parts of Turkey and Syria exceeded 41,000 as the United Nations appealed for \$1 billion to address a growing humanitarian crisis.

S. Africa's Navy Stages Exercises With China, Russia

CAPE TOWN (Disptches) - South Africa was Friday to embark on a 10-day

oint military exercise with Russia and China along its eastern coast coinciding

The controversial drills, dubbed "Mosi" meaning "smoke" in the local

Iswana language, are scheduled to take place between February 17 and 27 off

They are the second in a series of routine drills that Pretoria hosts with

However, the latest will coincide with the first anniversary of Russia's

invasion of Ukraine on February 24, with South African military sources

More than 350 members of South Africa's armed forces will take part in the

exercises "with an aim of sharing operational skills and knowledge" with

South Africa has refused to condemn the invasion of Ukraine which has

largely isolated Moscow on the international stage, saying it wants to stay

But the continental powerhouse has come under fire for hosting the joint drills.

According to Guy Martin, editor of an African magazine defenceWeb,

exercises such as these would ordinarily not be problematic but a useful

"However, politically the move is dubious, as it is tone deaf to the

situation in Ukraine and the harm it is doing to South Africa's other allies,'

He said the event could have been postponed or cancelled outright.

with the one year anniversary of the Kremlin's onslaught on Ukraine.

the port cities of Durban and Richards Bay.

aying the main event is slated for February 22.

Russia and China, the military said last month.

neutral and prefers dialogue to end the war.

foreign nations, including Russia.

experience for the local navy.

Eleven days after the quake - now one of the 10 deadliest in the past 100 years - Turkish rescuers pulled a 17-year-old girl and a woman in her 20s out of the rubble.

"She looked to be in good health. She opened and closed her eyes," coal miner Ali Akdogan said after participating in the rescue of Aleyna Olmez in Kahramanmaras, a city near the quake's epicentre.

But hopes of finding survivors have largely faded. Many in the affected zones are facing a dire emergency as they try to pick up the pieces in freezing conditions,

without food, water and toilets - raising the spectre of further disaster from diseases. The needs are enormous, people are suffering and there's no time to lose," said UN Secretary-General Antonio

'Continuing with the exercise shows

the South African government's

insensitivity to the people of Ukraine

Guterres in a statement, calling for funds to help the victims.

He said the contributions would provide humanitarian relief for three months to 5.2 million people.

The money would "allow aid organizations to rapidly scale up vital support," including in the areas of food security, protection, education, water and shelter, he added.

"I urge the international community to step up and fully fund this critical effort in response to one of the biggest natural disasters of our times."

Officials and medics said 38,044 people had died in Turkey and 3,688 in Syria from the February 6 tremor, bringing the confirmed total to 41,732.

The quake – in one of the world's most active earthquake zones - hit populated areas as many were asleep in houses that had not been built to resist such powerful ground vibrations.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pushed back hard against accusations that his government floundered in its response to the country's deadliest natural disaster of modern times.

Thai PM to Dissolve Parliament Before Term Ends Next Month

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha







infrastructures, he said.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz meanwhile insisted that German support was "designed to last", but took a veiled swipe at other allies over faltering efforts to deliver promised tanks to Ukraine.

Facing desperate pleas from Kviv. Berlin finally agreed in January to allow German-made, heavy Leopard tanks — widely used in Europe — to be sent Ukraine.

Berlin has vowed to send some of the most modern variety from its military stocks but is struggling to persuade allies to do the same.

"Those who can send such battle tanks should really do so now," Scholz told the conference, where he said he would be "intensively campaigning" to get allies to move on the issue.

It is a reversal of fortunes for Scholz, who up until last months facing accusations of foot-dragging over his reluctance to permit delivery of the tanks.

Under German law, Berlin must give permission for other countries that use the tanks to re-export them.

broadcast sought to ease the scarcity by allowing old 00 naira bills to circulate until April 10. Old 500 and 1,000 notes were no longer legal tender.

angry protesters in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos,

police and residents said, shutting businesses and blocking

Nigeria has been struggling with a shortage of hard

cash since the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) began

to swap old bills of the local naira currency for new,

re-designed ones, leading to a shortfall in banknotes.

The cash scarcity has triggered protests in major

cities as angry customers attacked banks and

roads to demonstrate against banknote scarcities.

On Friday, Lagos traders, markets, transporters and petrol stations started to reject the old notes, sparking riots in parts of the megalopolis of over 20 million people. At Ojota, close to the busy Mile 12 food market, a crowd of protesters gathered as early as 7am and set fire to used tyres to block the popular Ikorodu road. Many motorists were stranded.

Police were quickly deployed to clear crowds in the area, an epicentre for popular unrest.

"We deployed our men to the scene to prevent a breakdown of law and order. No one was injured



Protests Hit Lagos Over Cash Crisis

protesters barricaded roads and major streets with burning tyres, residents said.

Business owners were forced to close to avoid attacks and vandalisation.

The protests were the latest to hit Africa's most populous nation over the cash shortages, which are raising tensions before the February 25 ballot to elect the successor to Buhari.

The central bank said the currency policy was aimed at clearing up excess and counterfeit naira as well as discouraging cash ransom payments to kidnappers and bandits.

The policy was also introduced to promote cashless transactions by limiting the use of cash for businesses.

has "a date in mind" for when parliament will be dissolved, which he said will come before the government's term ends late next month.

He declined to disclose the date in his remarks to reporters, which was the first time Prayuth has said the house would be dissolved early. According to a timeline in the constitution, an election must be held by May at the latest.

The ballot could make for a grudge match for the premiership that pits two royalist former army chiefs against the billionaire Shinawatra family, whose elected governments the generals helped to overthrow in coups in 2006 and 2014

Prayuth, 68, has fared poorly in recent opinion polls against the Pheu Thai Party's Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the 36-year-old daughter of Thaksin Shinawatra and niece of Yingluck Shinawatra, both self-exiled former prime ministers.

He is expected to run also against his 77-year-old military mentor Prawit Wongsuwan, his deputy prime minister and veteran political kingmaker from the same royalist army regiment.

Early dissolution could be advantageous to Prayuth, who last month joined the new United Thai Nation party (UTN), as it would allow for more members to be recruited. Under election rules, early dissolution would reduce the minimum period of party membership for election candidates from 90 days to 30 days.

His party has much ground to gain and was sixth in an opinion poll conducted last month with support from just 4.8% of respondents. Pheu Thai was top with 23.4%.

Prayuth took power in a 2014 coup, promising his rule was only temporary. He served as prime minister of a junta and remained premier after a 2019 election.

GENERAL

IRAN NEWS

Moscow's Decades-Old Gas Ties With Europe Lie in Ruins

NOVY URENGOY (Dispatches) - Meticulously crafted over decades as a major revenue stream for the Kremlin, Moscow's gas trade with Europe is unlikely to recover from the ravages of military conflict.

After President Vladimir Putin's "special military operation" in Ukraine began almost a year ago, a combination of Western sanctions and Russia's decision to cut supplies to Europe drastically reduced the country's energy exports.

The latest sanctions, including price caps, are likely to disrupt oil trade further but it is easier to find new markets for crude and refined products than for gas.

Russia's gas trade with Europe has been based on thousands of miles of pipes beginning in Siberia and stretching to Germany and beyond. Until last year, they locked Western buyers into a long-term supply relationship.

"Of course, the loss of the European market is a very serious test for Russia in the gas aspect," Yury Shafranik, Russian fuel and energy minister from 1993 to 1996, told Reuters.

A former senior manager at Gazprom was more direct.

Current employees, however, say it is business as usual.

"Nothing has changed for us. We had a pay rise twice last year," a Gazprom's official, who is not authorised to speak to press, told Reuters in Novy Urengoy. The Arctic city is often referred to as Russia's "gas capital" because it was built to serve the biggest gas fields.

The state gas export giant Gazprom, which has offices there, was formed in the dying days of the Soviet Union in 1989 under the Ministry of Gas Industry, headed by Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Since the military operation began on Feb. 24 last year, less information has been available.

Like many Russian companies, Gazprom stopped disclosing details of its financial results.

According to Reuters' estimates, based on export fees and export volumes data, Gazprom's revenues from overseas sales were around \$3.4 billion in January down from \$6.3 billion in the same period last year.

The figures, combined with forecasts of exports and average gas prices, imply Gazprom's exporting revenues will almost halve this year, widening the \$25 billion budget deficit Russia posted in January.

Already, the company's natural gas exports last year almost halved to reach a post-Soviet low and the downward trend has continued this year.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen estimated Russia cut 80% of gas supplies to the EU in the eight months after the conflict began in Ukraine.

As a result, Russia supplied only around 7.5% of western Europe's gas needs by the end of last year, compared with around 40% in 2021.



Before the conflict, Russia had been confident of selling more to Europe, not less.

Elena Burmistrova, the head of Gazprom's exporting unit, told an industry event in Vienna in 2019 the company's record-high exports outside Soviet Union of more than 200 billion cubic metres (bcm) achieved in 2018 were the "new reality".

Last year, the total was just above 100 bcm.

Russia's transporting capacities were undermined last year after mysterious blasts in the Baltic Sea at the Nord Stream pipelines from Russia to Germany. Russia and the West blamed each other for the blasts. Pulitzer Prize-winning U.S. reporter Seymour Hersh in a blog said the United States was responsible, which the United States said was 'utterly false'.

Washington has long criticized Germany's policy of reliance on Russian energy, which until last year, Berlin had said was a means to improve relations.

For his part, Putin had been seeking to diversify Russia's gas markets long before last year, but the policy has gathered momentum.

In October, he mooted an idea of a gas hub in Turkey to divert the Russian gas flows from the Baltic Sea and North-West Europe.

Russia is also seeking to boost its pipeline gas sales to China, the world's largest energy consumer and top buyer of crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and coal.

Supplies began via the Power of Siberia Pipeline in late 2019 and Russia aims to raise the annual exports to around 38 bcm from 2025. Moscow also has an agreement with Beijing for another 10 bcm per year from a yet-to-be built pipeline from the Pacific island of Sakhalin, while Russia is also developing plans for Power of Siberia 2 from Western Siberia, which in theory could supply an additional 50 bcm per year to China. Whether that relationship can be as lucrative as the decades of supplying gas to Europe remains to be seen.

Gazprom's most important assets are located in West Siberia and in the wider Arctic Yamal region, where the 100,000-strong city of Novy Urengoy, which celebrates its 50th-anniversary in 2025, houses seasonal workers in utilitarian, high-rise blocks.

One of the fields in the tundra area, around 3,500 kilometres (2,175 miles) northeast of Moscow, where they work is Urengoy.

Following the discovery of the field, which is among the world's largest in 1966, the Soviet Politburo began talks with Western Germany on exchanging gas for pipes, as Russia then lacked production technology.

The resulting agreement, dubbed the "contract of the century" was finalised in 1970 after the then Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, nicknamed "Mr Nyet" in the West for his uncompromising approach, said "da" to the gas-for-pipes deal, which involved supplies of heavy equipment for Moscow as well as gas for Europe.

The 20-year supply deal is worth about \$30 billion in current gas prices. It meant that for decades, Europe and, especially Germany, benefited from relatively cheap, long-term contracts, and relied on Russian natural gas, or methane, for heating households and as a feedstock for the petrochemical industry.

The negotiations with China on new gas sales are expected to be complex, not least because China is not expected to need additional gas until after 2030, industry analysts said.

Russia also faces far more competition than in the past from renewable energy as the world seeks to limit the impact of climate change, as well as rival pipeline gas supplies to China, including from Turkmenistan.

LNG, which can be shipped anywhere in the world, has further reduced the need for pipeline gas.

Gazprom and China have kept their agreed gas price a secret. Ron Smith, analyst at Moscow-based BCS brokerage, expected the price for 2022 to average \$270 per 1,000 cubic metres, much lower than prices in Europe.

It is also below Gazprom's export price of \$700 per 1,000 cubic metres, expected by Russian Economy Ministry this year.

Last year, Russia's energy finances, which are not broken down publicly into oil and gas, were supported by the market impact of fears of shortage. In Europe, gas prices hit record levels and international oil prices shortly after the special military operation began spiked close to their all-time high.

Since then, prices for gas and oil have eased and Western price caps introduced in December and early this year are designed to erode Russia's revenues further.







INTERNATIONAL

Oil, Gas Industry Earned \$4 Trillion in 2022

OSLO (Dispatches) - The global oil and gas industry's profits in 2022 jumped to some \$4 trillion from an average of \$1.5 trillion in recent years, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Fatih Birol, said.

2 Despite those profits, countries depending on oil and gas revenue should prepare to reduce their reliance on petroleum as demand is going to fall in the longer term, Birol told a conference in Oslo while speaking via video link. "Especially the countries in the Middle East have to diversify their economies. In my view, the COP28 (climate summit)



could be an excellent milestone to change the destiny of the Middle East countries," Birol said. "You cannot anymore run a country whose economy is 90% reliant on oil and gas revenues because oil demand will go down," he added.



OPEC Raises 2023 Oil Demand Growth View, Points to Tighter Market

LONDON (Dispatches) - OPEC has raised its 2023 global oil demand growth forecast in its first upward revision for months, due to China's relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, and trimmed supply forecasts for Russia and other non-OPEC producers, pointing to a tighter market. Global oil demand will rise this year by 2.32 million barrels per day (bpd), or 2.3%, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said on Tuesday in a monthly report.

The projection is 100,000 bpd higher than last month's forecast.

A tighter supply and demand balance could support oil prices that have held relatively steady since December and stand at a little less than \$86 a barrel. OPEC had kept its 2023 demand growth forecast steady for the past two months after a series of downgrades as the economic outlook worsened.

"Key to oil demand growth in 2023 will be the return of China from its mandated mobility restrictions and the effect this will have on the country, the region and the world," OPEC said in the report.

"Concern hovers around the depth and pace of the country's economic recovery and the consequent impact on oil demand."

OPEC expects Chinese demand to grow by 590,000 bpd in 2023, up from last month's forecast of 510,000 bpd. China's oil consumption dropped for the first time in years in 2022, held back by its COVID containment measures.

The OPEC report was upbeat on economic prospects, nudging up its 2023 global growth forecast to 2.6% from 2.5%, though it said that a relative slowdown remained evident and cited high inflation and expected further increases to interest rates.

Other upside factors are the likelihood that the U.S. Federal Reserve will manage a soft landing for the U.S. economy and further commodity price weakness, OPEC said, although various potentially negative factors persist.

"Downside risks are apparent and may include further

geopolitical tensions in eastern Europe, China's ongoing domestic challenges amid the pandemic, and potential spillovers from China's still fragile real estate sector," OPEC said.

Oil was down more than \$1, moving towards \$85, after the report was released. The report also showed that OPEC's crude oil production fell in January

after the wider OPEC+ alliance pledged output cuts to support the market. For November last year, with prices weakening, OPEC+ agreed to a 2 million bpd reduction in its output target - the largest since

the early days of the pandemic in 2020. OPEC's share of the cut is 1.27 million bpd.

In the report, OPEC said its crude oil output in January fell by 49,000 bpd to 28.88 million bpd as declines in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran offset increases elsewhere.

OPEC also lowered its forecast of 2023 growth in supply from producers outside the group to 1.4 million bpd, from 1.5 million bpd last month, citing lower expectations from Russia and the United States.

— China Sanctions Lockheed Martin, Raytheon Over Taiwan Arms Sales –

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China put Lockheed Martin and a unit of Raytheon Technologies on an "unreliable entities list" over arms sales to Taiwan, banning them from imports and exports related to China in its latest sanctions against the U.S. companies.

The measures come amid heightened tensions after the U.S. military shot down what it says was a Chinese spy balloon, and a day after Beijing warned of "countermeasures against relevant U.S. entities that undermine China's sovereignty and security".

Lockheed Martin Corp and Raytheon Missile and Defense Corp, a subsidiary of Raytheon Technologies Corp, are prohibited from "engaging in import and export activities related to China," China's commerce ministry said in a statement.

Neither company sells defense products to China. Raytheon declined to comment. Raytheon Technologies sells its Pratt & Whitney aircraft engines, as well as landing gear and controls, to China's commercial aviation industry. Lockheed, which exports to more than 70 countries, said in a statement, "Foreign Military Sales are government-to-government transactions and we work closely with the U.S. government on any military sales to international customers. Lockheed Martin closely adheres to United States government policy with regard to conducting business with foreign governments."

Lockheed makes the F-22 Raptor fighter jet, which flew the mission to shoot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon off the coast of South Carolina, using the AIM-9X Sidewinder missile made by Raytheon.

Sri Lanka Hikes Power Prices by 66% Hoping to Gain IMF Support

COLOMBO (Dispatches) - Sri Lanka raised electricity prices by 66%, in a move the government hopes will persuade the International Monetary Fund to provide a bailout for its crisis stricken economy.

The increase, announced by Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera, comes after the government raised electricity prices by 75 percent last year, and adds to the pain of Sri Lankans already struggling with inflation above 54% year-on-year in January and income taxes as high as 36% percent. "We know that this will be hard on the public, especially the poor, but Sri Lanka is caught in a financial crisis and we have no choice but to move towards cost reflective pricing," Wijesekera told reporters.

"We hope that with this step Sri Lanka has moved closer to getting the IMF program." An official at the monopoly Ceylon Electricity

Board confirmed the scale of the price increase. The IMF agreed to loan Sri Lanka \$2.9 billion

in September to overcome its worst financial crisis in seven decades, but the deal comes with conditions that include raising taxes, removing subsidies and cutting public sector debt.

The government of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took over after mass

G20 Watchdog Homes in on Decentralized Finance After FTX Crash



LONDON (Dispatches) - The G20's Financial Stability Board (FSB) said it would take steps to tackle "vulnerabilities" and data gaps in decentralised finance (DeFi) highlighted by the collapse of cryptocurrency exchange FTX last year.

The fast-growing and unregulated DeFi segment offers trading, borrowing and lending in cryptocurrency assets by using public blockchains to record transactions, with no central control.

"The fact that crypto-assets underpinning much of DeFi lack inherent value and are highly volatile magnifies the impact of these vulnerabilities when they materialize, as recent incidents demonstrate," the FSB said in a report to ministers from the Group of 20 (G20) major economies meeting next week.

FSB member countries will now "proactively" analyse vulnerabilities from DeFi as part of regular monitoring of crypto markets, the report said.

"Potential policy responses may include, for example, regulatory and supervisory requirements concerning traditional financial institutions' direct exposures to DeFi," it said.

The collapse of FTX last November exposed vulnerabilities in intermediaries and DeFi, the report said.

"The full extent of the impacts of this failure, including on DeFi projects that were owned by FTX or depended on it for trading flows, will take time to become apparent given the lack of disclosure and transparency in these markets," the report said. The most worrying vulnerability in DeFi relates to "mismatches" in liquidity from different maturities in liabilities and assets, the report said.

Some DeFi arrangements may be "purposefully" cross-border to exploit gaps in supervision, hence the need for international coordination, it added.

Until the sharp retreat in bitcoin prices and the FTX crash, regulators had largely focused on cryptoassets rather than related technology.

The FSB said it would also study the tokenisation - or digital representation - of real assets which could increase links between crypto markets and DeFi with the wider financial system and economy.

Turkey Earthquake Could Result in Loss of Up to 1% of Country's GDP in 2023



LONDON (Dispatches) - The potential economic effects of the earthquake in Turkey could result in a loss of up to 1% of the country's gross domestic product this year, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said in a report published.

The bank added this is a "reasonable estimate" due

northern EU members, led by Germany, staunchly opposed any form of new common debt. Such a move had been backed by France and European Council President Charles Michel to help highly indebted countries raise the funds needed to transform their economies in the face of a vast subsidy program enacted by the United States. Common borrowing was first used by the EU to help countries pay for the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic but then, as now, countries such as Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Germany resented having to pay for poorer southern countries they see as lacking fiscal discipline.

Germany Dashes Hopes for New EU Common Borrowing

BERLIN (Dispatches) - Hopes for new joint European Union borrowing to support Europe's green industry were dashed as

"I don't see a need for new financial instruments, or, more precisely, any need for new common debt at the European level," German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said in Helsinki on Wednesday, at a panel on the future of EU finances.

The U.S. Inflation Reduction Act, with \$369 billion of subsidies largely for manufacturers based in North America, has put the EU on the defensive. European leaders fear the local content requirements may lure companies away from Europe.

"We need better quality public sector spending instead of more quantity," Lindner said, a reference to those proposing additional subsidies for the European green industry to level the playing field with the United States. "An excessive expansion of EU subsidies is not the right response," he said.

Finnish Finance Minister Annika Saarikko agreed, arguing there are sufficient funds available to EU countries with the bloc's 800-billion-euro (\$855 billion) pandemic recovery fund - dubbed 'Next Generation EU'.



"We have no need for additional EU funding," she said in a press conference with Lindner.

On Feb. 1, the European Commission presented its plan to strengthen Europe's position as a manufacturing hub for green products, partly in response to the U.S. subsidies, and opened the door to increased levels of state aid.

Smaller countries fear bigger countries will outspend them, with eleven members sending a letter to the Commission urging "great caution" in relaxing the bloc's state aid rules, saying that risked damaging competition.

As some countries have bigger fiscal capacity than others, some European leaders have returned to the idea of EU joint debt to help even the balance. protests against economic mismanagement ousted his predecessor last year, desperately needs the funds and has been courting multilateral agencies for support since taking office in July.

Wijesekera said the price increase would help the power ministry offset the gap caused by the cessation of government subsidies from January, and also help better manage long-term fuel contracts.

The government hopes to reduce tariffs by July, when it plans to revise prices again, he said. Analysts forecast the power price hike to further increase inflation.

"We are projecting inflation to increase slightly to 55.5% next month but overall inflation will continue downward given the high base effect from last year," said Dimantha Mathew, head of research, First Capital Holdings.

Inflation hit a record 73.7 percent in September last year.

"We can't bear these costs anymore," said Asela Sampath of the All Island Canteen Owners Association, a group that represents the restaurants sector frequented by middle to low-income Sri Lankans. "We ask for forgiveness from consumers, but we have no choice but to pass down these costs." to the expected boost from reconstruction efforts later this year, which will offset the negative impact to infrastructure and supply chains.

"The earthquake affected to a large extent agricultural areas and areas where there is light manufacturing, so spillovers to other sectors are limited," EBRD chief economist Beata Javorcik told Reuters.

Turkey and neighboring Syria have been rocked by a devastating earthquake on Feb. 6 which has killed more than 41,000 people and left millions in need of humanitarian aid, with many survivors having been left homeless in near-freezing winter temperatures.

Growth for Turkey, the single biggest recipient of EBRD funds, has been revised down to 3% from 3.5% in 2023, without considering the impact of the earthquake in the estimates.

The bank added that growing external financing requirements and political uncertainty associated with elections in 2023 create significant economic vulnerabilities.

Turkey's earthquake has thrown into disarray plans for elections to be held by June, sparking frantic debate within President Tayyip Erdogan's government and the opposition over a possible delay.

"As depreciation of the Turkish lira outpaced inflation since 2015, Turkey's exports have been growing fast, benefiting from lower costs expressed in US dollars," the report added.

Turkey's lira hit a fresh record low on Wednesday.

WORLD NEWS

IRAN NEWS 7

Iran, Russia Sign MoU On Sport Cooperation

TEHRAN (MNA) – Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports of Iran met with his Russian counterpart to sign an MoU on cooperation in various sports fields.

Hamid Sajjadi and Oleg Matytsin signed a MoU on cooperation in various sports fields.

Describing Iran-Russia MoU on developing sports cooperation as positive, Sajjadi stressed the necessity of implementing joint cooperation programs in various sports fields between the two states.

There is a long way to go in the sports fields, he said, expressing hope that they could pave the way through interactions and cooperation.



EU Gives Final Approval to 2035 Ban on Sales of New Fossil Fuel Cars

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - The European Parliament gave its final approval to a ban on new sales of carbon-emitting petrol and diesel cars by 2035, with a view to getting them off the continent's roads by mid-century.

European Union member states have already approved the legislation and will now formally nod it into law at an upcoming ministerial meeting, despite opposition from conservative MEPs, the parliament's biggest group.

Supporters of the bill had argued to that it would give European carmakers a clear timeframe in which to switch production to zero-emission electric vehicles, and spur investment to counter competition from China and the United States.

This, in turn, will also support the European Union's ambitious plan to become a "climate neutral" economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

"Let me remind you that between last year and the end of this year China will bring

80 models of electric cars to the international market," EU vice president Frans

Iran Enjoys World's Highest Steel Production Growth

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Islamic Republic of Iran currently has the highest growth in steel production in the world, Secretary of Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) Seyyed Rasoul Khalifeh Soltani said.

Saying that currently, Iran produces 28 million tons of steel per year, Soltani stressed that the steel production capacity in the country should reach 55 million tons within several years, which is accessible.

The annual growth of steel production in Iran is 8%, he told IRNA New Agency, adding that currently, about 15 steel projects are being implemented and built in the country, and with their exploitation, we will reach the actual production of 35 million tons within several years. While the global value of each ton of steel is \$600, up to \$75 to \$80 are spent to produce each ton in Iran, Soltani continued, stressing that the steel in Iran is very profitable.

"Very Good" Agreements Reached On Iran-China 25-Year Program

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Foreign Affairs confirmed that during President Raisi's state visit to China "very good agreements" were reached between the Presidents of the Republic of Iran and China regarding the removal of obstacles to the full implementation of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation program.

Hossein Amirabdollahian, referring to the visit of President Raisi and his delegation to China, said: "The opportunity to meet and talk with the President of China, Xi Jinping, helped to explore the various aspects of bilateral, regional and international cooperation between Iran and China at the level of senior and leading officials of the two countries. Iran's Foreign Minister stated that very good agreements were reached regarding the removal of obstacles for the full implementation of the comprehensive 25-year cooperation program between the two presidents of Iran and China.

"Fortunately, the relevant ministers and especially the economic team of the two governments held talks to implement this agreement," Amirabdollahian said. President Raisi who visited China on the official invitation of the President of China on Tuesday, arrived in Tehran Thursday morning after meeting with the President, Premier, and Chairman of the National People's Congress of China. In his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, the President of Iran stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to expand bilateral relations with the approach of mutual respect, and noted that the development of relations between Iran and China has been moving forward.

Tehran, Beijing Urge Closer Coordination To Help Sanctions Relief Negotiations

Timmermans warned MEPs.

"These are good cars. These are cars that will be more and more affordable, and we need to compete with that. We don't want to give up this essential industry to outsiders." But opponents argued that neither European industry nor many private motorists are ready for such a dramatic cut off in production of internal combustion engine vehicles -- and that hundreds of thousands of jobs are at risk.

"Our proposal is ... to let the market decide what technology is best to reach our goals," said MEP Jens Gieseke, a member of the centre-right European People's Party. Gieseke declared that arguments from Green and socialist MEPs that electric cars are cheaper to run had been rendered "null and void" by the crisis of soaring energy costs.

"In Germany 600,000 people work on ICE production, those jobs are at risk," he declared, urging the European Commission to rethink plans to also extend the ban to trucks and buses.

Chinese Wind, Solar Output Is Nearly Equal to Household Demand

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's wind and solar power generation has jumped in recent years to nearly equal domestic residential electricity consumption, but the relatively small share of household demand in overall consumption means that China still needs a lot of fossil fuels. In 2022, China's wind and solar power output surged by

In 2022, China's wind and solar power output surged by 21% to 1,190 terawatt-hours (TWh), according to data from the Chinese National Energy Administration (NEA) cited by Bloomberg. To compare, residential electricity demand last year rose by 14% to 1,340 TWh as people mostly stayed at home due to the zero-Covid policy.

Despite the surge in Chinese wind and solar power installations and generation, the Chinese industry accounts for around 60% of all electricity demand, according to Bloomberg's estimates. Residential demand, on the other hand, was just 17% of electricity consumption in 2020. Even with a surge in wind and solar, China will need more fossil fuel-powered electricity to keep its industry going and economic growth rising. China is speeding up the rollout of solar and wind capacity additions and it is likely that it will hit its 2030 renewable energy target earlier than planned, South China Morning Post reported last month. At least 30 Chinese provinces have unveiled more ambitious renewable installation programs.

Those provinces aim to add over 300 gigawatts (GW) of wind power and 550 GW of solar power capacity under the five-year plan. This would raise the provinces' total installed capacity to 1,500 GW, more than China's goal of 1,200 GW by 2030, Jin Boyang, a senior analyst at Refinitiv, told South China Morning Post.

China could even raise by 2025 or even sooner its national target for renewables installations through 2030, Jin said.

At the same time, China expects to add 70 GW of coal-fired power generation this year, up from 40 GW of capacity from coal installed in 2022, a report from the power sector's group, China Electricity Council, showed last month.

Minister Mocks Gathering of Infamous Oppositionists at U.S. University

TEHRAN (IFP) - Interior minister pokes fun at a gathering of eight infamous monarchist and separatist figures at Georgetown University, the U.S., in what was supposed to be a show of "unity" against the Islamic establishment in Iran. "Those who have become flag-bearers of oppositionists are in no position to [be able] to pose a danger to the

establishment and the country," said Ahmad Vahidi.

He referred to the presence of Reza Pahlavi, the son of Iran's last monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, among the participants, saying "One of them was an individual whose father and family brought about one of the worst and darkest eras in this country." Asked by reporters whether they will be dangerous for Iran, he replied, "They are actually nothing. They fabricate an event to earn money. They have been doing so for 44 years, and the latest one was a disgrace."

The eight figures held the gathering shortly after millions of Iranians held mass rallies countrywide to voice support for the Islamic establishment on the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which toppled the U.S.-sponsored Pahlavi regime. The large turnout comes months after the country was rocked by protests and riots against the government in the aftermath of the death of an Iranian woman in custody in mid-September.

Feb.11 Rallies...

FROM PAGE 1

He emphasized that liberation of the occupied Lebanese territories and the historic deal to end a long-running maritime border dispute with Israel in the gas-rich Mediterranean Sea were among the outstanding achievements notched up against the occupying Tel Aviv regime.

Nasrallah also paid tribute to the martyred Hezbollah commanders and fighters, stating that they remained steadfastly loyal to the Lebanese resistance movement despite all difficulties and hardship that they experienced. The Hezbollah chief went on cite a 2022 speech by

former U.S. president Barack Obama, in which he talked about controlling the public opinion of a country through misleading that nation, warning that the current Joe Biden administration is following the suit. Obama clarified in his speech that Washington would employ various tools in order to topple a certain government. It would relentlessly seek to drive the nation to despair and erode its confidence in the ruling government, Nasrallah said. "The dramatic surge in the dollar exchange rate and prices must be addressed. People's demands are perfectly legitimate. We should not accept any procrastination on the part of energy companies regarding launch of oil and gas exploration activities in the Mediterranean Sea off Lebanon's coast," he pointed out. The head of the religious council of Hezbollah resistance movement says the US is seeking to impose its favorable president upon Lebanon. "The US administration has been banking on rampant corruption ... of previous governments in Lebanon to advance its plots. We must set up initiatives and cooperate with each other in order to thwart schemes aimed at plunging Lebanon into chaos, and tampering with public opinion," he noted.

Nasrallah also urged various Lebanese political factions to put aside their differences and reach a consensus on the election of a new head of state to succeed former President Michel Aoun, whose term ended on October 31 last year.

"No one can impose a president on Lebanon and relevant efforts should be domestic. The US embassy in Beirut and some NGOs were seeking to install their favorable candidates as the new president. However, their project failed," the Hezbollah chief said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Hezbollah leader pointed to last week's devastating earthquake that rocked southern

Iran Offers \$40b...

FROM PAGE 1

Assadzadeh said that the finance scheme will come on top of a previous \$20-billion package which enabled Iran to access funds needed to build five petrochemical plants.

Iran and China signed multiple documents to expand their economic and energy cooperation during a threeday visit by Raisi to Beijing that ended on Thursday.

Meanwhile according to the statement of the Ministry of Commerce, China continued to be Iran's largest trading partner in 2022.

China has been maintaining its position as Iran's most important trade partner for 10 years in a row. Ministry in a statement to the press reported that the volume of trade relations between China and Iran reached 2022 billion dollars in 7, an increase of 15.8 percent compared to a year ago.

Reminding that the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ibrahim Raisi, visited China on February 14, the ministry announced that during the visit, both countries exchanged in-depth views on the development of economic and commercial relations between them and a number of positive results were reached.

"In the coming period, I will work with my Iranian counterpart to put into practice the consensus reached by both heads of state in the field of economy and trade, and to develop pragmatic cooperation in trade and other fields," it noted, adding that more highquality products will be imported from Iran and that the Belt and Road Initiative He stated that the cooperation on the construction will continue.

The statement also pointed out that they will strengthen multilateral cooperation between the two countries in different frameworks, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and inject a new breakthrough into the deepening of the China-Iran strategic partnership.

Iran Rejects UK... FROM PAGE 1

The authors had called for blacklisting the IRGC amid efforts by the US and Israeli lobbies to proscribe the official Iranian military force as a "terrorist organization." Early in February, The Times reported that the UK government had stopped plans to blacklist the IRGC, citing the Foreign Office's fears that the move would block the communications channels with Iran.

Citing sources in the government, the report said there are also concerns about how to blacklist the IRGC because, unlike other proscribed bodies, the Iranian force is an official government agency.

"Foreign Office officials have real concerns about proscription because they want to maintain access. The Home Office, and the government more broadly, supports the move. The IRGC should have been proscribed by now but the whole process is on ice," a Whitehall source said then.

Elsewhere, the Iranian diplomat rejected the accusations of Iran's drone delivery to Russia for use in the Ukraine war.

"On the accusation of selling Drones to Russia, Iran has asked time & again from Ukrainians to bring their evidence in a direct negotiation format in a third country and still stands for that. But no answer comes from the Ukrainians," he stressed.

"Iran is not a means for Ukraine for [drawing] more support from allies," the envoy stressed.

Iran Vows More Aid to... FROM PAGE 1

"The Syrian Arab Red Crescent has successfully completed

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Senior officials from Iran and China on Thursday underlined the need for both countries to work more closely to help the course of talks on putting an end to the sanctions on Tehran. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani and his Chinese counterpart Ma Zhaoxu met in Beijing on the sidelines of a visit to China by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. The two deputy foreign ministers highlighted the significant for all parties to adhere to their promises under a hard-won 2015 nuclear deal (known as JCPOA), noting that compliance with the talks has to be coupled with practical measures.

They also discussed issues of regional importance, as well as internationally significant issues, including the fight against terrorism and preventing the dominance of the Western narrative of human rights. Turkey and northwestern Syria, censuring the United States over being late in exempting Syria's quake aid from the Caesar Act sanctions.

"Washington abandoned people in Syria and left them to die due to its oppressive sanctions on Damascus," Nasrallah said.

The Hezbollah secretary general went on to describe the status quo across the Israeli-occupied lands as "critical and unprecedented," emphasizing that the farright Israeli administration led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is escalating tensions and pushing things toward a confrontation with Palestinians. Nasrallah said many Israeli historians have warned that the entity will cease to exist before the 80th anniversary of its 1948 creation. He highlighted that the Jews did not rule for more than eighty years throughout the Jewish history, noting the present Israeli regime is approaching the eighth decade of the entity's existence.

Iran Exports to...

FROM PAGE 1

As previously reported by Eurostat, the value of trade between Iran and the European Union had also increased by nine-percent in 2021 compared to 2020.

Iran exported €922 million worth of commodities to the union during January-December 2021 to register a 29-percent rise year on year.

Based on the Eurostat data, Europe's exports to Iran had also increased by five percent in the said year to stand at €3.941 billion.

Iran imported €3.745 billion worth of commodities from the European Union states in 2020, while exporting €713 million to the region.

Iran mainly exports foodstuff and livestock, beverages and tobacco, raw materials, mineral fuels, and vegetable oils to European countries, while foodstuff, beverages and tobacco, mineral fuels, vegetable oils, and chemicals are also the main products imported from the union.

the search and rescue operation and now it should start the phase of settling the victims. We are ready to provide you with our experiences in this regard," Kolivand said. Officials said on Friday that the death toll in Turkey now stands at 38,044, emphasizing, however, that the figure is expected to shoot up given some 264,000 apartments were lost in the quake and many people are still unaccounted for. In Syria, already shattered by more than a decade of war, authorities have reported more than 5,800 deaths. The toll has not changed for days.

Iran's embassy in Damascus said on Friday that the ninth batch of the Islamic Republic's humanitarian aid arrived in the quake-hit Syrian city of Aleppo on Thursday night.

An Iranian plane, which landed at Aleppo International Airport, carried foodstuff, medicine, powdered milk, and other sanitary and hygiene products.

Iran has pledged rescue and relief assistance to both Turkey and Syria immediately after the earthquakes. It also joined the international call to pressure the US to lift sanctions on Syria, saying they have obstructed the delivery of aid into the quake-hit areas.

In a telephone conversation with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric Egger on February 10, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the Islamic Republic is ready to immediately dispatch humanitarian aid convoys and rescue teams to Syria's northwestern province of Idlib as millions of people are in urgent need of food, shelter and warm clothes.



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Woods Back in Action at Riviera

OS ANGELES (Dispatches) - Former world number one Tiger Woods launched his first US PGA tournament bid in seven months as he teed off in Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club.

The 15-time major champion, who hasn't played a tour-level event since the British Open in July, has been limited the past two years by the severe leg injuries he suffered in a February 2021 car accident, and acknowledged this week his fitness remained an unknown factor.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard: (+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel: (+98)(21) 44253450 Editorial Board: 44253449 **Public Relations Fax:** (+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234 Website:

http://www.irannewsdaily.com

SPORTS

Former Spain Striker Llorente Retires at the Age of 37

ARIS (Dispatches) - Former Spain striker Fernando P Llorente announced his retirement on Thursday at the age of 37, ending an 18-year career during which he was part of the squad who won the 2010 World Cup and 2012 European Championship.

He played for clubs including Athletic Bilbao, Sevilla, Juventus, Tottenham Hotspur and Napoli, winning three Serie A titles, two Italian Cups and a Europa League.

8 IRAN NEWS

Antetokounmpo Injury **Scare as Bucks Roll to** 12th Straight Win

os Angeles (Dispatches) - Giannis Antetokounmpo suffered an injury scare as the Milwaukee Bucks cruised to a 12th straight victory with a 112-100 win over the Chicago Bulls.

Bucks superstar Antetokounmpo left the game in Chicago in the second quarter, shortly after suffering a heavy collision with the padded pillar behind the basket as he chased down a block

An initial injury report from the Bucks said the player had suffered a sprained right wrist. Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said the early reports of Antetokounmpo's injury were "hopeful." "The X-ray was clean. And he's got a sprain," Budenholzer said.

"I think we'll see how he feels tomorrow, see how he feels the next few days and continue to evaluate it.'

Antetokounmpo is due to captain the Eastern Conference line-up in Sunday's All-Star Game against the LeBron James-led Western Conference.

Antetokounmpo's injury took the shine off another polished performance by Milwaukee, who are second in the Eastern Conference behind leaders Boston with a 42-17 record.

With Antetokounmpo making an early exit, it was left to Milwaukee's Brook Lopez to provide the offensive thrust for the Bucks.

Lopez finished with 33 points, seven rebounds and two assists while Jevon Carter impressed with 22 points, six rebounds and six assists.

The defeat was another setback for Chicago.

The Bulls have now lost six straight games and have fallen outside the play-in places in the Eastern Conference at 26-33.

Kudermetova Stuns Gauff in Doha

DOHA (Dispatches) - Veronika Kudermetova upset the Doha Open seedings to beat American teenager Coco Gauff 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 and set up a semi-final with world number one Iga Swiatek.

Russian 25-year-old Kudermetova, ranked eighth, needed just over two hours to complete victory over the world number four.

If she is to reach a first WTA final since Istanbul last April, Kudermetova will have to get past a refreshed Swiatek.

The reigning French and US Open champion reached the last-four when last weekend's Abu Dhabi title winner Belinda Bencic withdrew from their quarter-final. Kudermetova, who will be playing in her second semi-final of the year, has not won a set from Swiatek in two previous encounters.

Polish star Swiatek hardly broke sweat in her opening match at the tournament, dropping just one game and needing only 53 minutes to

defeat Danielle Collins on Wednesday. Last season, Swiatek kicked off a 37-match

The Bulls offense was blunted by the injury absence of DeMar DeRozan, who also missed Wednesday's game against the Indiana Pacers with a thigh injury.

It is not clear if DeRozan will be fit to play in the All-Star game, where he is among the Eastern Conference reserves. In DeRozan's absence, Nikola Vucevic led the Bulls scoring, with 22 points and 16 rebounds, while Zach LaVine finished with 18 points.



Elsewhere, the Phoenix Suns' new superstar recruit Kevin Durant was courtside to watch as his team suffered a 116-107 home defeat to the Los Angeles Clippers.

Durant had been formally presented to fans in Phoenix at a news conference earlier Thursday, where he declared that the franchise was poised to end its long wait for an NBA championship.

"I think we got all the pieces to be successful," Durant said.

Those expectations were given a reality check, however, by a balanced Clippers offense that saw Paul George and Terance Mann score 26 points apiece.

Kawhi Leonard added 16 points while Ivica Zubac and Eric Gordon each finished with 13 points. Josh Okogie led Phoenix, scoring 24 points on a night where point guard Chris Paul was restricted to five points by the Clippers' defense.

The Clippers moved into the fourth spot in the Western Conference with a win that left them with a 33-28 record. The Suns are fifth at 32-28.

In the other game, the Washington Wizards staged a dramatic late fightback to stun the Minnesota Timberwolves 114-106 on the road.

The Wizards' Bradley Beal scored 30-plus points for the third time in four games, finishing with 35 points, six rebounds and five assists.

The Timberwolves led by 20 points in the first quarter and looked on course for victory after leading by 18 points with just over two minutes remaining in the third quarter.

But Washington outscored Minnesota 38-19 in the fourth quarter to take the lead for the first time and closed out a victory.

Anthony Edwards was the pick of the Minnesota offense with 34 points while Kyle Anderson added 18 and Rudy Gobert 17.



SUNDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2023

PARIS (Dispatches) - Mikaela Shiffrin put the split with her long-time coach behind her as she won a memorable seventh world title, storming to giant slalom glory at the World Ski Championships.

The US star, who parted company with Mike Day on Wednesday after seven incredibly successful years, clocked a combined total of 2min 07.13sec down the Roc de Fer piste in Meribel in bright, sunny conditions to claim her 13th world championship medal.

Italy's Federica Brignone took silver, at 0.12sec, with Norwegian Ragnhild Mowinckel rounding out the podium (+0.22). Shiffrin, the 2018 Olympic gold medallist in the GS who bagged a world super-G silver last week on the same slope, was perfectly poised after laying down the quickest run in the first leg.

While the 27-year-old only managed the 12th fastest second leg, it was enough to hold off a clutch of capable rivals, taking her to 13 career medals at the world championships, including seven titles (seven gold, three silver, three bronze). She has won at least one gold at every championships since 2013 and her 13 medals have come from just 16 career world championship races.

mner Gains Tsitsipas Revenge

 $R_{\mathrm{Sinner}\ \mathrm{stunned}\ \mathrm{top}\ \mathrm{seed}\ \mathrm{Stefanos}}^{\mathrm{OTTERDAM}\ (\mathrm{Dispatches})\ -\ \mathrm{Jannik}}$ Tsitsipas in straight sets to reach the Rotterdam ATP quarter-finals while ninthranked Holger Rune was knocked out by world number 160 Gijs Brouwer.

Italian 21-year-old Sinner, ranked 14 in the world and fresh from his Montpellier title last weekend, came through 6-4, 6-3.

It was only his second win over world number three Tsitsipas in seven meetings and avenged a five-set loss to the Greek player in the last-16 at the Australian Open last month. Sinner will face Swiss veteran and three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka for a place in the semi-finals.

Highly-regarded 19-year-old Rune was trailing American-born Dutchman Brouwer 6-4, 4-0 when he quit their second round tie.

Rune retired after a medical timeout failed to fix his physical problems.

Defending champion Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada eased past Gregoire Barrere to reach the last eight.

The 22-year-old from Montreal dispatched the last French player standing 6-4, 6-3 to set up a meeting with sixth seed Daniil Medvedev, who beat Botic van de Zandschulp 6-2, 6-2, saving all six break points he faced.

Number three seed Auger-Aliassime secured his place in the last eight on the back of a solid first service, firing nine aces.

Medvedev will be favourite to win their encounter having won all of his four meetings with the Canadian, with all but one going the distance.

Kounde Should



win streak in Doha, where she captured her first WTA 1000-level hard-court title.

Liverpool, Everton Charged by FA

Liverpool (Dispatches) -Liverpool and Everton have been charged by the Football Association (FA) following a "mass confrontation" between their players during Monday's Merseyside derby in the Premier League. The incident took place in the 86th minute of the match, which Liverpool won 2-0 at Anfield. Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and Liverpool defender Andy Robertson were both booked after a clash near the touchline before the incident escalated, with a number of players and substitutes from both teams getting involved.

"It's alleged that both clubs failed to ensure their players and/or benches failed to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion, and/or refrained from provocative behaviour," the FA said in a statement.

The clubs have until Feb. 20 to respond to the charges

A\$7.1b on Brisbane **Olympics Venues**

Australia to Spend

S YDNEY (Dispatches) - The Australian federal government and the Queensland state government said they would spend a combined A\$7.1 billion to build new venues and refurbish existing ones ahead of the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane.



The federal government will provide A\$2.5 billion for the development of Brisbane Arena, a proposed 17,000-seat sports venue, while the Queensland government will fund the A\$2.7 billion rebuild of the Gabba cricket ground.

Sixteen new or upgraded venues will receive A\$1.87 billion in co-funding on a 50/50 basis between the two governments, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Queensland state Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said during a joint media conference.

'This is nation-building. This event is a great event for Queensland but it's great for Australia as well." Albanese said.

Brisbane will become the third Australian city to host the Summer Olympics, after Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000.

Queensland already has 80 per cent of the venues needed for the games with the infrastructure expected to stay useful long after the games, Premier Palaszczuk said, adding the spending was about "changing the landscape of Brisbane".

Total cost for the games has been revised upwards to A\$7 billion from A\$5 billion but Palaszczuk said she will not seek any future funding from the International Olympic Committee.

The Brisbane Arena will host Olympic and Paralympic swimming, and water polo, completing the list of venues that will put 16 events within walking distance of each other, she said. Construction of the Brisbane Arena is planned to begin in 2027 and expected to finish by 2030.

Have Been Sent Off for **Rashford Challenge**

ONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said he could not understand why Barcelona's Jules Kounde was not sent off for his challenge on Marcus Rashford in their 2-2 Europa League draw on Thursday.

Marcos Alonso put the hosts ahead shortly after the break before Rashford and an own goal by Kounde gave United the lead in the knockout round first leg at Camp Nou. Raphinha then levelled for Barcelona when his cross eluded David de Gea.

Ten Hag was furious in the second half when Rashford went down under a challenge from last-man Kounde but referee Maurizio Mariani waved away claims for a foul and VAR backed the decision. Barcelona equalised soon after.

"I have to make the point that it's a big influence, not only on this game but on this round," Ten Hag told reporters. "You can discuss if it's in the box or outside, but definitely it's a red card.

"I asked the referee 'why' and he said 'it was outside the box and it was no foul'. The linesman and referee were in very good positions to see and we have VAR.

"It was a really bad decision and I can't understand."

Rashford said he was confused by the referee's decision.

"I don't understand why the referee thinks that I'm going down in that position," he said. "I've touched it past him and I'm one-on-one with the keeper. There's no gain for me to go down at all."

Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez said his side should have been awarded a penalty when Fred handled a Sergi Roberto effort with the score at 2-2.