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IRAN NEWS

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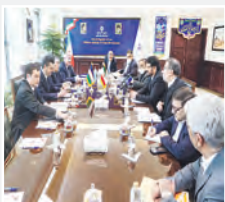
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Tehran-Riyadh Agreement to Influence Ties With Jordan, Kuwait

TEHRAN (MNA) – Referring to the resumption of diplomatic ties between Tehran and Riyadh through peaceful dialogue, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said this can positively impact Iran's relations with Jordan and Kuwait.

Addressing his weekly presser on Monday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman briefed reporters about Iran's foreign policy regarding the latest regional and international developments.

Iran has shown in practice that it has a firm and practical belief in diplomacy as the best way to resolve disputes and solve problems, and it has shown its adherence to this issue, Nasser Kanaani said.

Regarding the nuclear negotiations, Kanaani pointed out that the US government has a record of non-compliance and non-adherence to its obligations.

Tehran believes in the necessity of obtaining verifiable guarantees in order to ensure the adherence of the Armenian government to the new agreement, he also said.

The Iranian top diplomat also briefed reporters about the latest status of the Tehran-Riyadh agreement on the resumption of diplomatic ties.

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Lukashenko in Tehran to Bolster Iran-Belarus Ties



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN – Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and his delegation in their visit to Tehran yesterday signed the comprehensive cooperation roadmap and seven cooperation documents in various commercial, transportation, agricultural and cultural fields with their Iranian counterparts.

The Belarus minister on Monday met with President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi while his delegation was busy with signing agreements for boosting all-out bilateral ties.

In the meeting, President Raisi described the relations between Iran and Belarus as good and constructive in the past 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and emphasized the use of existing capacities to accelerate the strengthening of relations between the two countries.

He also said that the use of the capacity of regional treaties such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union is effective in increasing economic relations between the two countries and other independent countries.

Raisi also emphasized the implementation of the agreements between Iran and Belarus until the results are achieved and its economic benefits become tangible for the two nations.

Lukashenko, in turn, described Iran as one of the advanced countries in the field of civilization and economy, calling for more cooperation between the two countries in various fields of industry, agriculture, transportation and technology.

The President of Belarus also referred to the slow development of economic cooperation between Iran and Belarus in the past years and praised the acceleration of the development of relations between the two countries in the government of Raisi.

Speaking at the joint press conference with his Belarusian counterpart, Raisi said, "Good agreements were made in the field of industry, mining, trade, agriculture, roads and various fields, and we hope that it will be a step towards the development of the two countries."

The President said, "Today, after 30 years of friendly relations, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Belarus have designed a comprehensive road map for the development of their strategic relations in various fields, which will definitely lead to a different future."

Raisi added, "This roadmap, based on the conditions and capacities of Iran and Belarus, will clarify the path of the two countries for cooperation in political, economic and cultural fields."

In another part of his speech, the President stated, "Despite the threats and sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been able to take great steps towards progress and create opportunities for itself from the sanctions."

Raisi added, "Iran is ready to share its experiences in this regard with Belarus as a friendly country."

Referring to the valuable agreements between Iran and Belarus in various fields, especially in the fields of industry, mining, trade, agriculture and roads, the President expressed hope that the adherence and implementation of these agreements will strengthen the relations between the two countries and secure the interests of the two nations.

"In addition to bilateral relations, the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to improve its relations with Belarus within the framework of regional and extra-regional organizations, and in this regard, fruitful negotiations have been held between the two sides," he noted.

"We can have very good cooperation with each other by using the capacity of Shanghai and Eurasian Union organisations and develop these cooperation based on common positions and interests," Raisi said.

Referring to the fundamental measures taken by the 13th Administration to develop Tehran-Minsk relations, the President said, "In the past year and a half, fundamental steps have been taken to improve the level of cooperation between Iran and Belarus, and our commercial and economic conditions today cannot be compared to before."

Raisi pointed out, "Both countries are against unilateralism and we believe that effective and constructive communication between independent countries is the way to neutralize the sanctions and, considering the good capacities of these countries, become the basis for the progress of nations."

Lukashenko, for his part, pointed to his last visit to Iran in 2006 and said that no sanctions or pressures have been able to stop the Iranian nation from progressing, and it is a fact that an independent and strong Iran is continuing its path.

Referring to the signed memorandums of understanding between Iran and Belarus, Lukashenko noted that if all these MoUs will be implemented, the two countries can reach the \$100 million trade exchange. "The volume of trade between the two countries has tripled in 2022 compared to 2021."

The two countries have a similar view about international and regional issues, he added, saying that Tehran and Minsk want to build a better and homogeneous world.

He went on to say, "The two countries have very good scientific and technical achievements, and I think these initiatives and plans should reach the commercial stage in the future. Our cooperation with Iran continues in various fields, including humanitarian, and will be developed in the parliamentary field as well."

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CEO of Sokhan Gostar Institute in an Exclusive Interview

44 Years of Opportunity Have Burned

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - Mr. Hamid Reza Naghashian, the owner and the CEO of Sokhan Gostar Institute, publisher of two English and Persian dailies of IRAN NEWS and Sobh-e Eghtesad, despite his great role in the early days of the Islamic Revolution is less seen in the media and has decided to stay away from the state jobs and prefers to continue his activities in the cultural sector. There was a chance to encourage him for giving an interview with us and finally on March 2 we could seat with him at the office of Sokhan Gostar Institute for an exclusive warm and interesting interview.

The reporter of Sokhan Gostar Institute (publisher of Iran News English daily and Sobh-e Eghtesad Persian economic daily) talked with Mr. Naghashian in different fields which took four hours and actually its coverage in one issue of the newspaper is impossible and the whole interviews was decided to publish in two issues of Iran News and today the second part of the priceless experiences of his excellency will be presented to our readers on inside page.

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Oil Minister Unveils Plan to Issue \$6b Worth of Oil Bonds

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Oil Ministry has unveiled a plan to issue some \$6 billion worth of oil bonds in a first such move in the history of the country which would allow supply of oil to domestic customers.

The plan to issue Certificate of Deposit of Crude Oil and Condensates was unveiled on Sunday in a ceremony attended by Oil Minister Javad Owji and other senior officials in the Iranian capital Tehran.

CEO of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr said the state-run firm will offer bonds for two shipments of 36 million barrels of oil and condensates per year in the local energy exchange market.

"The physical supply of crude oil to domestic customers has become possible for a first time in the history of Iran's oil industry," said Khojasteh Mehr. He said the NIOC and Iran's finance ministry have worked for nearly a year on the joint project to issue certificates of deposit for crude oil.

A report by the official IRNA news agency said companies and legal entities can purchase a minimum amount of 1,000 barrels of oil through the newly-unveiled bonds, adding that buyers will have the option to receive physical oil or to sell their bonds in the secondary stock market in Iran.

The report said a second phase of the plan will allow individuals to buy oil bonds through stock market brokers.

Pakistan Trying to Implement Mechanism to Buy LPG Gas From Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Pakistan energy minister is visiting Iran while Islamabad is trying to implement a law that facilitates payment of the LPG gas that Pakistan imports from Iran.

Simultaneously with the visit of the Pakistani energy minister to Iran, a delegation of Iranian companies involved in gas distribution, refinery of gas derivatives, and petrochemical industries, including the Pasargad Oil Company and Iran Press Gas, are meeting with the managing director of Pakistan's state gas company which is responsible for provision of that country's southern Baluchistan and Sind provinces.

The managing director had also a simultaneous meeting with the Iran consul general in Karachi.

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Maldives to Resume Diplomatic Ties With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The government of the Republic of Maldives has announced that it will resume diplomatic ties with Iran days after Iran and Saudi Arabia reached a deal in China to restore their political ties.

According to a press release issued on Monday, the government of Maldives welcomed the Joint Trilateral Statement by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China last week which said Iran and Saudi Arabia will re-open their embassies and missions after seven years.

"In light of these positive and welcoming developments the Government of Maldives has decided to resume diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran," said the statement.

On March 10, Iran and Saudi Arabia released a statement in Beijing announcing they had reached an agreement to restore their ties.

Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran Ali Shamkhani had held talks with Saudi officials in Beijing as of March 6 to follow up on agreements reached on the issue during President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to China in late February.



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Enemies Waging Anti-Iran Cognitive War

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has censured the enemies' ongoing cognitive and media warfare against Iran on the pretext of supporting women's rights, asserting that the seditious plots are doomed to failure just like the past.

Peyman Jebelli made the remarks during the closing ceremony of the first edition of Sobh (Morning) Media Festival hosted by the IRIB World Service in Tehran. "The months-long cognitive warfare and seditions under a fake advocacy for

women's rights and status is part of the hybrid war against the country," Jebelli said.

He stressed the need to utilize available capacities in order to thwart the enemies' plots, noting that the rapprochement deal between Tehran and Riyadh as well as the Western parties' eagerness to finalize an agreement on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal clearly showed that Iran has emerged triumphant out of the hybrid war, and prompted world countries to pursue interaction with the country.

Iran, Uzbekistan Agree To Boost Transport Ties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Iran and Uzbekistan have reached an agreement on the implementation of a comprehensive roadmap for developing transportation ties in all fields.

The roadmap was discussed and agreed upon on Sunday in a meeting between Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash and a high-ranking Uzbek delegation led by Bakhtiyor Saidov, Uzbekistan's acting foreign affairs minister.

The meeting was also attended by Ilhom Mahkamov, the minister of transport of Uzbekistan. Speaking at the meeting, Bazrpash considered the transit sector as one of the important and strategic axes of cooperation between the two countries and said: "The cooperation opportunity and potentials between Iran and Uzbekistan in transportation and transit sectors is ready, and Iran is prepared to enhance ties in this field."

"The draft of the comprehensive transportation cooperation roadmap has been prepared and there are high potentials for Uzbekistan's participation and cooperation in Iran's southern and northern ports as well as the North-South corridor", added the Iranian minister.

Referring to the possibility of the maritime economy prosperity in the southern ports of Iran, Bazrpash noted that Uzbekistan's request to become a member of the Chabahar Agreement has been accepted.

Bakhtiyor Saidov, for his part, referred to the implementation of important agreements between the two countries since last year and added that the main focus of economic relations between Iran and Uzbekistan is transportation and logistics.

"Considering the facilities and interest of the two countries, the volume of cargo transportation between Iran and Uzbekistan can increase significantly", Saidov added.

Other issues raised in this meeting were the compilation of the designing of a roadmap in the field of passenger transport between the two countries, as well as the implementation of an agreement reached between the two sides in 1993 with some changes and amendments.

The facilitation of road and rail transportation by reducing tariffs and facilitating the conditions for the passage of drivers between the two countries was also discussed in the meeting.

In order to achieve better and faster results, it was decided that the two countries introduce plenipotentiary representatives to discuss the details of the negotiated topics.

Meanwhile in another meeting, Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafei held talks with his Uzbek



counterpart Vakhobov Davron Abdulolovich, during which he called for establishing a joint investment committee between the private sectors of the two countries.

"The joint investment committee of the two chambers, if formed, can conduct detailed studies on the suitable areas for investment and partnership in the two countries and provide the results to the businessmen and the private sectors of the two sides for new cooperation," Shafei explained.

Referring to the establishment of an Iran-Uzbekistan joint chamber of commerce in Iran, he continued: "I hope that a corresponding joint chamber will also be formed in Uzbekistan. Because it can have a tangible effect on the development of business relations between the two sides."

Emphasizing that one of the main problems in the development of economic relations between Iran and Uzbekistan is transportation issues, especially rail transportation, the ICCIMA head added: "Unfortunately, third countries play a role in this and create problems in the way of sending goods to Uzbekistan."

He further made some suggestions for increasing the level of commercial exchanges between the two countries and stated: "Providing some facilities, including bank guarantees for issuing technical and engineering services, which is one of the good fields of cooperation, can have an effect on increasing our economic exchanges."

The chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan for his part welcomed Shafei's remarks and suggestions and stated that by activating all the potentials of both sides, the volume of trade relations between the two countries can be multiplied.

"I am confident that with the efforts of the chambers of the two countries, we can increase the volume of trade between Iran and Uzbekistan by 20 to 30 percent this year," he added.

Tehran, Baghdad Agree On Establishing Joint Free Trade Zone

TEHRAN (MNA) - The deputy head of the Iranian Free Zones High Council said on Monday that Iran and Iraq have reached an agreement to form a joint free trade zone on the border of the two countries in the near future, IRNA reported.

According to Ahmad Jamali, the decision for establishing the mentioned zone was made during the two countries' fifth Joint Economic Committee meeting in Baghdad.

Underlining the fact that three of Iran's major free zones are located near the Iraqi border, Jamali noted that along with the joint zone, these four free trade zones can play a significant role in boosting the trade exchanges between the two countries.

The fifth session of the Iran-Iraq joint economic committee meeting kicked off on Sunday with the purpose of shoring up economic cooperation between the two countries.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Iranian Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi met with Iraqi Minister of Trade Atheer Daoud Al-Ghuraيري on Monday and discussed ways of expanding economic ties.

Speaking at the meeting, Khandouzi underlined the capacities of the two countries for developing trade and said: "The capacity of exchanges between Iran and Iraq is far beyond the numbers recorded in the joint trade between the two countries."

The Iran-Iraq Joint Economic Committee meeting is going to be wrapped up on March 14.

Iran's Neighborliness Policy Aims to Establish Regional Stability

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's chief nuclear negotiator and deputy foreign minister for political affairs says "mutual political trust" is the key to the success of Iran's neighborliness policy, which is aimed at regional peace and prosperity.

Speaking at a meeting with Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi in Muscat on Sunday, Ali Bagheri Kani cited the recent rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the result of Tehran's successful neighborliness policy.

Praising Oman's constructive role, the senior diplomat said, "The agreement between Riyadh and Tehran to start a new era of relations showed that the neighborliness policy is the administration's smart strategy to secure the country's national interests and advance foreign policy goals."

"The key to the success of Iran's neighborliness policy is mutual political trust. The purpose of this strategic policy is to establish stability and calm in the region and enhance economic cooperation in order to promote development in all countries and prosperity for all regional nations," added Bagheri Kani, who is also



Iran's lead negotiator in the talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

On Friday, following days of intensive talks in Beijing, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume their diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies seven years after relations were severed.

In a joint statement, Tehran and Riyadh

highlighted the need to respect each other's national sovereignty and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another.

They agreed to implement a security cooperation agreement signed in April 2001 and another accord reached in May 1998 to boost economic, commercial, investment, technical, scientific, cultural, sports, and youth affairs cooperation.

The top Omani diplomat, for his part, welcomed the Iran-Saudi deal, saying it will serve as a basis for strengthening the spirit of cooperation and greater interaction among regional states.

During the meeting, the two sides also exchanged views on bilateral and regional issues as well as regional negotiations to boost peace and security.

UN Envoy Hails Tehran-Riyadh Agreement as Positive Development for Region

TEHRAN (IP) - A special representative of the UN secretary-general has hailed the recent agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to resume bilateral ties as a positive development for the entire regional countries, especially Yemen.

Hans Grundberg arrived in Tehran at the head of a high-ranking delegation for consultations on the latest developments in Yemen.

Grundberg made the comment in a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Ali-Asghar Khaji on Sunday evening.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged viewpoints on the perspective of peace in Yemen and the exchange of POWs.

Khaji elaborated on the Islamic Republic of Iran's moves made for the removal of imposed sanctions against the war-stricken Yemeni nation, brokering a peace treaty and resolving the crisis there through political negotiations.

"A practical strategy to achieve those goals needs to be sought urgently, and the human catastrophe in Yemen needs to be improved as a top priority of the UN and the other players in the country," added Khaji.

For his part, Grundberg expressed satisfaction over the recently achieved Tehran-Riyadh political agreement to resume full diplomatic relations, saying, "This positive development has favorable aftermaths for the entire regional countries, especially for the war-stricken Yemeni nation."

Iran Mulling to Reopen Embassy in Tripoli

TEHRAN (IP) - Iran and Libya are mulling the reopening of the Iranian embassy in Tripoli.

The accredited ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Libya on Sunday consulted with the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on the reopening of the Iranian embassy in Tripoli.

Mohammad-Reza Raouf-Sheibani and Najla Al-Mangoush sought ways for strengthening bilateral ties, including the reopening of the Iranian mission in Tripoli.

The two sides also talked about making the required arrangements for the establishment of the Iran-Libya Joint Economic Committee as a means for further strengthening the bilateral ties, according to Aljazeera New Network.

The Iranian and Libyan diplomats also focused on the most important regional and international developments, including the re-establishment of Tehran-Riyadh relations.

Najla Al-Mangoush said that Libya hails the development as of great importance for the entire region and beyond.

HOSCO Wins 3-Star Statue For Customer Orientation Unit



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) was honored during the 3rd national top customer oriented unit award and received the three-star statue of the event.

The 3rd national top 100 customer oriented units award was held at IRIB conference hall in presence of officials and top companies in terms of sales and customer orientation.

Hormozgan Steel Company as one of the biggest producers of steel slabs in the country which has taken major share of the domestic and export markets for selling this strategic product won the three-star statue award in the event due to implementing the customer orientation policy for its staff and offering economic analysis for sales of products as well as creating various ways for paying the cost of products by customers.

Minister Hails Iran-Uzbekistan Business Opportunities

TEHRAN (IP) - Industry, Mine, and Trade Minister said that there are many business opportunities between Iran and Uzbekistan.

Reza Fatemi Amin made the remarks in a meeting with Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Bakhtiar Saidov.

The two sides discussed developing trade ties.

Stressing the fact that the tariffs affect the volume of trade between the two countries, Fatemi Amin called for defining a roadmap aiming to develop trade.

He pointed to high commercial capacities between Iran and Uzbekistan, saying: "If we can finalize the infrastructure, especially with regard to tariffs and the road map, it is expected that there will be a very significant growth in the economic relations."

He also invited Saidov to participate in the great exhibition of Iran's export capabilities, which is held at the Tehran International Exhibition, with the presence of ministers and trade delegations from more than 50 countries.

Balancing the trade balance between the two countries is also emphasized by Iran, he said adding that it can be done through joint investment between Iranian companies in Uzbekistan and vice versa.

Meanwhile, Saidov said: "We are interested in increasing trade exchanges to 100%, which we must do more to achieve."

In the meantime, we must find a solution that is beneficial to both parties and useful for both countries.

The most important issue is that there is political and economic will in every country to increase trade exchanges, and in this regard, Uzbekistan offers its full readiness to develop open and pragmatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, he stated.

Stock Exchange Welcomes Knowledge-Based Companies

TEHRAN (IP) - The President of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization announced the body's plans to facilitate the entry of knowledge-based companies into the stock exchange.

Majid Eshghi told reporters in a press brief on Monday that the knowledge-based company's entry to the stock exchange will be implemented in various fields, including companies in digital, economy, creativity, and innovation areas.

Stressing the Securities and Exchange Organization's improvement in stock market levels, Eshghi added that the required dealing infrastructure would be operational in the coming year so that the body would enjoy an indigenous stock market. Still, Eshghi said: "The development of investment funds is another measure that is on the new year's agenda to facilitate indirect investment in the stock market and reduce the shareholders' losses."

Exclusive Interview With Haj **Hamid Reza Naghashian**,
The CEO of Sokhan Gostar Institute

44 Years of Opportunity Have Burned

Mr. Haj Hamid Reza Naghashian, the owner and the CEO of Sokhan Gostar Institute, publisher of two English and Persian dailies of IRAN NEWS and Sobh-e Eghtesad, despite his great role in the early days of the Islamic Revolution is less seen in the media and has decided to stay away from the state jobs and prefers to continue his activities in the cultural sector. There was a chance to encourage him for giving an interview to us and finally on March 2 we could seat with him at the office of Sokhan Gostar Institute for an exclusive warm and interesting interview.

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PART II

I know culturalization, to some extent, because I know the tools for shaping beliefs in the mass media. Big powers like the U.S., Europe and China in the past and Russia have tried to align men with themselves through teaching lessons in accordance with their requirements. Recent investments in the cyber world bespeaks of this fact that they want to control the mindset of those people who have key role in presenting cultural output. I am more cultural than political and more cultural than being economic and to prove my being culture, I should say that I am a congregation man and since my childhood I have been a member of Saheb-ul Zamani Congregation of Tehran and have had role in running it and I have been, am and will be a press man. I am a book-reader, author, and poet with over 4000 lyrics. Pen plays the role of criticism and revival as it is known today as “informative”. I am a teacher because I have concerns on course to education; I am critic because I have experienced and tested opinion. If I want to have an abrupt answer to your question, I should say that I have been one hundred percent successful in my ten years of presence in the state jobs but in the private job for supporting the revolution and the establishment I have been 1000 percent successful. Most of my interest and enthusiasm has been shaped in the field of publication. I think it took very long but I think after going to the sidelines and margins I could answer to your question.

Reporter: Wonderful. Actually when you talk in the ups and downs of your sentences either when you set up for answers and either when you go straight to the point of the text, one is stupefied by your remarks. Yes. You answered to my question very precisely with broad dimensions. I want to raise this question why you did not stay in your state job and why you did not become a minister or Majlis deputy. You have such a broad vision for any job and you have distinguished capabilities. Was not it a pity not to pursue a heavy job and responsibility in the country?

Mr. Naghashian: Many people ask me this question and I have dodged answering them so far but I answer to you on this question. Why? Because I feel I have reached end of my life and I have only small share of seeing sunshine. In those years that I left my state job, I was very afflicted by sorrow. I wanted to yell and speak out my sorrows regarding what is going in the country but each time a hidden call in my soul shouted at me and asked me not to do and even it gave me an ultimatum to wait for a while and be patient. It told me your words would go nowhere and patience will prevail the truth. May God bless my father when he reached such a condition and he was surrounded with disgrace and darkness and there was no trust, he used to recount a story from the public bathroom events and drew conclusion that when everybody has hoof and you do not have, it is better to hide it from those who have hooves. During ten years of my presence in the state jobs and working with the government, I had seen a large number of British infiltrators and stipendiaries. And almost around 30 percent of them have been exposed and thrown out of their jobs and even been arrested and been imprisoned. How could I work with these people? Major part of these people lacked the power of recognizing this issue and I used to tell it to them with meaningful language but their diagnosis was that they know the distortions but what the solution was.

Infiltrators also advanced their goals by the help of immature people. It was difficult to tell it to the Late Imam (R) because my cognizance was an individual one but I had no firm documents and evidences for my claim. If I wanted to tell the intelligence forces, they themselves had hooves and I was forced to retreat and collect intelligence. In the very first year, I became certain that MirHossein Mousavi was a Freemason and actually major part of his cabinet, and for each of them I opened a case in my mind and the more I went ahead, the more my fear was being doubled. The Iraqi-imposed was misled and deviated by just these people and they pushed the intelligence service to the current condition and they were those who also destroyed the economy. They directed the Islamic Revolution to a point that everybody hated religion and resistance. If there were not the Velayat-e Faqih in the Constitution and the Supreme Leader had not been elected as the Leader and if the popular current of supporting him were not backing him, nothing from the religion and revolution had remained. In summing up of the yardstick and level of infiltration, I reached a serious analysis which today it is more tangible. I believe for getting revenge from the U.S. after their defeat in the oil movement in Iran in 1952, understanding the role of sacrifice and religion in the 15-Khordad 1962 uprising, the power of amount of influence and power of the clerics on the people, and realizing the inability of their trained seculars during the Constitution Revolution, the British started a long term project for attracting people from among the religious ones. They started attracting students abroad, students in the Islamic associations, and attracting political-religious people in the prisons and even they engineered Masoud Rajavi to become the leader of Mujahedin Khalq Organization. They took charge of directing students in the religious schools and took the control of the Hojjatieh current in schools. They even nourished and installed their lackeys in seminaries and intellectual currents, and even after the late Imam was taken to Najaf according to their project, the British-oriented clerics were placed around the late Imam. The main goal of the British was to retake the control of Iran, some project which had been planned during the Constitution Revolution era and in the confidential Saint Petersburg agreement with Russians in 1907 and later through killing half of Iranian nation through creating drought and food and medicine shortage during the World War One and later by bringing Vossug ed Dowleh to power in Iran as the prime minister and very heavy and colonialist 1919 agreement which had led to the national confrontation and now they wanted to materialize it through the confrontation of the clerics with the U.S. and Soviet Union. The volume of attracting people and making friends was so much that every reader or listener at first consider you a hardliner and then the power of your mind accuses the speaker and author more than the very issue of infiltration itself.

If I tell you that in the past 44 years more than 100 think tanks in Tehran and London have planned what kinds of plots and roadmaps and whom they have hired for implementing their plans, you will be dumbfounded. I should tell you that those people have inflicted huge costs on the country in these 44 years and all tried to eliminate



Velayat-e Faqih or weaken it and to control it and after the demise of Imam Khomeini (R), all of their plots against the Velayat-e Faqih failed due to the wise, brave and prudent leadership of Supreme Leader and the path of awakening people has toughened the work for them to fulfill their plots. I should, for the first time in my life, confess that the goal behind refraining from direct work in the previous governments was to expose this complicated and really complicated current. Actually I set up Sokhan Gostar Institute for this end, and this institute turned into a tool for deep cognition of infiltration current. Some of my early colleagues were of this type of people and every other day they had some interviews with BBC and I just watched patiently without saying anything. They disclosed the secrets of the people. I knew that the correct path of the revolution is sincerity and wiping off the impurities and revealing the treason of the mercenaries of the aliens against the revolution and the Islamic establishment. Today, I proudly spend to materialize the goals of the Re-Appearence. I consider the Islamic Revolution as the unedited photo of the Imam Mahdi (A)'s revolution and I believe the only way of saving the humanity is resistance and revealing the path of enemies and evils. Once again it took very long.

Reporter: I was stupefied by your answer. It means you had been monitoring the deviations of the traitors since 1989 and have hidden yourselves cleverly in the economic climate to prepare the ground gradually for the Imam Mahdi (A)'s intentions.

Mr. Naghashian: Yes. You got the point. I have gone exactly this path and I could not wash the dirt off the governments by the government's money. I needed to make money like before the Islamic Revolution to spend for the Re-Appearence; spend money for paving the road for the Re-Appearence and revealing the enemies' line. You see that today I run the Saheb-ul Zamani Congregation. Under the congregation some other structures have been formed. I decided to reduce my economic activities and to focus more on cultural works started and have pursued this goal since 2009. And since 1979, I have witnessed corruption, treason, infiltration and rounding the path which had been depicted by the late Imam, and on road to cognition I have carried out over 30 projects. Let me recount an interesting story which will make more tangible the issue of infiltration for you and your readers.

During the era of Forqan Group, one day Mr. Ahmad Khomeini (Son of the late Imam Khomeini) called me. He had an office in the IRIB's central building and when I got there, I found that I was not alone and Hojjatoleslam Seyed Mohammad Mousavi Khoeiniha was also there. It was just a couple of days after the seizure of the U.S. Spy Den (U.S. Embassy). It was December 1980 and I do not make a mistake in dealing with the date. Mr Ahmad asked me about collecting information on the Forqan Group and I explained for him and then he went directly to the main point. The issue was a box with the size of 70x50cm with 50cm height which was filled with papers. He asked me where I had learned English and I told him I learned it before the revolution and because of my need for talks with purchasers of carpets in the Tehran Bazaar and I had to talk with Danish and Swedish customers because of starting carpet business in the Bazaar. He knew me and counted on me. I opened the box and took two sheets with the emblems and letterheads of the U.S. Embassy and the papers explained that there had been a room in the embassy where Shapoor Reporter was considered as the economic advisor of U.S. Ambassador Sullivan. The Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line who had seized the embassy had asked Mousavi Khoeiniha what to do and they handed over a box full of papers and other personal items of Shapoor Reporter which had been discovered in the room.

Both Mr. Ahmad Khomeini and Mousavi Khoeiniha wondered why a British and MI6 element was working with the U.S. Embassy and what his mission was. I took the box to my office where I studied them thoroughly and it took almost two weeks and then I explained to Mr. Ahmad Khomeini my findings and handed over a 15-page report to him. The whole story was that Shapoor used to inform U.S. Ambassador Sullivan of all information and activities of people and their connections to the intelligence services and foreign companies and producers in Iran. On his list there were names of foreign companies from Russia, Japan, India, France, Italy, Britain, Germany and even from the U.S. In other words, foreign companies were the covers for intelligence operation or diplomacy. After Mr. Ahmad read the report immediately said that he knew the British controlled the Americans. This sentence was enough to show that these two gentlemen (Khomeini and Khoeiniha) were looking for discovering which current is in the spy den. And this discovery happened by me and in other words, even small businesses were run under the monitor of the British and if one was not a Freemasonry and he had no attachment to the British, he was not allowed to be representative of any company in the country.

For example, Ashraf Pahlavi had secret cooperation with Hinduja Company which was the representative of Mercedes Benz Company in Lichtenstein and she got 10% of profit for selling any Benz car and truck in Iran and through this cooperation all activities of Mercedes Benz Company was controlled in order not to exceed the macro policies defined by the British for national economy. Unfortunately after the revolution with the presence of the infiltrators we did not know this intelligence grandeur and economic influence of the British and we were unable to control it in order that economy can have a clean framework.

So I say that be sure that the path which has been depicted by the Supreme Leader is in this line that is first comprehensive cognition of the behind-the-scenes and then wait and see those who have turned their back to the revolution to go nowhere and the new siblings of the revolution will materialize the Re-Appearence and organize it, and today we are on the right track and if the current president, Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, shows more courage and reshuffle and strengthen his cabinet and gives more speed to his move, we will shorten the path. Inshallah.

Reporter: Mr. Haj Naghashian. I know that even if I seat and talk with you for ten hours and ask any question, I will face with astonishing untold answers that your chest and experience is filled with these words but I want to get permission to end this interview which was prolonged but I want to get your promise for seating with you for more talks in the future and to use your words about the past for finding the future path. I sincerely thank you for giving this chance to have this interview.

Mr. Naghashian: I also thank you for allocating your time for this interview and transcribing my long talks. I also wish you and your colleagues the best and wish you success. **END**

Five People Drown Off Turkey’s Southwestern Coast

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Five people have drowned in the Aegean Sea off Turkey’s southwestern coast after setting out on a rubber dinghy, apparently towards Greece, according to the Turkish coastguard.

The incident took place early on Saturday off the town of Didim, in waters of the Turkish province of Aydin, the coastguard said.

In a video released by the Turkish coastguard, refugees and migrants on board a grey inflatable dinghy are seen waving as they are buffeted by rough seas.

“Eleven migrants [10 adults, one child] were rescued... and the bodies of five were found,” the coastguard said in a statement on Saturday.



8 Dead, 7 Missing After Boat Capsizes Off San Diego Coast

SAN DIEGO (Dispatches) - At least eight people were killed when two suspected smuggling boats approached a San Diego beach and one capsized, and crews are searching for an estimated seven additional victims, authorities said.

A woman on one of the panga-style boats called 911 late Saturday to report that the other vessel had overturned in waves off Blacks Beach, according to U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Richard Brahm.

“The woman who called stated that the boat that overturned had 15 people on it, but that was just an estimate,” Brahm said.



French Senate Approves Macron’s Pension Plan Amid New Protests

PARIS (Dispatches) - The French Senate has approved President Emmanuel Macron’s unpopular pension reform plan as hundreds of thousands of protesters rallied in cities across the country to oppose the changes.

Senators voted late on Saturday to adopt the reforms by 195 votes to 112, bringing the package — whose key measure is raising the retirement age by two years to 64 — closer to becoming law.

“After hundreds of hours of discussions, the Senate adopted the pension reform plan. It is a key step to make a reform happen that will guarantee the future of our pension system,” Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne wrote on Twitter.

She added she was “totally committed to ensure the text will be definitively adopted in the coming days”.

Now that the Senate has adopted the bill, it will be reviewed by a joint committee of lower and upper house legislators, probably on Wednesday.

If the committee agrees on a text, a final vote in both chambers is likely to take place on Thursday. But the outcome of that still seems uncertain in the lower chamber, the National Assembly, where Macron’s party needs allies’ votes for a majority.

If the government fears it will not have enough votes in the lower house, it is still possible for it to push the text through without a parliamentary vote via a rarely used and highly controversial constitutional tool known as article 49:3.

The logo of the CGT trade union is seen behind hundreds of protesters in Paris, France. One sign, written in French and held up at the front reads “Where is social justice?”

Unions, which have fiercely opposed the measures, still hoped on Saturday to force Macron to back down, though the day’s protests against the reform were far smaller than some previous ones.

According to figures from the interior ministry, 368,000 demonstrators marched through various cities on Saturday. Authorities had expected up to a million people to take part after a record 1.28 million people rallied in the streets earlier in the week.

Tensions flared on Saturday evening, with Paris police saying they had made 32 arrests after some protesters threw objects at security forces, with rubbish bins burned and windows broken.

In a joint statement, the French unions, maintaining a rare show of unity since the protest movement was launched at the end of January, called on the government to organise a “citizens’ consultation” as soon as possible.

The unions said they plan to keep up the pressure with an additional day of nationwide strikes and protests planned for Wednesday.

“This is the final stretch,” Marylise Leon, deputy leader of the CFDT union, told the broadcaster Franceinfo. “A lot of things can still happen next week,” she said. “Will the text be voted in the National Assembly? We have to rally. It’s now or never.”

Opinion polls show a majority of voters oppose Macron’s plan, while a slim majority supports the strike actions. Most people, however, said they believe the president would end up getting the reform adopted.

The government insists the reform plan is essential to ensure the French pension system does not run out of money, but many see the changes, such as raising the retirement age, as unfair to people who started working young.

“I’m here to fight for my colleagues and for our young people,” said Claude Jeanvoine, 63, a retired train driver demonstrating in Strasbourg, in eastern France.

“People shouldn’t let the government get away with this, this is about the future of their children and grandchildren,” he told the AFP news agency.

Rubbish bins set on fire as French unions rally against pensions reforms in Paris, France.



Moldova Police Say They Foiled Russia-Backed Unrest Plot

CHISINAU (Dispatches) - Moldovan police said they have foiled a plot by groups of Russia-backed actors who were specially trained to cause mass unrest during a protest the same day in the capital against the country’s new pro-Western government.

The head of Moldova’s police, Viorel Cernauteanu, said in a news conference that an undercover agent had infiltrated groups of “diversionists,” some Russian citizens, who had been promised \$10,000 to organize “mass disorder” to destabilize Moldova during a protest in the capital, Chisinau. Seven people were detained, he said.

Separately, police said they arrested 54 protesters on Sunday, including 21 minors, who exhibited “questionable behavior” or were found to be carrying prohibited items, including at least one knife.

The protest Sunday is one of several held in recent weeks organized by a group calling itself Movement for the People, which is backed by Moldova’s Russia-friendly Shor Party, which holds six seats in the country’s 101-seat legislature.

The demonstrators are demanding that the government fully cover the costs of winter energy bills and to “not involve the country in war.”

They have repeatedly called on President Maia Sandu to step down.

Police said that four bomb threats on Sunday, including one at the capital’s international airport, had been registered, which they called “an ongoing part of the destabilization measures” against Moldova, a former Soviet republic with a population of about 2.6 million.

Moldova’s border police also said Sunday that 182 foreign nationals in the last week have been denied entry into Moldova, including a “possible representative” of Russia’s Wagner Group, the private military company that is fighting in Ukraine, Moldova’s war-torn neighbor.

The police announcement Sunday comes just days after U.S. intelligence officials said they have determined that actors with ties to Russian intelligence are planning to use protests in Moldova, a European Union candidate since last June, as a basis to foment an insurrection against the country’s government.



History Will Hold Trump Accountable for Capitol Attack

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - History will hold former U.S. President Donald Trump “accountable” for his role in the 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, his former deputy Mike Pence said, offering his most forceful rebuke to date of his former boss.

“President Trump was wrong,” Pence said in a speech at the annual Gridiron Dinner in Washington, DC, on Saturday.

“I had no right to overturn the election. And his reckless words endangered my family and everyone at the Capitol that day. And I know that history will hold Donald Trump accountable.”

The remarks are likely to widen the rift between the former running mates, who have been at loggerheads ever since Pence refused to go along with Trump’s efforts to overturn the 2020 election results and remain in power.

Some of the thousands who stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, called for Pence to be hanged, forcing him to rush to a safe location.

Pence was in the Capitol when Trump supporters breached the building in an attempt to stop Congress from certifying the results of the election where Trump lost to Joe Biden.

As the vice president has the constitutional role of Senate president, Pence was presiding over what had always been the ceremonial task of approving the votes of the Electoral College to select the president and vice president.

Trump has already declared his intention to seek a new term as president in the 2024 elections, and Pence indicated he might challenge him for the Republican nomination.

Pence rarely addressed the incident in the following months but has now upped his criticism of the rioters and the behavior of his former boss that day.

He has sharply criticized Trump’s conduct in recent media interviews. In a memoir released in November, he accused Trump of endangering his family.

Thousands Rally in New Greece Protests Over Train Crash

ATHENS (Dispatches) - Thousands of people have rallied in central Athens to protest over Greece’s deadliest rail disaster, which killed dozens of people last month.

The demonstrators expressed anger over safety deficiencies in Greece’s railway network and demanded punishment for those responsible for the head-on collision between a passenger train and a freight train that killed 57 people on February 28. Police said that more than 8,000 people in Athens gathered outside Parliament to protest.

Protesters flooded Athens’s Syntagma Square, waving banners that read “We won’t forget, we won’t forgive” and “We will become the voice of all the dead”.

“It was anger and rage that brought me here,” Markella, a 65-year-old Athens protester who gave only one name, told the AFP news agency.

Another demonstrator, 26-year-old Alexandros, added: “We’re getting desperate. You don’t know what to say, what to do – all you can do is join the protest.”

The protesters later marched to the offices of privatised train operator Hellenic Train. The company, which has been owned by Italy’s Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane since 2017, isn’t responsible for the maintenance of the railway network. State-owned Hellenic Railways is in charge of upkeep.

Reporting from Athens, Al Jazeera’s John Psaropoulos said “the message on the street today ... was one of scepticism and confrontation towards the government”.

Authorities shut down four metro stations on two lines running through central Athens because of the protest.

The rally was organised by civil servants, a pro-communist union and university students.

In Thessaloniki, Greece’s second-largest city, about 5,000 people demonstrated.

The rallies, which passed off without serious incident, weren’t as well-attended as similar events earlier in the week, when more than 30,000 had turned out in Athens and more than 20,000 in Thessaloniki.

A memorial service was conducted for 12 students of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece’s largest university, who were killed in the train crash.

A stationmaster accused of placing the trains on the same track has been charged with negligent homicide and other offences, and the country’s transportation minister and senior railway officials resigned the day after the crash.

Public and private sector employees are expected to walk out again on Thursday.

Revelations of serious safety gaps on Greece’s busiest rail line have put the centre-right government of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on the defensive. He has pledged the government’s full cooperation with a judicial inquiry into the crash.



U.S. Not Negotiating New Venezuela Prisoner Swap Despite Appeal

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States is not discussing a prisoner exchange as described in a letter and video appeal addressed to President Joe Biden by an American detained in Venezuela, according to two U.S. officials.

Eyvin Hernandez was “quite possibly coerced” into appealing to Biden to swap him and seven other U.S. detainees for Alex Saab, a Colombian-born businessman facing trial in Miami, said one of the U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Hernandez, a 35-year-old Los Angeles public defender, sent the letter and video to Biden in February.

“I’m making this appeal to you on behalf of myself, my family, my friends, and all the other U.S. Americans that are here, unlawfully detained in Venezuela,” Hernandez said in the video, which was reviewed by Reuters and is being reported for the first time. “We know that we will be released if you make a trade for Alex Saab for all of us.”

His letter, also reviewed by Reuters, was previously reported by Newsweek.

The Venezuelan Ministry of Information did not respond to questions about whether a prisoner swap was being considered, or whether Hernandez was coerced into making his appeal.

In the video, Hernandez says swapping him and the other detainees for Saab, a long-time ally of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, would be the “only way” they could be freed.

Saab is charged with siphoning around \$350 million out of Venezuela through the U.S. in a bribery scheme linked to Venezuela’s state-controlled exchange rate. He denies the allegation. No date has been set for his trial.

Declining to comment on the specifics of any ongoing case, a U.S. State Department spokesperson appeared to indicate that talks on a prisoner swap involving Saab might be possible after his trial ran its course.

The spokesperson cautioned against any reporting that suggested a deal had been reached to secure the release of an American wrongfully detained in Venezuela, “or that there are active conversations about releasing a major U.S. criminal suspect who hasn’t even gone to trial.”

The first U.S. official also said no negotiations were underway.



Ukraine, Russia Say Hundreds of Enemy Troops Killed in Battle for Bakhmut

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine and Russia claimed that hundreds of enemy troops were killed over the previous 24 hours in the fight for Bakhmut, with Kyiv fending off unabating attacks and a small river that bisects the town now marking the new front line.

Serhiy Cherevatyi, a Ukrainian military spokesperson, said that 221 pro-Moscow troops were killed and more than 300 wounded in Bakhmut. Russia’s defense ministry said that up to 210 Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the broader Donetsk part of the frontline.

While Moscow did not specify Bakhmut casualties, the eastern Donetsk town, now nearly deserted, has been the site of one of the bloodiest and longest battles of the year-long war.

UN Makes Major Breakthrough to Prevent Yemen Oil Spill Disaster

GENEVA (Dispatches) - The United Nations has bought a ship to remove oil and avoid a potentially catastrophic spill from a tanker decaying for years off the coast of war-ravaged Yemen, officials said.

In an unusual step for a UN agency, the UN Development Program said it signed a contract to purchase a crude carrier from major tanker company Euronav that will head to Yemen to remove the oil from the beleaguered FSO Safer.

The 47-year-old ship has not been serviced since Yemen's devastating civil war broke out in 2015 and was left abandoned off the rebel-held port of Hodeida, a critical gateway for shipments into the country heavily dependent on emergency foreign aid.

UNDP chief Achim Steiner called the deal a "major breakthrough."

The effort will "avoid the risk of an environmental and humanitarian disaster on a massive scale," he told reporters at the UN headquarters.

Steiner said the vessel would sail within the next month after routine maintenance underway in China.

"We hope, if all things go according to plan, that the operation of the ship-to-ship transfer would actually commence in early May," he said.

UN officials have voiced fears that the ship would crumble, unleashing an oil spill that would severely impair foreign aid and cost some \$20 billion to clean up.

The Safer contains 1.1 million barrels of oil -- four times as much as that spilled in the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster, one of the world's worst ecological catastrophes, according to the UN.

An ecological disaster could also clog the Bab al-Mandab strait between Africa and the Arabian peninsula, taking a major toll on the global economy by holding up the Suez Canal.

The United Nations had been searching for years for a solution and appealed for a ship donation or a lease.

It finally decided to buy the ship, described as the only one available on the market, after failing to find another option, with prices in the shipping industry spiking in the past year due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We had no choice, frankly, but to buy a vessel," David Gressly, who coordinates UN humanitarian relief in Yemen, said by video-link from Aden.

"The fact that we have gotten to this step is already bringing a sense of relief here in Yemen," he said.

The salvage operation is estimated to cost \$129 million of which \$75 million has been received and another \$20 million has been pledged, according to the United Nations.

Steiner warned that the United Nations could still suspend the operation if it does not find the remaining funds.

"I do have to say it does surprise me that I have to sit in front of you here today," he said, "still begging for these funds."

The United States, which has contributed \$10 million, welcomed the UN announcement and called on other nations as well as private donors to fill the funding gap.

"It is critical that we close this funding gap now so that the UN can complete the emergency operation as quickly as possible," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

Steiner described the plan as carrying "very significant risks" and going beyond the usual activities of the UNDP.

He said that the United Nations was also still figuring out where the oil would go.

"Let me be very clear -- this is a risky operation and things could go wrong," Steiner said.



Children Take the Floor at UN to Call for Digital Access, Safety

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Mariana has made the long journey from the rural mountains of southern Colombia to the United Nations in Geneva to denounce digital inequity and online dangers facing children like her.

"If technology and the internet are part of everyday life for people around the world, why... is this right still not accessible for all children?" the 12-year-old demanded.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Council, she highlighted statistics showing fewer than a third of households in rural Colombia have internet access at home.

Flanked by children from Ethiopia and Malaysia, as well as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk, Mariana was taking part in a UN discussion on child rights in the digital environment.

The child participants' full names were not given.

Marking a first at the UN rights council, a majority of the panelists at Friday's session were minors.

Children also replaced some ambassadors to voice the stance of their countries from the floor, demanding universal internet access and protection for minors in digital environments.

Turk stressed the importance of hearing from children directly about their insights into the digital world.

"When I was a child, I could barely have imagined the world you live in today," the 57-year-old Austrian said, pointing to the "instantaneous connection with others, the knowledge and learning you have at your fingertips."

"We have seen first-hand the promise of technology, but we know that the rapid rate of progress is not without risk."

Like Mariana, Turk condemned the digital divide which he said meant "a staggering 2.2 billion children and young people under 25 around the globe still do not have access to the internet at home."

"They are left behind," he warned, stressing that "it may be time to reinforce universal access to the internet as a human right, and not just as a privilege."

Turk and the child panelists also voiced alarm at the dangers and pressures that children who can access the internet encounter online.

Nidhi, a 14-year-old podcaster from Malaysia, said that a third of online users worldwide were children but often "they don't even know how to use online tools safely or preserve their personal information, which makes them extremely vulnerable."

The situation is "alarming", she said, highlighting estimates that 72 million pieces of personal data on average are collected on every child worldwide before they turn 13.

Calling overzealous data collection practices "unethical and a violation of children's online space," she also slammed how inappropriate content is often pushed on youngsters.

"I distinctly remember when I was about nine years old, how scared I was when I saw a scary image while exploring a game on the internet," she told the council, calling for more safeguards.

Kidus, a 17-year-old from Ethiopia who serves as speaker of the country's Child Parliament, warned that digital technology "poses serious challenges affecting (children's) well-being and rights."

When online, he said, children are often exposed to things like pornography, disinformation and pressure to "engage in unlawful or harmful activities like joining armed groups".

Minors in digital environments can also be vulnerable to not only cyberbullying but also sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking, he added.

"I implore all of you to take all legislative and administrative measures to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation on the digital environment," he told the council.



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Russia Uses Ship-To-Ship Transfers to Boost Diesel Exports to Saudi Arabia

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia is accelerating its exports of diesel to Saudi Arabia by both direct shipments and ship-to-ship transfers, Reuters reported on Friday, quoting trade sources and shipping data from Refinitiv.

Using STS loadings, Russia is shortening the routes for tankers headed to Africa and Asia after Moscow is now banned from exporting fuels to the EU.

Two cargoes of diesel loaded in the Primorsk port on the Baltic Sea in Russia have been transferred on another tanker heading to Saudi Arabia's port of Ras Tanura, per shipping data from

Refinitiv cited by Reuters. The data also showed that another cargo loaded from the Black Sea port of Tuapse used ship-to-ship loading to another tanker that had already discharged the fuel at the Jizan port in Saudi Arabia. Both STS loadings took place near the Greek port of Kalamata, according to Refinitiv's data.

Russia started exporting diesel to Saudi Arabia—its ally in the OPEC+ group—in February, after Moscow's key fuel export outlet, the EU, enacted an embargo on seaborne imports of Russian oil products on February 5, Reuters reported earlier this week, quoting traders and ship-tracking data.



Kazakhstan Faces Political Pressure To Diversify Its Oil Export Routes

ASTANA (Dispatches) - Kazakhstan is upbeat about boosting oil exports, despite caveats over how the war in Ukraine may impact markets and questions about its recently launched shipments to Europe.

Kazakhstan plans to increase oil supplies via its main export pipeline to Russia by over a third by the end of next year, Energy Minister Bolat Akchulakov said during an industry conference in Texas.

That is fighting talk, given the troubles that have beset the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, whose supplies were halted four times last year.

Official explanations for the disruptions have not convinced skeptics, who believe Moscow is using the CPC as political leverage over Kazakhstan to coerce it (unsuccessfully) to support Russia's war in Ukraine.

Astana aims to increase exports through the pipeline, which carries about 1 percent of global oil, to 60 million metric tons this year, Akchulakov said during the CERAWEEK energy conference in Houston. That would be a rise of 15 percent on the 52.2 million metric tons it shipped last year. Next year, it intends to ramp up exports by another 20 percent to 72 million metric tons. If successful, that would amount to a 38 percent rise over two years.

This is possible after an expansion on Kazakhstan's section of the CPC pipeline, completed in January, increased its capacity from the current 53.7 million metric tons to 72.5 million.

Kazakhstan is heavily dependent on the CPC, which carries four-fifths of its oil exports. Russia is not: Kazakh oil accounted for 88 percent of the CPC's shipments in 2022.

Kazakh supplies through the CPC were down 1 percent in 2022, owing to pipeline disruptions, but still accounted for 81 percent of Kazakhstan's exports of 64.3 million metric tons.

Pipelines to Russia carried 94 percent of Kazakh oil, with the CPC accounting for the bulk and a pipeline from the Kazakh city of Atyrau to the Russian city of Samara delivering the remaining 13 percent.

The rest of the oil went across the Caspian Sea by tanker to join the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline to Turkey (2.3 million tons, or nearly 4 percent of Kazakhstan's exports) and to China along the Atasu-Alashankou pipeline (1.2 million, or nearly 2 percent).

Small amounts were shipped to the Georgian port of Batumi and Uzbekistan, Reuters reported.

On orders from President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan is seeking to diversify export routes because of the war, by implication to reduce reliance on sanctions-hit Russia.

That is Kazakhstan's "number one problem," Akchulakov told the Houston energy conference.

Building a new pipeline to carry oil east across the Caspian Sea could take up to five years, he said. He did not mention that Russia, as a littoral state, would certainly try to veto it.

Kazakhstan upped oil supplies via non-Russian routes last year, but only by 638,000 tons, according to Reuters.

In late February Kazakhstan started pumping oil to Germany, to make up for shortfalls after EU countries banned most Russian oil. But that oil still must pass through Russia.

Saudi Unveils New Airline to Compete With Persian Gulf Rivals

RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia announced the creation of a new national airline, part of a plan to turn Riyadh into a global aviation hub rivaling regional leaders like Dubai and Doha.

Riyadh Air "aims to launch flights to more than 100 destinations around the world by 2030," the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The Persian Gulf kingdom is pursuing ambitious aviation goals as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's wide-ranging "Vision 2030" reform agenda, including more than tripling annual traffic to 330 million passengers by the end of the decade.

It also wants to move up to five million tons of cargo each year.

Last November officials announced plans for a new airport in the capital Riyadh -- spanning 57 square kilometers (22 square miles) -- that is set to accommodate 120 million travelers per year by 2030 and 185 million travelers by 2050.

The capacity of the existing Riyadh airport is around 35 million travelers.

The new airline is the latest in "a huge package of projects" that will "consolidate our country's position as an international hub for aviation and a global logistics center", Saudi transport minister Saleh Al-Jasser said on Twitter.

Tony Douglas, former head of Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, has been appointed CEO, SPA said.

Sunday's announcement said Riyadh Air would operate a "fleet of advanced aircraft", but did not specify how big the fleet would be or from where it would be sourced.

Turkey's Industrial Production Returns to Growth in January

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Industrial output in Turkey expanded more than expected in January, official data showed Friday, ensuring a return to growth after two months of decline due to a global economic slowdown.

The industrial production index grew 4.5% year-over-year in January, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said.

Month-over-month, the output expanded 1.9% on a calendar and seasonally adjusted basis, the data showed.

Industrial activity bounced back strongly after the initial coronavirus wave in April 2020 and expanded for more than two years straight.

But annual growth slowed significantly since the summer, with demand declining due to the broader global slowdown.

Despite the buoyant January, the devastating earthquakes that hit the country's south in February are likely to impact subsequent growth.

The Feb. 6 quakes and strong aftershocks killed more than 47,000 people and destroyed or severely damaged over 230,000 buildings, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless, making it the worst disaster in Turkey's modern history.

In a Reuters poll, output had been expected to expand 2.45% year-over-year in January. The estimates in the poll of six institutions ranged between 1.90% and 3.50%.

In November, the index contracted 1.3% year-over-year, for the first time since 2020, and another 0.2% in December.

The January data showed the mining and quarrying index decreased by 7.6% and the manufacturing index increased by 5.8%, while the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply index dropped by 5.7%.

On a monthly basis, the mining and quarrying index jumped by 4.4% and the manufacturing index increased by 2.1% and the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply index increased by 1.4%.

The government is preparing to ramp up spending for post-quake recovery, which could lift industrial production as well as consumer spending, two key indicators of economic growth.

The region is rich in textile production and agriculture, which accounts for 16% of total employment and around 11% of industrial production, according to a report by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO).

The disaster forced millions to leave 11 southeastern provinces that were home to some 14 million people.

Climate-Stressed Iraq Says Will Plant 5m Trees

BASRA (Dispatches) - Iraq's prime minister announced a campaign to combat the severe impacts of climate change on the water-scarce country, including by planting five million palms and trees.

Oil-rich but war-battered Iraq suffers from extreme summer heat, frequent droughts, desertification and regular dust storms, problems that are all exacerbated by a heating planet.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani told a climate conference that more than seven million Iraqis had already been affected by climate change and hundreds of thousands displaced by drought.

He cited challenges including "high temperatures, scarcity of rain and an increase in dust storms" as well as shrinking green spaces, which all "threaten food, health, environmental and community security".

Sudani, who took office in late October, said his government was launching "a grand afforestation initiative, which includes planting five million trees and palm trees in all governorates of Iraq".

In the spring of last year, Iraq was swept by about a dozen major sand or dust storms which blanketed Baghdad and other areas, causing breathing difficulties for thousands and forcing the closure of airports and schools.

Sudani said the government was working on a wider "Iraqi vision for climate action", speaking at a conference in the southern city of Basra attended by foreign ambassadors and UN officials.

The plan would include promoting clean and renewable energy, new irrigation and water treatment projects and reduced industrial gas flaring, he said, without announcing details on funding or timeframes.

Sudani said Iraq was "moving forward to conclude contracts for constructing renewable energy power plants to provide one-third of our electricity demand by 2030".

Sudani also cited "efforts to preserve Iraq's rights in the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers", the two waterways whose flows have been reduced, with Iraqi officials blaming dams upstream in Turkey and Iran.

"The unilateral water control in the upstream countries increases the vulnerability of countries challenged by the effects of climate change," the Iraqi premier told the Basra meeting.

As part of the wider plan, the government cited the creation of green belts around cities to act as windbreaks against dust storms.

Iraq was once dubbed "the country of 30 million palm trees", but decades of conflict and failing public policies have ravaged the national symbol as urbanisation has shrunk traditional green spaces.

Lush palm groves that once protected large cities such as Baghdad or Karbala have given way to concrete neighborhoods.

Aramco Reports Record \$161b Profit for 2022



RIYADH (Dispatches) - Saudi Aramco said it achieved "record" profits totalling \$161.1 billion last year, drawing an outraged response from activists warning about the ravages of climate change.

The mostly state-owned energy giant, the world's second most valuable company behind Apple, said in a filing with the Saudi stock market that net income for 2022 was up 46 percent from \$110 billion in 2021.

The results -- the strongest since Aramco became a listed company in 2019 -- were "predominantly due to the impact of higher crude oil prices and volumes sold, and stronger refining margins," it said.

Global energy prices surged after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

"It is shocking for a company to make a profit of more than \$161 billion in a single year through the sale of fossil fuel -- the single largest driver of the climate crisis," Agnes Callamard, secretary-general of Amnesty International, said in a statement.

"It is all the more shocking because this surplus was amassed during a global cost-of-living crisis and aided by the increase in energy prices resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

Amnesty described Aramco's profits as "the most ever disclosed by a company in a single year" and said they "should be used to fund a human rights-based transition to renewable energy".

Aramco's gains are consistent with record profits for 2022 reported by the five oil majors Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP and TotalEnergies, which in total surpassed \$150 billion and would have been closer to \$200 billion without costly withdrawals from Russia.

Bangladesh Not Heading Towards Chinese Debt Trap

DHAKA (Dispatches) - Bangladesh yesterday strongly ruled out the possibility of falling into any Chinese debt-trap as the return on its investments is much higher than the cost of the funds, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

He said there is a wrong perception among many people that Bangladesh would slip into a Chinese debt-trap.

"No way... no way," Momen said.

He made the comments in replying to questions from Richard Quest, CNN's Business editor-at-large, at the Bangladesh Business Summit.

The three-day summit, organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), kicked off at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka to showcase the country's progress and potential to both global and local investors.

The debt-trap question has surfaced as Bangladesh has borrowed heavily from many countries, including China in recent years to pull off its growth targets. The bankruptcy of Sri Lanka, whose largest lenders include China, in 2022 has cemented the worries.

But Momen said Bangladesh has received many loans from international agencies with Japan being the largest bilateral lender.

"We are taking loans from all sources on a very prudent basis and in a calculative way."

Of the \$72.3 billion foreign loan, the World Bank accounts for \$18.2 billion, followed by the Asian Development Bank (\$13.3 billion), Japan (\$9.2 billion), Russia (\$5.1 billion), China (\$4.8 billion) and India (\$1.02 billion).

Whatever investments have been made with the debts, the return on the investments is higher than the cost of the funds, Momen said.



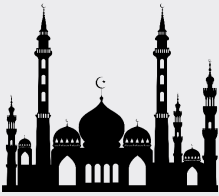
Bangladesh has a low risk of external and overall debt distress despite higher external borrowing in recent terms, said the International Monetary Fund in February.

Responding to a question related to the foreign policy towards the Russia-Ukraine war, Momen said: Bangladesh always follows the foreign policy that is "friendship to all and malice to none".

"It is helping us. Of course, we condemn the war. We are a peace-loving country. Bangladesh wants a peaceful solution to the war as it affects individuals, families, women and children."

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said it was true that the war has inflicted sufferings onto the country.

"Yes, I can understand that people are suffering from the high price, but the government is trying to sort it out."



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

12:13

18:28

04:51

06:15

71. Relate to them the story of Noah. Behold! he said to his people:
“O my people, if it be hard on your (mind) that I should stay (with you) and commemorate the signs of Allah,- yet I put my trust in Allah. Get ye then an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan be on to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite.
Surah 10. Jonah (71)

Train Crash May Thwart Greek PM's Re-Election Bid

ATHENS (Dispatches) - The Greek prime minister’s bid for re-election at forthcoming polls may be thwarted by the country’s deadliest train crash, which has sparked mass protests and calls for him to quit.

A nation heartbroken at the loss of 57 lives has exploded in anger, with tens of thousands taking to the streets in sometimes violent protests Wednesday.

Four people -- three station masters and a rail supervisor -- are facing multiple charges over the February 28 head-on collision, and could be jailed for life.

But public anger has focused on mismanagement and underfunding of the railway network, which critics say is symptomatic of a broader hollowing-out of public services that was triggered by the country’s debt crisis.

And, observers say, conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis -- who had looked on course to comfortably win a second term -- may pay a heavy price.

The accident “will have an impact on the government as it has political and ethical responsibility,” Stella Ladi, who works at Panteion University in Athens and Queen Mary University of London, told AFP.

During Wednesday’s protests in Athens, the biggest the capital has witnessed since demonstrations some years ago in the wake of the eurozone crisis, anger among protesters was palpable.

“People have been under pressure since the financial crisis,” Pinelopi Horianopoulou, a striking civil servant who joined the protests, told AFP.

“There are not enough staff.”

Understaffing had been a key complaint of railway unions, who had long been ringing alarm bells about the parlous state of the nation’s underfunded network.

But it may not be just Mitsotakis’s conservative New Democracy party that is punished at the ballot box.

Ladi said other mainstream parties that have held power in recent years -- left-wing Syriza and the socialists Pasok -- could also suffer losses.

There could be “a protest vote against ruling parties of the last decade, which were unable to address public sector failings”, she told AFP.

Mitsotakis was elected in 2019 and, before the train crash, his party held a 7.5 percentage point lead over its closest rivals, Syriza.

The latest polls on voting intentions suggest that while his party is still ahead of Syriza, that lead has narrowed since the train disaster. One poll of 1,241 people carried out last week gives ND 29.6 percent of voting intentions to 25 percent for Syriza.



The 55-year-old’s term ends in July and he had already been out campaigning this year, criss-crossing the country and saying the “countdown” to polls had started.

He had been widely expected to call elections on April 9 but, following the backlash triggered by the accident, analysts believe he will delay the polls, possibly to the end of May.

He seems keen to avoid the question for now -- asked when the election date will be set, government spokesman Yiannis Economou said this week that the “issue is not on the prime minister’s mind at all”.


Ladi said the government’s priority currently is “the adoption of measures to comfort victims’ families and restore the railway network”.

Criticized for initially trying to blame the accident on “human error”, Mitsotakis sought forgiveness at the weekend from the victims’ families and apologised -- but his words were widely judged to have come too late.

For many observers, when it comes to what will happen in the forthcoming polls, all bets are now off.

“No political analyst is now risking predictions” about the election result, said daily Ta Nea, adding the chances of a single party being able to form a government were weakening.

U.S. Clean Energy Carrots Could Put Europe Behind In Decarbonization Race



HOUSTON (Dispatches) - Billions of dollars in clean energy incentives are poised to speed investment on American soil while putting the European Union’s energy transition at risk by luring away money and talent, executives at the CERAWEEK energy conference said this week.

U.S. President Joe Biden’s landmark Inflation Reduction Act climate package was signed into law last year and has caused trade tensions between Washington and allies competing for cash and skilled labor to advance a shift from fossil fuels and combat climate change.

Europe can ill afford to see a slowing in the energy transition as the continent struggles with soaring gas and power prices since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The IRA directed some \$370 billion in tax benefits to U.S. development of solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy technologies, as well as to electric vehicles and projects that reduce or capture industrial greenhouse gas emissions before they reach the atmosphere.

U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said the Biden administration makes no apologies for the IRA, and challenged EU allies to follow the U.S. lead by providing more subsidies of their own.

“We don’t want to stoke trade wars or anything like that,” said Granholm. “We keep saying ‘have at it - you should do the same thing’ - a little friendly competition is all.”

“But we are serious about bringing supply chains back into this country,” she said.


She called the U.S. incentives “10 years of IRA carrots you can take to the bank” and said more than 100 companies in the electric vehicle supply chain had announced investments in the United States since the law passed.

European energy companies echoed the call for Europe to come up with its own new incentives.

“It would be great to see the European Union policy move from stick to carrot,” said Josu Jon Imaz, chief executive officer of Spanish energy provider Repsol SA (REP.MC). “We don’t need banning technologies, we don’t need restrictions, we need to be attractive.”

Repsol this year expects to spend almost 40% of its project budget in the United States, including \$1.5 billion in oil and gas and \$1 billion in renewables, compared with 25% going into the Iberian peninsula, Imaz told Reuters.

Nuclear Submarine Plan Aims to Give Australia Strategic Edge to Deter China



SYDNEY (Dispatches) - Australian nuclear submarines are key to defending the country’s 36,000 kilometers of coastline and maintaining an edge against China, whose growing military presence means conflict can erupt without notice, defense officials and government advisers said.

The shift from Australia’s diesel-electric fleet to nuclear-powered subs brings additional range, stealth and strike capability - crucial capabilities given Canberra’s reliance on sea cargo for trade, and undersea cables for telecommunications, they said.

“This is the biggest step forward in our military capability that we’ve had since the end of the Second World War,” Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles said on Friday. “This, more than anything that we can do, it will allow us in a pretty difficult world to look after ourselves.”

Reuters has reported Australia is expected to buy up to five U.S. Virginia class submarines in the 2030’s, before building a new British-designed submarine in South Australia under a partnership with both countries dubbed AUKUS. Sooner than that, around 2027, U.S. nuclear submarines are expected to be deployed in Western Australia.

The three countries are expected to announce details of the plan on Monday in San Diego. The shift from six conventional submarines to a nuclear-powered fleet comes with a price tag estimated at A\$100 billion-A\$170 billion (\$66 billion-\$112 billion), Australia’s biggest-ever defense project.

Nuclear submarines are a key area where the United States has an edge over China’s navy, which is the world’s largest, said Peter Dean, co-author of Australia’s Defense Strategic Review, which was handed to government last month and will be made public in April.

It is vital that Australia has the same capability to deter - or, if necessary, fight - China as it expands its nuclear submarine fleet and ranges deeper into Australia’s northern waters, he said.

“The number one thing submarines do is hunt other submarines,” he said. “We need to be able to track those submarines, and if it did come to a conflict with anyone, to respond appropriately. They are a really important part of our deterrence capability.”

A U.S. Defense Department report last year said the People’s Liberation Army Navy had a fighting force of 340 ships and submarines, including 12 nuclear submarines - six equipped with ballistic missiles - and 44 conventionally powered submarines. The report added that China would build a guided missile submarine by the middle of this decade.

Sheer numbers can be overcome with superior technology, analysts said.

“Chinese submarines are of less advanced technology and noisier than they should be so more detectable,” said

Lukashenko in Tehran...

FROM PAGE 1

The Belarusian president expressed hope that the implementation of the comprehensive program of cooperation would help to develop the relations between the two countries even more.

Raisi and Lukashenko signed the roadmap for comprehensive cooperation between Iran and Belarus during a ceremony.

Also, in the presence of Raisi and Lukashenko, the senior officials of Iran and Belarus signed the cooperation documents of the two countries in various commercial, transportation, agricultural, cultural and artistic fields, the transfer of convicts and the executive program document on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries.

These documents were signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Industry, Agriculture, Roads and Urban Development and Justice with their Belarusian counterparts.

Iranian President Raisi officially welcomed his Belarusian counterpart, r Lukashenko, on Monday morning.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Lukashenko arrived in Tehran on Sunday evening.

This is Lukashenko’s third visit to Iran. His previous visit took place in 2006. The two presidents met in September 2022 in Samarkand, on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Tehran-Riyadh...

FROM PAGE 1

“The Iranian and Saudi foreign ministries are arranging for the meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries, and we hope that this meeting will take place in the near future,” he said.

Agreements have been made regarding the place of the meeting and further information will be released, he said.

There is no obstacle to a direct meeting and dialogue between the two foreign ministers, and this process will be carried out through diplomatic channels, the Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson said.

At the same time, he appreciated the valuable and admirable role of Iraq and Oman in hosting eight rounds of talks between the delegations of the two countries.

According to Kanaani, this agreement will help consolidate peace and stability in the region, especially in the strategic area of the Persian Gulf.

The general position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to welcome any movement and diplomatic development that will help political convergence in the region, he also stressed.

Political convergence helps to realize the common economic interests of all countries in the region, he noted.

“Considering the positive atmosphere that has taken place after the agreement with Saudi Arabia, there is a possibility that we will reach an agreement with other countries, including Jordan,” he also added.

Referring to Iran’s political will with emphasis on the neighborhood policy and expansion of relations with neighboring countries and the Asian region, he also said that the relations between Iran and Bahrain are not an exception.

Answering a question about Iran’s decision to release French prisoners, he said that Iran expressed its position many times and the people who have been arrested had roles in Iran related to the recent riots.

“Their actions were criminal actions in accordance with the national laws of Iran, and they were arrested in this connection, and the judicial process is underway,” he noted.

Political and consular dialogues between the relevant Iranian and French authorities are ongoing, he added.

Pakistan Trying to...

FROM PAGE 1

The consul general of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Karachi Hassan Nurian, in his meeting with the managing director sought ways for expansion of bilateral cooperation, especially between the private sector firms of the two countries.

The managing director of Pakistan’s state gas company referred to the obstacles created by the west in the way of Iran-Pakistan trade, arguing, “Pakistan is determined to increase its LPG gas imports from Iran, and of course a mechanism for paying the price for the imported gas from Iran, too, must be devised.”

He said that the bartered deals, or other mechanisms mutually agreed by both sides can facilitate the finalizing of that deal.

The Pakistani official said that there are new no-money-transfer methods for payment, through which we can pass the hard currency hurdle.

The Iranian consul in Karachi, too, said that the Iranian companies are ready for cooperation with Pakistan in gas and petrochemical products’ fields and proposed that the managing director of the Pakistani state gas company will visit Iran, which was welcomed by the Pakistani side.

Ormsby Wins Int’1 Series Thailand

BANGKOK (Dispatches) - Australian Wade Ormsby won his fourth Asian Tour title following a sudden death playoff against Thai Chonlatit Chuenboonngam in the International Series Thailand final.

The Aussie had lagged two shots behind the leaders at the beginning of the day, but under near-perfect conditions in seaside resort Hua Hin carded a seven-under-par 65 to win the \$360,000 prize money.

Little-known Chonlatit, 24, had looked set to win, remaining in the lead in the final six holes, carding par at 18, before finishing eight-under-par 64.

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Pogacar Wins Dream Paris-Nice Title

NICE (Dispatches) - Tadej Pogacar won cycling’s Paris-Nice when his solo triumph on the Riviera town’s iconic Promenade des Anglais propelled the UAE Emirates rider to a crushing overall victory on his first entry to the eight-day event.

The Slovenian, a double Tour de France winner, finished alone to clinch a third individual stage on the race, bowing to the crowds as he crossed the line, with Frenchman David Gaudu ending second overall and Jonas Vingegaard in third. “It was always my dream to win Paris-Nice,” the 24-year-old Slovenian said.

Curry's Late Heroics Lift Warriors Over Giannis-Less Bucks

SAN FRANCISCO (Dispatches) - Stephen Curry rallied the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors in the fourth quarter to deliver a 125-116 overtime victory over Milwaukee.

The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player scored 22 of his 36 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, with key three-pointers and a timely block helping Golden State stretch a home win streak to seven games.

“We feed off our crowd’s energy,” Curry said. “Whatever it is in terms of our focus and energy and effort, it’s giving us a chance no matter what the score is down the stretch.”

The Bucks, playing without two-time NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo due to his sore right hand, saw their nine-game road win streak snapped and their NBA-best record fall to 48-19.

Milwaukee led by five in the final minute, but Curry sank a three-pointer, made a fast break layup to tie the game, then answered a Jrue Holiday three with one of his own with 18 seconds remaining to lift the Warriors level at 111-111.

His late block of Holiday in the paint on a drive to the hoop helped ensure the game went into overtime.

“It felt like playoff-type energy and atmosphere,” Curry said. “I know they were missing Giannis but we’ve been searching for a long time to try and figure out how to perform and execute down the stretch in a game like this.

“We got down five with under a minute and come back. And I think it has been a long time since we won an overtime game. So all those things – dig deep and figure out a way to get it done.”

Curry, who turns 35 on Tuesday, scored nine points in overtime to seal the victory, playing 43 minutes in all to achieve his first victory in four tries since returning March 5 from a left leg injury.

“I’m great. I’m just getting old,” a visibly worn-down Curry said after the finish. “Everybody

contributed and that’s the way it has to be for us the way we’re built right now.”

Curry made eight of 11 shots from the floor in the fourth quarter and overtime, and sank four of seven from behind the arc.

In Atlanta, Jason Tatum delivered game highs of 34 points and 15 rebounds in powering the Boston Celtics over the host Hawks 134-125.

Jaylen Brown added 24 points as the Celtics improved to 47-21, while the Hawks, paced by 35 points and 13 assists from Trae Young, fell to 34-34.



Kawhi Leonard scored 38 points to lead the Los Angeles Clippers over the visiting New York Knicks 106-95.

Paul George added 22 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Clippers.

Immanuel Quickley led the Knicks with 26 points.

Clippers guard Russell Westbrook overtook Isiah Thomas for ninth on the NBA’s all-time assists list with a third-quarter pass to set up a George dunk for his 9,062nd career assist.

Talen Horton-Tucker had game highs of 37 points and 10 assists in leading Utah to a 119-111 victory at Charlotte.

Zach LaVine scored 36 points and DeMar DeRozan added 27 to lead the Chicago Bulls to a 119-111 victory at Houston.

Wendell Carter scored seven of his 27 points in overtime to spark Orlando over visiting Miami 126-114. Jimmy Butler scored 38 points to lead the Heat.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points to lead Oklahoma City’s 110-96 victory at New Orleans. Desmond Bane scored 25 points while David Roddy came off the bench to score 24 and spark the Memphis Grizzlies over visiting Dallas 112-108.

Tim Hardaway Jr. led the Mavericks with 23 points, but Dallas was without Luka Doncic due to a left thigh strain and Kyrie Irving with a right foot injury, while Ja Morant was still away from Memphis for personal reasons.

Harrison Barnes scored 19 points to lead seven double-digit scorers for Sacramento in a 128-119 victory at Phoenix.

Jalen Smith scored 20 points off the bench to lead Indiana’s 121-115 victory at Detroit.

Top-Four Finish Like A Title Win For Spurs



LONDON (Dispatches) - A Premier League top four finish for Tottenham Hotspur this season would be like winning the title, manager Antonio Conte said after his team bounced back from their midweek Champions League exit with a 3-1 win over Nottingham Forest.

Harry Kane bagged a first-half double and Son Heung-min added a third as Spurs eased the pressure on Conte, whose future at the club has been the source of speculation after Wednesday’s Champions League elimination at the hands of AC Milan.

The victory was Spurs’ first in four games after a demoralising 10 days during which they also crashed out of the FA Cup and lost to Wolverhampton Wanderers in the league.

“For us to finish in the top four is like winning the Premier League,” said Conte, who led Tottenham to a fourth-placed finish last season. “It happened last season, and I spoke about it being a miracle.

“This season it will be much more difficult, there are many teams involved and in this moment there is only one place available.”

Tottenham have 48 points from 27 games, six more than fifth-placed Liverpool, who suffered a shock 1-0 defeat at Bournemouth but have a game in hand. Newcastle United, who play Wolves on Sunday, are a further point adrift of Liverpool in sixth.

Real Madrid to Take Legal Action Against Barcelona For Refereeing Scandal

MADRID (Dispatches) - Real Madrid will join the complaint filed on Friday by Spanish prosecutors against Barcelona and two of the LaLiga club’s ex-presidents over alleged payments to a company owned by a senior refereeing official to influence match results, the club said.

The European and Spanish soccer champions called an urgent board meeting to discuss alleged attempts by arch rivals Barcelona to influence referees and decided to take legal action for what they called “serious accusations” by prosecutors.

“Real Madrid express their deep concern about the seriousness of the facts and reiterate their full confidence in the action of the justice and have agreed that, in defense of their legitimate interests, they will join the complaint as soon as the judge takes up the case,” the club said in an official statement.

Barcelona allegedly paid more than €7.3 million between 2001 and 2018 to firms owned by Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira, who was vice-president of the refereeing committee of the Spanish football association from 1993-2018.

Prosecutors allege that under a secret agreement and “in exchange for money”, Negreira favoured Barcelona “in the decisions taken by referees in the games played by the club, as well as in the results of the competitions”.

A senior Barcelona official told Reuters on Friday that the club had expected the prosecutors’ complaint and described it as “nothing more than an absolutely preliminary investigative hypothesis”.

The official said the club “will fully cooperate with the investigation by all means necessary” and “reiterate that they have never bought any referee nor have tried to influence any official’s decisions”.

In a statement last month, Barca denied wrongdoing, saying they had simply paid an external consultant who supplied them with “technical reports related to professional refereeing”, calling it “a common practice among professional football clubs”.

Murray Makes It Through in Two at Indian Wells



lasting five-plus hours in the second round of the Australian Open.

The escape artist exploits continued last month in Doha, where Murray won four three-set matches, overcoming eight match points on the way to the final, where he fell to Daniil Medvedev.

He needed more than three hours to win his Indian Wells opener over Thomas Etcheverry in three sets.

INDIAN WELLS (Dispatches) - Former world number one Andy Murray didn’t need any marathon match heroics as he eased into the third round at Indian Wells with his first straight sets victory of 2023.

Murray defeated lucky loser Radu Albot of Moldova 6-4, 6-3 — the one-hour-42-minute affair in stark contrast to Murray’s previous victories this year that included a five-setter

Arsenal Regain Five-Point Lead With Fulham Stroll

LONDON (Dispatches) - Arsenal powered five points clear at the top of the Premier League with a stylish 3-0 win at Fulham, while Casemiro was sent off in Manchester United’s 0-0 draw against struggling Southampton.

Mikel Arteta’s side had seen second placed Manchester City close the gap with victory at Crystal Palace on Saturday. The Gunners responded with the kind of composed display that has been the hallmark of their unexpected title charge.

First-half goals from Gabriel Magalhaes, Gabriel Martinelli and Martin Odegaard -- all set up by the influential Leandro Trossard -- put Arsenal on course for a fifth consecutive league win.

With 11 league games left, the north Londoners have the title in their sights.

Since being knocked out of pole position after a defeat against City, which came during a run of four games without a win, Arsenal have shown the mettle of potential champions with a strong response to that wobble.

It was Arsenal’s 11th victory from 14 away league matches this season, underlining the durability and maturity that has them in position to win the title for the first time since Arsene Wenger’s ‘Invincibles’ in 2004.

There was more good news for Arsenal in the last 14 minutes as Brazil forward Gabriel Jesus made his first appearance since injuring his knee at last year’s World Cup.



Odermatt Wins Giant Slalom to Seal World Cup Overall Title

KRANSKA (Dispatches) - Marco Odermatt won the World Cup overall title for the second year running when he took victory in the giant slalom for the second time in 24 hours.

The 25-year-old Swiss, who is also Olympic giant slalom champion, beat his great rival Aleksander Kilde Aamodt of Norway into second in the standings by almost 600 points.

In sunny, warm conditions on soft snow Odermatt made it two giant slalom victories in two days. In the race Odermatt beat Henrik Kristoffersen by 0.32sec and Alexis Pinturault was third at 0.70sec. He was fastest on the first descent on Sunday but had to give it all as he pushed for the line. “It’s mad, I can hardly believe it,” said Odermatt. “It was a huge struggle and I took a lot of risks going for the line.”

Odermatt could now become just the second man to break the 2,000 points barrier after Hermann Maier 23 years ago.

He was delighted with winning the large Crystal Globe awarded for the World Cup overall title and attributed his success to his support team.

“I have a great team and they do a huge job. I was less nervous this year than I was last year,” he said.

Odermatt also won the small Crystal Globe for the individual giant slalom event.

