



Foreign Ministry, Judiciary to Punish Gen. Soleimani Assassins

► Page 2

Report

“Fascist” Israeli cabinet sworn in amid Palestinian UN “victory”

Benjamin Netanyahu's newly formed cabinet has been officially sworn in despite receiving no favorable headlines from around the world.

Even some Israeli media outlets have referred to the new cabinet as the most right-wing during the entity's decades-long history.

Israel, as a colonialist regime, has always been viewed as an extremist right-wing occupation committing atrocities and Palestinian do not see much difference between any Israeli cabinets over the past seven decades.

All the regime's cabinets have committed crimes against humanity that included war crimes, genocide, the mass slaughter of children, the ongoing ethnic cleansing campaign along with so many other violations of international law.

However, the newly formed Netanyahu cabinet is perhaps the most extreme and right-wing and that's according to Israel's so-called leftist parties who are afraid that it will result in an increased number of retaliatory operations by the Palestinians. ► Page 5

Paris was forced to acknowledge reality about Iran regional influence: MP

TEHRAN – A senior Iranian lawmaker has commented on remarks by French President Emmanuel Macron regarding Iranian influence in the region, saying the remarks were made out of desperation.

The lawmaker, Abbas Moqtadaei, who is the deputy chief the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said that the French now have to change their policy on Iran out of desperation.

President Macron has recently said that problems on the West Asia region can only be resolved within a framework that includes Iran. ► Page 3

I was illegally removed from FFIRI presidency: Azizi Khadem

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN – Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem, former president of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), believes that he was illegally removed from the presidency of the federation.

Azizi Khadem broke his silence about his short time as the president of the FFIRI in an interview with Iran state-run TV.

“I don't like to say that I am the former president of the football federation. I would rather say I am the illegally removed from presidency of the federation,” he said.

Members of the federation's board of directors held an extraordinary meeting in February 2021 in which Azizi Khadem was removed from the presidency of the federation per article 35, paragraph 14 of the FFIRI Statutes. Then the Ethics Committee of the FFIRI banned him for two years from all football activities. ► Page 3

Khuzestan ports in full swing



© Reza Jafarpourian

By Mehdi Garshasbi

TEHRAN – With around 1,186 kilometers of shoreline, 300 kilometers of sea border, 746 kilometers of maritime waterway, and 34 kilometers length of commercial and fishing docks, the southwestern Khuzestan province

is full of capacity for increasing the country's share of regional and global trade.

The seven ports of the province, namely Imam Khomeini, Khorramshahr, Abadan, Sajafti, Shadegan, Choebdeh, and Arvandkenar, have a total nominal capacity of more than

70 million tons per year, with Imam Khomeini Port holding the lion's share of 60 million tons.

Some 13,000 individuals are working in the provincial ports which have a total population of 917,000 approximately. ► Page 4

IMF sees a positive outlook for Iranian economy in 2023

TEHRAN – Drawing a positive outlook for the Iranian economy in 2023, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that 10 major indicators of the Iranian economy would experience growth and improvement in the mentioned year compared to 2022.

Based on the IMF data, Iran's Gross Domest-

ic Product (GDP) based on the purchasing power index will grow by \$91 billion or two percent in 2023 to reach \$1.7 trillion.

Meanwhile, Iran's GDP per capita is also expected to increase by \$865 based on the purchasing power index to reach \$19,528 in 2023 from \$18,663 in 2022.

IMF sees Iran's GDP excluding oil grow by two percent in 2023, and the growth of the country's economy including oil will be 2.1 percent this year.

The inflation rate in Iran is predicted to be 40 percent in 2023, registering no change compared to 2022. ► Page 4

Tehran, Caracas to develop technological co-op

TEHRAN – Medicines, vaccines, agricultural products, environmental products, medical equipment, information technology, and telecommunications are the fields of cooperation between Iran and Venezuela.

Recently, the technological ties have been strengthened between the two countries, Rouhollah Stiri, director of the international business development office of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, said.

Earlier this month, a delegation from Iran visited Caracas and introduced the achievements of various knowledge-based fields to the Venezuelan investors, he explained, IRIB reported.

Venezuela is a relatively wealthy country whose high inflation rate has been well-controlled in recent years. The trade relations with Iran can be done through the exchange of goods, he said. ► Page 7



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Ruholamin's commemorative painting of Gen. Soleimani on huge Tehran billboard

TEHRAN – Tehran's largest billboard in Vali-e Asr Square has been dedicated to a poster bearing a painting done by Hassan Ruholamin to pay tribute to Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani on the third anniversary of his assassination. ► Page 8

Iran eyes UNESCO tag for its Sassanid fortress

TEHRAN – Iran has completed an all-inclusive dossier for its Qale Falak-ol-Aflak, which is a Sassanid era (224–651) fortress located in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province, in a bid to nominate it for UNESCO status, the tourism minister has said.

As a symbol of Iranian history, culture, and civilization, the castle is being prepared for possible inclusion in UNESCO's prestigious

list, said Ezzatollah Zarghami on Friday, while visiting the historical structure.

A major obstacle to the registration of this ancient castle was that parts of it were at the disposal of the armed forces in recent years, the minister added.

However, the issue was overcome by the governor of Lorestan and by the parliamentarians,

and the armed forces will be transferred to another location in the near future, he explained.

In December, President Ebrahim Raisi paid a visit to the ancient fortress. He was accompanied by members of his cabinet, including the Energy Minister, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister, Agriculture Minister, Culture Minister as well as Cooperatives, and Labor and Social Welfare Minister. ► Page 6

From Inside

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Tehran Papers

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

A positive but insufficient step

In reaction to the appointment of the new head of the central bank, Etemad also ran a story headlined 'A positive but insufficient step'. Three economic experts told the publication that the success of the new appointment depends on solving issues beyond his authority. ► Page 2

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi was 'prominent, influential jurist': Raisi

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has praised the late Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi as a great jurist.

Speaking at a commemorative ceremony held on the occasion of the second anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, President Raisi said that “our society today can reach knowledge and practice by knowing the character of Ayatollah Mesbah.” ► Page 3

Israel to fall due to its very essence, Iran says

TEHRAN- Benjamin Netanyahu who has taken the helm again in Israel has received criticism from Iran's Foreign Ministry for repeating unfounded accusations against Tehran, stating that the Zionist regime is inherently decaying.

“The Zionist regime's same old prime minister who is known to all seeks to fabricate an identity for himself and the illegitimate regime of Israel by repeating his bogus claims against Iran,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on his Twitter account on Friday. ► Page 2

Gen. Soleimani, al-Muhandis played important part in countering terrorism: envoy

TEHRAN- Iran's ambassador to Iraq stressed on Friday that Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu-Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) played a pivotal part in the victory over terrorism.

Speaking with Iraq's Al-Ahd News Agency on the commemoration of the 3rd martyrdom anniversary of the two resistance commanders, Ambassador Mohammad-Kazem Ale-Sadeq noted that “those martyr commanders shouldered the heavy burden of encountering Daesh terrorists, and martyr Soleimani rushed to Iraq during the first hours of the Daesh invasion of Iraq.” ► Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

A positive but insufficient step

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in Yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

from page 1 ► Iran's economy is looking forward to positive events such as the approval of FATF or facilitating the entry and exit of currency and even the lifting of sanctions, which are possible with new decisions and changes in foreign policy, the publication stated.

Unless the foreign policy reforms are made, even the best economic teams are not able to make fundamental changes, however they can reduce the pace of economic collapse and prevent the negative economic growth in various fields, money and banking expert Kamran Nedri told Etemad.

In the current situation, changing people in managerial posts does not appear effective, however, changing policies does. As long as the macro policies are not changed, it is not possible to take a fundamental step in the path to economy, noted Ahmed Hatami-Yazdi, the former managing director of Saderat bank.

"The first problem of the central bank in the current situation is the lack of foreign currency to control supply and demand, and the second one is an underground economy, and third, foreign currencies are abroad and out of the system's control," Abbass Hashi, a money and banking expert, remarked.

On the competence of the new head of the central bank, Hashi said Farzin does not make impulsive decisions as he believes in professional work and has practical work experience.

Vatan-e Emrooz: Foreign currency stabilization policies

The Vatan-e Emrooz newspaper analyzed the policies of the new governor of the central bank to prevent the upward trend of foreign currency price.

The publication said increasing interest rates and bond interest rates are the plans that the new central banker will follow to deal with the rising inflation and currency price.

Russia, during the war in Ukraine, implemented this policy simultaneously as the unprecedented sanctions imposed on the country, especially on its energy exports by Europe. The policy increased the interest rate by 2 times and brought it to about 20%. On the other hand, it severely limited capital flight, which brought the value of the ruble back to pre-war levels.

The report claimed that the Russian monetary policy is the one chosen by Mohammad-Reza Farzin.

Jomhuri Eslami: Comprehensive approach needed to reform economic system

Jomhuri Eslami, in its editorial, criticized replacing the central banker and wrote that the problem is not only in the management of the central bank. Rather, it said, the economic management system is severely inefficient. Taking a look at any of the sub-categories of the economic ministries, the unorganized process is quite evident.

You can hope that the new chief banker to solve the currency problem and restore the value of the national currency to its real position only if you lift the sanctions and remove the existing international obstacles on the way to trade and economic interactions, it argued.

Arman-e Melli: Caught in development trap

Today's world is in a very complicated situation and a few mistakes can lead to numerous problems even for the biggest economic powers, so countries like Iran, that lack a development model, are caught in the trap of development, a researcher on political economy said in an interview with Arman-e Melli.

In line with sustainable development, there should be economic prosperity in the country, social and political participation should be strengthened as well as social justice, and natural resources should be protected, however, all of these have been weakened over the past 20 years, Kamal Athari remarked.

In fact, different classes of society such as women, youth, farmers and others reacted and protested against the loss of development principles, he said, adding, the protestors were demanding their right to development, which have been lost.

He further suggested that the Iranian society needs to move from the primary ideology to a superior ideology. In the superior ideology, development patterns must be defined and different social and political forces must be aligned to realize the pattern, the researcher pointed out.

Kayhan: Who helped the sanctioners?

The conservative Kayhan newspaper argued in a commentary that reformists gave America and Europe an excuse to avoid cancelling sanctions with supporting the unrest.

The newspaper, finding fault with the reform faction, stated that "their media tried to highlight the right to protest, human rights, and women's rights, create widespread and deep belief in the unrest, blame the regime for the riots, and introduce riots as 'protest' and 'rioters' as ordinary people."

Their actions encouraged the enemies to intensify threats and sanctions against Iran, to create social insecurity, economic crisis and a sudden increase in inflation, the author claimed.

The author concluded that they [reformists] are the culprits in the intensification of sanctions and these political losers are the real beneficiaries of the sanctions, who seek their survival through weakening the economy.

Air defense systems intercept, down drones in drills

TEHRAN – Iranian manufactured air defense systems have intercepted and shot down hostile drones during large-scale military exercises, which the Army has undertaken in a zone spanning from the country's southeastern ports and waters to the northern tip of the Indian Ocean, Press TV reported.

During the main stage of the Zolfaghar 1401 joint drills on Saturday, Army forces practiced detection and downing of a range of aerial targets with various radars and advanced home-grown air defense systems.

The low-altitude Majid air defense missile system and the Khatam artillery fire control system were employed, and they could down several unmanned aerial vehicles.

Majid is an agile electro-optical air defense missile system, and reportedly has an operational range of eight kilometers. It is equipped with a long-range thermal optical system, and is paired with the Khatam artillery fire control system to hit designated targets.

Also on Saturday, the Army's reconnaissance drones surveyed the war game zone, and transmitted the collected intelligence and tak-

en topographic images to the joint operations command center.

Combat drones carried out close air support (CAS) operations and attacked ground sites as well.

Moreover, the attack helicopters of the Airborne Division of the Army's Ground Force undertook sorties in turbulent weather conditions.

The drills kicked off late on Thursday night, and feature parts of the infantry, armored and mechanized units, surface, sub-surface and flying vessels, air defense systems, members of the marine commando force, and strategic bombers.

The drill spokesman, Brigadier General Alireza Sheikh, said the exercises are meant to promote training and combat readiness and implementing some operational and intelligence plans to improve the security of the region.

The commander of the military exercises, Deputy Army Chief Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, said earlier on Thursday that the maneuvers bear the message that regional countries can ensure peace in their neighborhood through joint cooperation, without relying on outsiders.

TEHRAN- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Saturday called Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi highly incredibly intelligent and creative.

"The late Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi possessed distinctive traits," the Leader said in an address to the second international conference honoring the late ayatollah.

The second international congress commemorating Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi took place on Saturday in Tehran in the presence of President Ebrahim Raisi, a few intellectuals, military brass, and national authorities.

"Remembering Mr. Mesbah is one of the duties," the Leader declared. "Retaining his legacy entails keeping his manner alive."

Ayatollah Khamenei described Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi as a person possessing distinctive qualities.

The Leader listed his exceptional qualities as being very knowledgeable, smart and innovative thinker, clear speaker, unending and exclusive motivation, good and out-

Leader: Late Mesbah was in-credibly intelligent, creative



standing behavior, and spirituality.

"Death is for everyone, but his path should continue and it should not be closed," underlined Ayatollah Khamenei.

The Leader of the Revolution

stated that "his views should be uncovered and publicized via his works."

As an Iranian Shia theologian, philosopher, and political theorist, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi was

the spiritual head of the "Front of Islamic Revolution Stability" who passed away on January 1, 2021.

Ayatollah Mesbah regarded a loyal Hezbollah advocate: Nasrallah

Addressing the congress, Hezbollah chief Seyed Hassan Nasrallah also stated that Ayatollah Mesbah was one of the most ardent supporters of the Lebanese Resistance.

"In the Islamic world, Ayatollah Mesbah possesses a distinctive and remarkable personality. Seminaries recognize him as a forward-thinking philosopher," Nasrallah stated in his message to the conference.

"He was a forerunner in the preservation of Islam and the Islamic Revolution," the message read.

Nasrallah pointed out, "He used to come to Lebanon and meet with us. He used to go to the border points and talk to the Resistance forces."

"Mesbah was a godly man. His emotional connection to Hezbollah was quite strong, as he revealed and explained in his words. We gave him our whole support," Nasrallah said.

Foreign Ministry, Judiciary to punish Gen. Soleimani assassins

TEHRAN - Abbas Ali Kadkhodaie, the head of an Iranian special committee tasked with prosecuting suspects in the assassination of General Soleimani in domestic and foreign courts, remarked on Saturday that numerous institutions in Iran, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the country's justice system, had made some positive steps to punish Gen. Soleimani's assassins.

Delivering a speech in a specialized roundtable concentrating on fighting terrorism and extremism in the West Asia region, Kadkhodaie, a legal expert, censured the U.S. for assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

It was an act of state terrorism and a blatant disregard for all rules and conventions of international law, said Kadkhodaie, a legal expert.

The official also said that an indictment to prosecute suspects in the case is nearing completion.

Iranian judges and prosecutors have been working on the case to ensure a favorable legal conclusion, the former member of the Guardian Council stated.

Kadkhodaie referred to the assassination of General Soleimani as an abominable crime and demanded that all those who were culprits should be held to account.

He stated that by assassinating General Soleimani, the U.S. had breached all of its international commitments, including non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, compliance with human rights standards, and respect for nations' sovereignty and independence.

He emphasized that the U.S. has been unable to defend the assassination, which he called a "clear example of state terrorism."

Asserting that Tehran was in the forefront of the battle against terrorist organizations like Daesh when General Soleimani was martyred, Kadkhodaie reaffirmed Iran's plan to confront and resist outsiders in the West Asia region.

"General Soleimani bolstered Iran's global power"

Speaking in the roundtable held at the Foreign Ministry Institute for Political and International Studies, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry also emphasized that one of General Soleimani's key traits was his capacity to increase both domestic and global power in support of the resistance front.

Gen. Soleimani, al-Muhandis played important part in countering terrorism: envoy

from page 1 ► The Iranian ambassador stated that the Jihadi efforts of General Soleimani and his companion warrior al-Muhandis remain memorable, as their preparations led to the breakdown of the terrorists in their operations in Iraq.

Based on the remarks made by Ale-Sadeq, many of the young individuals living in the region are

now graduates of the school that General Soleimani founded for resistance against terrorism.

In reference to General Soleimani's leadership in the fight against terrorism, the ambassador stated, "It is impossible even to list the innumerable services offered by martyr Soleimani during the years of his prolific life in various levels and in various

fields."

Donald Trump, the former U.S. president, ordered the assassination of both General Soleimani and al-Muhandis in early January 2020 near Baghdad's international airport.

Daesh celebrated the assassination of General Soleimani, the legendary commander in the fight



Due to their crucial contributions in fighting against the takfiri Daesh terrorist organization, notably in Iraq and Syria, both leaders enjoyed great respect throughout West Asia.

Iranian officials have reiterated time and time again that Tehran will definitely exact retribution on the terrorists who planned and carried out the attack on the anti-terror hero.

Tehran has emphasized that because it is unpredictable when and where attacks would occur, Americans and Zionists should not take its threat of retaliation lightly. Tehran is serious about taking vengeance for the assassination of Martyr Soleimani.

Days later, in retaliation, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched a barrage of missiles towards the U.S.-run Ein Al-Assad airbase in the western province of Al-Anbar in Iraq. The missile assault was called a "first slap" by Iran.

At least 110 American service members suffered "traumatic brain injuries" during the counterattack on the base, according to the Pentagon.

Iran has requested that Interpol should issue a red notice for all perpetrators and planners of General Soleimani's assassination.

Numerous more individuals have been named by Tehran as having ties to the intended terrorist act, including former U.S. President Donald Trump, Pentagon officials, and American soldiers stationed in the region.

Based on a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the assassination of General Soleimani was ordered, carried out, or assisted by a number of people, including Trump, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and former National Security Advisor John Bolton.

against terrorism.

General Soleimani saved thousands of lives from Daesh terrorists, whose savagery rattled the world.

Daesh terrorists, whose barbaric acts made al-Qaeda look rather moderate, butchered men of different sects and enslaved women.

Israel to fall due to its very essence, Iran says

"Palestine is not destroyable"

from page 1 ► The Tel Aviv regime has spent more than 70 years trying to resolve its identity issue, Kanaani said, noting Israel's name is synonymous with genocide, pillage, forced relocation, and numerous other terrible atrocities.

"This is an interpretation of the misguided policies and actions of Britain, the U.S., and certain European nations in backing the illegitimate regime," the spokesman added.

Kanaani proceeded, "Palestine is not destroyable, and decline is inherent in the Zionist

regime's nature and essence."

Netanyahu laid forth three major objectives for his coalition government during his first cabinet meeting, the first of which was to halt Iran's nuclear development.

Netanyahu, who served as prime minister from 1996 to 1999 and again from 2009 to 2021, underlined his steadfast opposition to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), often known as the Iran nuclear deal, in a previous interview with Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV.

Netanyahu purportedly said that "the JCPOA is a horrible agreement because it allowed Iran basically with international approval, to develop a nuclear and basically an atomic arsenal paved with gold, with hundreds of billions of dollars of sanction relief."

Additionally, Netanyahu's cabinet pledged to push additional anti-Palestinian measures and to increase the size of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi was ‘prominent, influential jurist’: Raisi

From Page 1 ▶ President Raisi pointed out that Ayatollah Mesbah was one of the prominent and influential teachers in the field of ethics and he was also an outstanding jurist in the field of practice and rulings.

According to Ayatollah Raisi, if someone’s speech, actions and thinking were the manifestation of jurisprudence, he is a perfect jurist. “The speech of such a person reminds us of God and his actions are also manifestations of jurisprudence,” he continued.

Raisi emphasized that Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi was one of the fighters against the Pahlavi regime. “He has left some statements in this regard and he was fighting against the worst of things, which was the Pahlavi regime,” Raisi said. “And after the [1979], he supported with all his might the best of things that is the Islamic Republic.”

Ayatollah Raisi added, “The late Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi knew deviations well and fought against them well. For this reason, he was called the Ammar Yaser of the Revolution. He was very excellent in the field of the Clarification Jihad.”

Raisi noted, “He confronted deviant ideas and seditionists who wanted to bring chaos to the region, and he was one of the models of this confrontation and resistance alongside the martyred general Qassem Soleimani.”



Ayatollah Mesbah died in early 2021 at the age of 85 due to gastrointestinal disease. A philosopher and political theorist, the ayatollah was a member of the Assembly of Experts and the Society of the Seminary Teachers of Qom. He also founded the Baqir-ul-Uloom Institute and then the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in the city of Qom, which he headed for the rest of his life.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei expressed his condolences over the demise of prominent cleric, saying he himself is mourning the demise of a “dear brother.”

In a message, the Leader said Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi’s demise is a loss for the seminary and the

Islamic studies.

“I received the news of the demise of Ayatollah Hajj Sheikh Muhammad-Taqi Misbah Yazdi – a spiritual scholar and a mujahid faqih and hakim – with considerable grief and sorrow. This is a grave loss for Islamic seminaries and for Islamic ethics in general,” the Leader said in the message. “He was an outstanding thinker and a competent manager who had an eloquent tongue in telling the truth and who stood firm on the straight path. His services in producing religious thoughts, in writing instructive books, in training brilliant and influential pupils and in showing his presence in all the arenas where his presence was necessary are really and truly unique.”

He added, “From his youth until the end of his life, piety and devoutness were his eternal qualities and the blessing of treading on the path of towhid (Monotheistic) understanding was God’s great reward for his long-term endeavor.”

In the meantime, the Leader condoled with the bereaved family of the late ayatollah, his students and the seminary.

“Being in mourning myself for the loss of this old-time and dear brother of ours, I express my condolences to his esteemed family, his honorable children and his relatives, and I extend my condolences to the pupils and admirers of that great teacher and to the Islamic seminaries,” the Leader said.

Iran, Azerbaijan FM’s discuss bilateral ties

TEHRAN – The top diplomats of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan held a phone conversation on Saturday morning in which they discussed bilateral relations.

According to a Fars News report, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov, exchanged views on the latest about Tehran-Baku relations.

The last time Amir Abdollahian and Bayramov spoke over the phone was in mid-November when the Iranian foreign minister expressed dissatisfaction with some “unrealistic” remarks by Azerbaijani officials.

In the November conversation, Amir Abdollahian “voiced dissatisfaction with some unrealistic statements made in recent days, describing respect for countries’ sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in their domestic affairs as an important and fundamental principle.”



“He said that official and diplomatic channels are the best path for resolving misunderstandings and differences, emphasizing that brining up such issues in media will not only fail to help their settlement but pave the way for enemies to exploit them,” according to a statement by the Iranian foreign ministry.

The Iranian foreign minister said the expansion of ties with neighbors including Azerbaijan Republic is a priority of the

Islamic Republic’s foreign policy agenda, stressing the necessity to promote all-out ties between the two countries.

He invited his Azeri counterpart to join the Iranian initiative for an event, named the 3+3 meeting, in Tehran as a format designed to resolve regional issues through diplomatic ways.

For his part, the Azeri foreign minister pointed to a recent meeting between the presidents of the two countries in Astana, describing the talks and contacts between officials in Tehran and Baku as positive.

Jeyhun Bayramov expressed Azerbaijan Republic’s readiness to enhance ties with Iran and resolve misunderstandings.

The two sides also stressed the necessity to continue and promote links between different sectors and institutions of the two countries in order to enhance friendly relations and settle possible misunderstandings.



changed and Asian countries are working together, and Western countries cannot have an imperialist approach.”

In his remarks, Macron likened Iranian influence in the region to metastasis, saying it was his responsibility to reduce it.

“The region looks with great resentment at the West after what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan and that is why they say to us: ‘You don’t have a lesson to give us’. So, one of the countries that was a pole of stability that you may not have liked, you changed its leadership and you didn’t find anything better, you just let the Iranians metastasize, so it’s your responsibility to reduce that metastasis,” Macron said, according to Le Monde.

Iran’s state news agency

IRNA has said that the French president’s acknowledgment of the necessity of Iran’s presence in regional talks is due to its influence in the region.

“The President of France acknowledges the importance of Iran,” it added.

The French president has recently attended the second edition of the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, which was held in the Jordanian capital Amman.

Along with President Macron, officials from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates attended the Baghdad conference II.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian represented Iran and delivered a speech at the summit.

On the sidelines of the Baghdad Conference II in Jordan’s capital Amman, Amir Abdollahian held a meeting with the EU’s Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrel. At the meeting, the key issues on the agenda of Iran and the EU, especially the state of the Vienna talks, were discussed by the two top diplomats, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

SPORTS

Persepolis defeat Gol Gohar: IPL

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated Gol Gohar 2-0 on Matchday 14 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Saturday.

Gol Gohar’s player Amin Pourali missed a penalty in the eighth minute in Sirjan.

Mohammad Omri gave the visiting team the lead in the 49th minute and Sina Asadbeigi made it 2-0 with a long-range shot in the 79th minute.

Earlier in the day, Paykan defeated Sepahan 1-0 in Tehran courtesy of Mohammadali Kazemi’s goal in the 77th minute.

Nassaji beat Tractor 2-0 in Ghaemshahr thanks to goals from Reza Jafari and Alireza Ebrahimi in the first half.

Mes Kerman and Malavan also played out a goalless draw in Kerman.

Persepolis remain top with 29 points, two points above Esteghlal.

Ex-Iran coach Queiroz shortlisted to lead Qatar: report

TEHRAN – Qatar Football Association (QFA) will part company with head coach Felix Sanchez and Carlos Queiroz is a candidate to replace the Spaniard.

The QFA has announced that Sanchez’s contract, which expires on December 31, 2022, will not be renewed, as a result both the parties will move forward to start a new chapter.

“QFA and Felix Sanchez have decided together not to extend into a new contract,” the statement reads.

The QFA confirmed it would decide on a replacement shortly and there have been rumors that former Iran coach Queiroz is a candidate to take the role. An announcement though is not likely to be made until the end of the Persian Gulf Cup.

Iran not to participate at French wrestling tournament

TEHRAN – Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team will not participate at the 2023 Grand Prix de France Henri Deglane.

The competition will be held in Nice, France from January 20 to 23.

Sajad Abbaspour (60kg), Shahin Boodaghi (72kg), Alireza Arghash (77kg), Saeid Karimizadeh (87kg), Vahid Dadkhah (97kg) and Morteza Alghousi (130kg) were chosen to participate at the tournament but head coach Hassan Rangraz announced that the six-man team will not travel to France.

“We will not compete at the 2023 Grand Prix de France Henri Deglane due to the federation’s financial problems,” Rangraz told Tasnim news agency.

The event is named after Deglane, who won Olympic gold for France in the heavyweight category at their home Paris Games in 1924.

Hadi Choopan receives massive hero’s welcome

TEHRAN – Hadi Chopin was greeted by a huge crowd when he returned to Iran.

Choopan reached the pinnacle of the sport of bodybuilding by winning the 2022 Mr. Olympia title. Upon his return home to Iran, he was treated like a hero by fans coming to see him.

He became the first Iranian bodybuilder to lift the Sandow trophy. He dedicated his victory to the women and people in the country. After years of work in and out of the gym, Choopan earned the prize that he has been working for — and it was not easy.

This year’s competition was considered the deepest group in Men’s Open history. Choopan came in shredded once again and proved superior during prejudging. He was able to beat out Derek Lunsford and Nick Walker, who finished second and third respectively. Big Ramy was considered the favorite once again but fell to fifth due to some imperfections.

Hadi Choopan is featured in the documentary Generation Iron Persia as the fan of the sport in the country. It is extremely popular and it showed when the Olympia champ return home to Shiraz, Iran.

In a recent GI Exclusive Interview, coach Hany Rambod detailed the prep for Choopan that ultimately led to his victory. Many believe that Hadi Choopan entered the 2021 competition in good enough shape to be crowned champion. He was just as shredded in 2022 but Rambod explained how he put on 10 pounds of muscle over the final two months of prep.

Choopan deserved the welcome that he got following the 2022 Olympia. One thing that is for sure is that he will look to hang onto the title for as long as possible.

Roberto Torres linked with Foolad: report

TEHRAN – Roberto Torres Morales has been linked with a move to Iranian top-flight club Foolad.

The Spanish media reported that the 33-year-old midfielder has reached an agreement with Foolad.

He is a member of Spanish football club Osasuna since 2007 but is going to part ways with the La Liga side.

Torres was teammate with Javad Nekounam in Osasuna. Nekounam currently heads Foolad.

The Spaniard will reportedly join Foolad in January transfer windows.

Fatemeh Barmaki chosen best female Kurash wrestler of year

TEHRAN – Fatemeh Barmaki of Iran was chosen as best female Kurash wrestler of the year of 2022.

Barmaki won gold medals at the Asian Kurash Championship in Tajikistan and World Senior Kurash Championship in 2022 in the +87 kg weight class.

Umid Esanov (Uzbekistan) was chosen as the best male athlete, Jeong Minwoo (South Korea) was selected as the best male coach, Dilfuza Rakhmatova (Uzbekistan) was picked as the best female coach, Guy Ambeto (Congo) was chosen the best male referee and Kayoko Moriyama (Japan) was selected as the best female referee.

Kurash is an ancient type of upright jacket grappling which originated in the territory of modern Uzbekistan.

I was illegally removed from FFIRI presidency: Azizi Khadem

From Page 1 ▶ “I was scapegoated by some people’s disagreements and personal encounters with the football federation and with me as well,” added the 44-year-old man.

When Azizi Khadem was elected as the president of the FFIRI on February 28, 2021, the Iran national team were on the verge of missing the 2022 World Cup. Back-to-back defeats against Bahrain and Iraq had left Iran on the brink of an early exit from the Asian qualifiers.

However, Dragan Skocic, former coach of the national team, who had replaced Marc Wilmots, did a great job and made Iran the first Asian nation to book their place in the Qatar 2022 World Cup. All these events happened during the presidency of Azizi Khadim.

“Even the most optimistic fans of Iranian football didn’t hope for the national team qualification at that time,” said Azizi Khadem referring to the problems of the federation at that time.

“It was a very pathetic situation because the federation was running by an interim president before me. Even with a draw, Iran would have lost the World Cup, and Team Melli had to win all four remaining matches.

“However, we made history. It was the fastest World Cup qualification in the history of our country’s football.

“The football federation in my time inspired the development of Iranian sports,” Azizi Khadem claimed.

IMF sees a positive outlook for Iranian economy in 2023

from page 1 ► The International Monetary Fund expects the rate of the country's liquidity growth to slow down in 2023. The liquidity growth that reached 47.5 percent of GDP in 2022 will decrease to 45.6 percent in 2023.

The budget deficit of the Iranian government in 2023 will reach six percent of GDP, which is 1.8 percent higher than the figure in 2022.

The Iranian government's total revenues will not change in 2023 compared to the previous year. The Iranian government's income in 2023 is estimated to be 8.3 percent of the GDP, registering no change compared to the previous year. However, the government's non-oil incomes will increase from 7.4 percent of GDP in 2022 to 7.5 percent of GDP in 2023.

Based on the IMF data, the downward trend of the Iranian government's gross debt will continue in 2023 to settle at 31.9 percent of the GDP this year.

The fund also predicts Iran's current account balance to be \$30.2 billion in 2023. Iran's current account balance in 2022 is estimated at more than \$32 billion.



Based on the mentioned data, Iran's foreign currency reserves increase by more than \$11.4 billion in 2023 and reach \$42.2 billion. Iran's available foreign currency reserves in 2022 are estimated at \$30.8 billion. This international organization has announced that Iran's foreign currency reserves are more than \$120 billion, but it claims that Iran has access to only a small part of these reserves due to the U.S. sanctions.

According to the estimate of the International Monetary Fund, Iran's foreign debt in 2022 will be equal to 0.5 percent of the GDP and it is expected that this figure will remain the same in 2023.

Intl. leather, footwear exhibit to kick off in Tehran on January 9

TEHRAN – The ninth International Exhibition of Footwear, Bag, Leather, and Related Industries (MPEX 2023) is scheduled to kick off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on January 9, 2023, IRIB reported.

This four-day exhibition will be held with the aim of increasing international interactions, developing exports, and introducing new technologies and knowledge in the leather and footwear industry while promoting domestic

capabilities.

Increasing the quality of products, encouraging competition among producers, optimizing the product distribution system, responding to the diverse needs of the markets inside and outside the country, and facilitating the access of Iranian producers to regional markets are also reported to be among the goals of this international exhibition.

12m tons of basic goods unloaded in Imam Khomeini port in 9 months

TEHRAN – As announced by a provincial official, 12 million tons of basic commodities were unloaded in Imam Khomeini port, in southwestern Khuzestan province, during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2022).

Behrouz Aqaei, the director-general of Khuzestan province's Ports and Maritime Department, said 209 vessels have unloaded 12 million tons of basic goods in Imam Khomeini Port in the mentioned nine-month period, of which 50 percent of the goods were for the private sector and 50 percent for the governmental sector.

As reported by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), 17,449,670 tons of basic commodities were unloaded in the ports of

the country during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year.

As previously announced by the deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran has imported 30.9 million tons of basic goods in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022).

Foroud Asgari, the deputy head of IRICA for customs affairs, said that the imported goods were in 25 commodity groups.

Putting the value of the imported basic commodities at \$19.6 billion in the past year, the official said that the imports show a 60-percent rise in worth and 32-percent growth in weight, as compared to the Iranian calendar year 1399.

TEDPIX falls 56,800 points on Saturday

TEHRAN– TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 56,819 points to 1.59 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

As reported, over 14.983 billion securities worth 79.324 trillion rials (about \$273.5 million) were traded at the TSE.

Sturgeon production up 30% in Golestan province

TEHRAN– As announced by a provincial official, the production of sturgeons has increased by 30 percent in Golestan province, in the northeast of Iran, in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2022).

Mahmoud Saqli, a director of the Fisheries Department of the province, said that the production of sturgeons has reached 150 tons in this year, while the figure was 118 tons in the whole of last year.

He further stated that sturgeon production has been transferred to the private sector, adding that all sturgeon breeding farms are operated by the private sector, but the breeding of sturgeon fry is done by the fisheries breeding centers of this

department in order to preserve aquatic stocks.

Saqli announced the activity of eight sturgeon breeding centers in the province and stated: "Three farms are operating in Bandargaz, three farms are in Kordkoui, one farm is in Agh-Qala and one farm is in Aliabad-Katul.

In relation to the provision of fish feed, the official said supplying fish feed is the responsibility of the private sector and Fisheries Department has no role in this field.

The Persian sturgeon (*Acipenser persicus*) is a species of fish in the family Acipenseridae. It is found in the Caspian Sea and to a lesser extent the Black Sea and ascends certain rivers to spawn, mainly the Volga, Kura, Araks, and Ural Rivers.

from page 1 ► The ports enjoy the advantage of being situated in the vicinity of the country's largest petrochemical special economic zones and the second hub of the steel industry, having the largest capacity for loading and unloading basic commodities, and having the capacity for transiting and transshipping goods to Iraq, Turkey, and the Caucasus.

Some 40 docks with a total length of 7 kilometers and vast warehouses with an annual capacity of 29 million tons are some other unique features of the ports that are equipped with 1,192 vessels with a capacity to carry 34 million tons of cargo.

For the purpose of promoting maritime tourism, studies commenced in 2019 for building 8 docks at Imam Khomeini port with an estimated cost of 1,200 billion rials (some \$3 million) and building tourism docks at Abadan and Shadegan ports costing 3.5 billion rials.

The port, according to the latest statistics, has a total loading and unloading capacity of around 34 million tons of goods including basic commodities, oil products, mining, and chemical products, and general cargo.

The port's basic commodity warehouses currently hold some 5.7 million tons of wheat, corn, barley, oil seeds, sugar, rice, and edible oil.

Khorramshahr port is situated



Khuzestan ports in full swing

at the Arvand free trade and an industrial zone with the advantage of neighboring Iraq and Kuwait.

Abadan port is situated near Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq. It is equipped with unique infrastructures for passenger shipment to Iraq and Kuwait. The port also enjoys appropriate facilities for exporting fish and shrimp, as well as agricultural and industrial goods.

Restarting the export of Abadan refinery products after 40 years, launching a passenger terminal for transferring people

to Iraq, and creating a joint water border with Iraq are among the notable development projects.

Abadan is equipped with 7 docks with a total length of 450 meters and has a warehousing area of around 30,000 square meters.

Arvandkenar port is situated at the nearest distance to a number of ports in Kuwait and Iraq and is most appropriate for exporting fish and agricultural products. It has also equipped with suitable infrastructure for exporting construction materials.

A dock with a capacity of 1,000

tons, and warehouse with an area of 2,000 square meters, and an access road with a length of 3 kilometers are being built in the port.

Choebdeh is the most active port in the field of exporting livestock. It is situated near Kuwait and Iraq and has the advantage of transferring passengers to Iraq and Kuwait. The port is also equipped with infrastructure for exporting construction materials.

The port enjoys 3 docks with a total length of 206 meters and a warehousing area of 24,000 square meters. Some 1,000 billion rials worth of development projects is underway.

And the last but not least, Shadegan is an important port in terms of local trade. The port is equipped with infrastructures for maritime tourism and is appropriate for exporting fish as well as agricultural products and construction materials.

Some 700 billion rials worth of development projects is underway, including building a tourism dock and launching an optical fiber network.

In addition to the abovementioned ports, feasibility studies are underway for establishing the giant port of Khali-j-e Fars (Persian Gulf) which is projected to be able to anchor large container ships and will compete with key ports in the region to gain a greater share of the regional trade.

Honey production rises 30% in Kordestan province

TEHRAN– Production of honey has risen 30 percent in Kordestan province, in the west of Iran, during the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2022), as compared to the previous year, according to a provincial official.

Referring to the census of apiaries in the province during October 8-20, 2022, Farzad Moaveni, the deputy head of the province's Agriculture Department, informed about the favorable growth of honey production and the number of colonies in the apiaries of the province.

While referring to the number of colonies in Kordestan province, he added: "According to this census, there are 278,000 colonies in the province, of which 97 percent are modern and three percent are indigenous."

Announcing that a total of 2,435 tons of honey was produced in the province this year, he said: "2,415 tons of it were related to modern colonies and 20 tons were related to native colonies."

Pointing out that the average production of honey in the modern colonies of the province was 8.6 kilograms and in the native colonies was 2.9 kilograms, he reminded that there are 7,213 apiaries in the province, which shows an increase of 2.5 percent compared to last year.

Saying that 257 kilograms of royal jelly was produced in Kordestan this year, the deputy head of the province's Agriculture Department said: "One of the priority projects of the province is the development of beekeeping, which has been seriously pursued in the last few years."

Major companies active in water industry ink co-op MOUs

TEHRAN – Iran's major companies active in the water and wastewater industry have signed several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with each other and with other knowledge-based companies to cooperate in developing and modernizing the mentioned sector.

As reported by the Energy Ministry news portal (Paven), the said MOUs have been signed on the sidelines of the 18th International Water and Wastewater Exhibition which is being held at Tehran Permeant International Fairgrounds.

The water and Wastewater Company of Iran and the country's Water Research Institute are among the entities that signed MOUs to cooperate in providing new solutions to the water and wastewater sector's challenges.

Also, on the sidelines of the mentioned exhibition, three items and equipment which have been manufactured inside the country for the first time were unveiled.

One of these items is a hydraulic



Back in late August 2022, the director of the Agriculture Ministry's beekeeping development program said the country's annual honey production is expected to reach 115,000 tons in the current Iranian calendar year 1401 (ends on March 20, 2023).

According to Touraj Saremi, the government has paid over 145 billion rials (over \$500,000) of facilities to the country's beekeepers since August 2021 when the government took office.

Saremi noted that Agriculture Ministry has defined a five-year development plan to reform the structure of the country's apiaries and increase the quantity and quality of honey production during the Iranian calendar year 1401 to 1405 (begins in March 2026).

"The implementation of this program requires the necessary support for providing inputs, implementing educational-training programs, and providing facilities to beekeepers. It is also required to provide apiaries with insurance coverage to reduce the risks and to ensure sustainable production," he said.



motor for water distribution and transmission, which is considered the first smart hydraulic motor built inside the country.

Hydraulic simulation of supply and distribution networks, accurate calculation of pressure and flow at network points, connection to other smart systems, the definition of control and operation rules, the definition of new elements (wells), EPS and Steady State solution, connection with GIS and geo databases, defining valve and pump operation diagrams and defining new consumption patterns are among the capabilities of this motor.

The electric actuator of adjustable industrial valves is another piece of equipment that was unveiled at the exhibition.

This actuator operates with an automatic clutch system for controlling valves in the water and wastewater network.

Optimum management of water resources and prevention of water wastage and meeting the needs of water and wastewater companies, regional water organizations, and thermal power plants are among the design goals of this actuator.

Iran's 18th International Water and Wastewater Exhibition kicked off on Friday at Tehran Permeant International Fairgrounds.

As reported, 169 domestic companies along with six foreign exhibitors are participating in this year's exhibition which was opened by Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian.

The U.S., China, Italy, and Canada are among the countries whose representatives are showcasing

their latest products and services in the four-day event.

A considerable number of the exhibitors taking part in the exhibition are knowledge-based and technological companies.

The event covers a variety of areas and commodity groups including metal pipes and fittings, industrial valves, pumps, and rotary machines, industrial water treatment, dams, and hydroelectric power plants, education, irrigation and drainage, water transmission lines, polymer pipes, and fittings, chemical materials, paint and coatings, household water treatment, household faucets, leak detectors, blowers and vacuums and measuring systems.

Specialized meetings and news conferences, as well as educational workshops on various topics including water consumption management and examining the challenges of the water sector, are among the programs scheduled to be held on the sidelines of the exhibition.

“Fascist” Israeli cabinet sworn in amid Palestinian UN “victory”

From page 1 ► A member of Israel's own Knesset admitted that the occupation, under the rule of Netanyahu and his extremist cabinet, is moving toward a “fully-pledged fascist state”.

The remarks were made during an Israeli settler protest outside the Knesset in strong opposition to the return of Netanyahu who has been Israel's longest-ever serving Prime Minister.

The truth is Israel has always held a fascist ideology but it is now under the rule of a more extreme and fascist ideology. The regime has given the powers of governance to war criminals and extremists because Israel has never been so weak and vulnerable as it is at the moment.

It has been exposed because of the unprecedented armed resistance that has been emerging from the occupied West Bank this year.

Such is the extent of the resistance; Israel has turned to Netanyahu, the war criminal and a person that is facing multiple corruption charges along with a coalition that is so extreme that it has called for the expulsion of all Palestinians from their native land and the execution of Palestinian prisoners.

Netanyahu was forced to bring in these fascist figures because he wanted to secure a majority that can bring him back to power and save him from corruption charges.

In other words, the war criminal does not care for the safety of Israeli settlers which is something that is very concerning for Israelis who are planning on leaving the occupied Palestinian territories in their droves, according to surveys.

There are now Israelis protesting against the new cabinet, for the first time in history, because of new ministers in an office such as Itamar Ben-Gvir who has made so many disturbing and racist statements that even Israel's allies are concerned.

The most extreme and right-wing fascist cabinet in history will put Israel at odds with large parts of the Israeli public, and concern Israel's closest allies while escalating tensions with the Palestinians.

Reports indicate that some elements of the new Israeli cabinet are so extreme that the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden will not deal with them as they feel uncomfortable with such elements.

Netanyahu's incoming hardline government will place illegal West



Bank settlement expansion at the top of its agenda and had already pledged to legalize dozens of illegally built outposts and annex the occupied territory as part of its coalition deal with ultranationalist allies.

Some members of the new cabinet squat on illegal settlements themselves, in a sign that there will be a major push in the future toward expanding settler units, despite the fact they are considered illegal under international law.

But experts say the newly formed West Bank resistance groups will expand their armed operations in the face of further settlement expansion, which comes alongside Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes.

The new cabinet members also support the Israeli settlers storming of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, something Palestinians have said is a redline.

There is no doubt this will represent a new escalation in occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem) next year and the wider occupied West Bank as well as inside the occupied Palestinian territories.

Some Palestinian analysts say they are glad the new Israeli government is in power because it represents the real face of the regime in front of the international community.

Meanwhile, Palestinians have welcomed a vote by the United Nations General Assembly to ask the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to deliver a widespread opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

“The time has come for Israel to be a state subject to law, and to be held accountable for its ongoing crimes against our people,” said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a senior Palestinian official based in the

occupied West Bank.

In a social media post, another senior official Hussein al-Sheikh said that the vote “reflects the victory of Palestinian diplomacy.”

The United Nations General Assembly has passed a resolution calling on the ICJ to give an opinion on Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine.

The General Assembly voted 87 to 26 with 53 abstentions on the resolution, with Western nations split but with virtually unanimous support in the Islamic world – including among Arab states that have normalized relations with Israel.

Russia and China also voted in favor of the resolution.

Israel, the U.S., and 24 other members – including the United Kingdom and Germany – voted against the resolution, while France was among the 53 nations that abstained.

The resolution will see the ICJ give an opinion on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

The Hague-based ICJ, also known as the World Court, is the top UN court. Its rulings are binding but have no power to enforce them.

Palestine's UN ambassador Riyad Mansour noted that the vote came amid the swearing-in of a new far-right Israeli government, which he said will accelerate “colonial and racist policies” toward Palestinians.

He also hailed nations that voted in favor of the resolution and were “undeterred by threats and pressure”.

“We trust that, regardless of your vote today, if you believe in international law and peace, you will uphold the opinion of the International Court of Justice when delivered and you will stand up to this Israeli government right

now,” Mansour told the General Assembly.

The UN General Assembly asked the ICJ to give an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's “occupation, settlement, and annexation ... including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of the Holy City of al-Quds (Jerusalem), and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures”.

The UN resolution also asks the ICJ to advise on how those policies and practices “affect the legal status of the occupation” and what legal consequences arise for all countries and the UN from this status.

The ICJ last weighed in on the issue of Israel's occupation in 2004, when it ruled that Israel's apartheid separation wall in the occupied West Bank and al-Quds (Jerusalem) was illegal. Israel rejected that ruling, accusing the court of being politically motivated.

Israel now occupies all of historic Palestine and expelled more than a million Palestinians from their homes. Israel also occupies Syria's Golan Heights in the north.

In 1967, the regime expanded its military occupation to the West Bank, which makes it the longest occupation in modern history.

Among Western nations that backed the resolution was Portugal, whose representative acknowledged the “risk of overjudicialising international relations” but said the world court “underpins the international rules-based order which we seek to preserve”.

Mansour said “This vote, and the request, comes one day after the new Israeli government was formed, pledging to accelerate colonial and racist policies against the Palestinian people. We trust that regardless of your vote today if you believe in international law and peace, you will uphold the opinion of the International Court of Justice when delivered. And you will stand up to this Israeli government right now because freedom, justice, and peace shall prevail.”

While symbolic in nature, the advice will increase global awareness about Israel's occupation which could increase the activity of NGOs and other organizations in dealing with Israel.

As for the liberation of Palestine, experts say armed resistance is the only path left.

WORLD HEADLINES

Russia allows gas debt payments in foreign currencies

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on Friday allowing “unfriendly” Western countries that have placed sanctions on Russia to pay their debts for natural gas supplies in foreign currencies instead of rubles. The decree was published on the government's official portal for legal information.

The new document amends a presidential decree from March, which required all payments for Russian gas to be made in Russian currency. At the time, President Putin said foreign governments were using their currencies “as weapons,” meaning Russia should not use them in settlements. The March decree came shortly after Western states introduced sanctions against Russia over its military operation in Ukraine. The restrictions made it nearly impossible for Russia to carry out transactions in euros and dollars.

The new document proposes transferring the funds intended for settling the debt to a designated foreign currency account of the Russian supplier. Once they are credited to the account, the debt is considered to be paid. The new decree stipulates, however, that the repayment of gas debt does not imply that Russia will resume supplies unless the buyer agrees to pay for future deliveries in rubles.

Venezuela votes out U.S.-backed opposition leader

Opposition lawmakers in Venezuela have voted to dissolve the ‘interim government’ formed under their one-time leader, Juan Guaido, the main rival to the country's ruling socialist party and once a darling of the U.S. foreign policy establishment.

Holding their vote over a Zoom call, the opposition-controlled National Assembly moved to reorganize their movement on Friday, with 72 lawmakers voting in favor of disbanding the legislature compared to just 29 opposed. Guaido's term at the head of the assembly, as well as his ‘interim presidency’ declared in 2019 with the blessing of the U.S., are now set to end on January 5.

“Venezuela needs new machinery in this struggle,” lawmaker Juan Miguel Matheus of the opposition Justice First party said after the vote, adding that Guaido's tenure as interim leader “was something that was supposed to be temporary, but it became something perpetual”.

Guaido and his supporters, meanwhile, have argued that dissolving the interim government could spell the demise of any unified opposition movement, insisting it will only bolster the power and influence of Maduro, who has been deemed an illegitimate leader by Washington and a long list of allies.

“This is not about defending Guaido. This is about not losing the important tools that we have in this struggle,” Guaido said.

Turkey agrees to withdraw troops from Syria following Moscow talks

Turkey has agreed to fully withdraw its troops from northern Syria following tripartite talks involving Moscow, Ankara, and Damascus earlier this week, Syrian newspaper Al-Watan has reported.

The three countries' defense ministers – Hulusi Akar, Ali Mahmoud Abbas, and Sergey Shoigu – met in Moscow on Wednesday for the first meeting of its kind since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

According to the paper's source in Damascus, the negotiations resulted in “Türkiye's consent to completely withdraw its troops from the Syrian territories that it occupies in the north of the country.”

Ankara and Damascus also expressed a common view that the Syrian-based Kurdish YPG militia, which Turkey associates with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), “are agents of Israel and the U.S., and pose a grave threat to both Türkiye and Syria.”

Turkey considers the separatist PKK and allied Kurdish groups to be “terrorist organizations” that threaten its national security. The Turkish military carried out airstrikes against YPG targets in northern Syria in November, with Ankara saying a ground operation in the area was also on the cards.

A special trilateral commission will be created by Russia, Turkey, and Syria to ensure that the agreements reached in Moscow are honored, Al-Watan reported.

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told local media on Saturday that “one shouldn't expect that everything will be solved at once in a single meeting.”

In Moscow, Turkey “emphasized that we respect Syria's territorial integrity and sovereign rights and that our only goal is the fight against terrorism” including the PKK/YPG and Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS), he said.

Countries around the world begin to ring in 2023 after turbulent year

The world's eight billion people began ushering in 2023 on Saturday and bidding farewell to a turbulent 12 months marked by war in Europe, stinging price rises, Lionel Messi's World Cup glory and the deaths of Queen Elizabeth, Pele and former pope Benedict.

Many will be looking to cut loose this New Year's Eve after a few pandemic-dampened years, setting aside pinched budgets and a virus that is increasingly forgotten but not gone.

Sydney will be among the first major cities to ring in 2023, restaking its claim to be the “New Year's Eve capital of the world” after two years of lockdown and coronavirus-muted festivities.

Australia's borders have reopened and the crowds gathering at Sydney's sparkling harbour to watch 100,000 pyrotechnics illuminate the southern sky were expected to number more than one million.

N. Korea fires missiles toward Japan

North Korea has fired three short-range ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan, according to South Korean and Japanese defense officials, who condemned the show of force as a threat to regional stability.

The South Korean military's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) detailed the latest missile launches on Saturday, as cited in local press reports, saying the three projectiles were fired around 8 a.m. from the DPRK's North Hwanghae Province, located south of the capital. According to Yonhap news agency, it was the first time the area has been used as a ballistic missile site.

The military was quick to denounce the move, vowing to step up joint surveillance efforts with

the United States “in preparation for further provocations by North Korea” and to be ready to “overwhelmingly respond” in force if needed.

All three munitions were fired from a mobile launch vehicle, the JCS said, adding that they each flew about 350km (217 miles) northeast in the direction of the Sea of Japan – known as the East Sea in the Koreas.

The North Korean launches may have come in response to a successful trial of Seoul's new solid-fuel rocket on Thursday, which officials say will be used to construct a space-based surveillance apparatus focused on Pyongyang. The South has stressed the need to bolster its air defenses in recent days, namely after at least

five North Korean drones penetrated its airspace earlier this week.

Japan's Defense Ministry also noted the most recent weapons test and clarified that while the missiles flew toward its territory, none entered its exclusive economic zone, which extends some 370km (229 miles) from the country's coast.

“North Korea's series of actions, including its repeated ballistic missile launches, threatens the peace and security of Japan, the region, and the international community,” the ministry said in a statement, adding that aircraft and ships along the missiles' flight path were alerted, but that there had been no incidents “at this time.”

Benedict XVI dies at 95

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, the shy German theologian who tried to reawaken Christianity in a secularized Europe but will forever be remembered as the first pontiff in 600 years to resign from the job, died Saturday. He was 95.

Benedict stunned the world on Feb. 11, 2013, when he announced, in his typical, soft-spoken Latin, that he no longer had the strength to run the 1.2 billion-strong Catholic Church that he had steered for

eight years through scandal and indifference.

His dramatic decision paved the way for the conclave that elected Pope Francis as his successor. The two popes then lived side-by-side in the Vatican gardens, an unprecedented arrangement that set the stage for future “popes emeritus” to do the same.

A statement from Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni on Saturday morning said: “With pain, I

inform that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI died today at 9:34 in the Mater Ecclesia Monastery in the Vatican. Further information will be released as soon as possible.”

The Vatican said Benedict's remains would be on public display in St. Peter's Basilica starting Monday for the faithful to pay their final respects.

The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had never wanted to be pope, planning at age 78 to spend

his final years writing in the “peace and quiet” of his native Bavaria.

Instead, he was forced to follow the footsteps of the beloved St. John Paul II and run the church through the fallout of the clerical sex abuse scandal and then a second scandal that erupted when his own butler stole his personal papers and gave them to a journalist.

Being elected pope, he once said, felt like a “guillotine” had come down on him.



The Seyyed Al-Shohada Cultural Center in northern Iraq's Sahl Nineveh Club held a big memorial ceremony for resistance commanders Martyrs Gen. Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al- Muhandis.

Over 1,300 people trained as crafters in Fars



TEHRAN – Over 1,300 people have been trained as crafters in the southern province of Fars during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

“A total of 1,354 people attended the handicrafts training courses in 14 fields in Fars during the first nine months of the year,”

Behzad Ahmadi Farsani explained on Saturday.

The courses included kilim, miniature, mirror work, wood carving, and woodwork, the official added.

The ancient region of Fars, also spelled Pars or Persis, was the heart of the Achaemenian Empire (c. 550–330 BC), which was founded by Cyrus the Great and had its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next. For instance, Shiraz is named a “world city of [diverse] handicrafts”, Malayer is a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture, while Zanjan has gained the title of a “world city of filigree”.

Jameh Mosque of Dezful in need of urgent restoration

TEHRAN – Jameh Mosque of Dezful, a centuries-old congregational place of worship that stands tall in the southwestern Khuzestan province, is in need of urgent restoration, a local tourism official has said.

Due to the damage to the sewer pipes, the eastern and western sides of the mosque need to undergo urgent restoration, Abbas Cheragh-Cheshm explained on Saturday.

A proper budget needs to be allocated to the restoration project, the official added.

The historical mosque has been added to the national heritage list.

Khuzestan is home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Susa, Tchogha Zanbil, and Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System yet it is a region of raw beauty where its visitors could spend weeks exploring. The province is also a cradle for handicrafts and arts whose crafters inherited from their preceding generations.

Lying at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering Iraq on the west, Khuzestan was settled about 6000 BC by a people with affinities to the Sumerians, who came from the Zagros



Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there nearly contemporaneously with the first cities in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium. Khuzestan, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, came to constitute the heart of the Elamite kingdom, with Susa as its capital.

The terms “Jameh Mosque”, “Masjed-e Jameh” and “Friday Mosque” are used in Iran for a grand communal mosque where mandatory Friday prayers are performed: the phrase is used in other Muslim countries but only in Iran does it designate this purpose.

Illegal diggers arrested in northern Iran

TEHRAN – The Iranian police have recently arrested six illegal excavators in Sari, the capital of the northern province of Mazandaran, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage, has said.

The accused people were traced and finally arrested after police received reports from cultural heritage aficionados and local people about their misdeeds, CHTN quoted Mohammadreza Kordan as saying on Saturday.

Some digging tools were seized from the culprits, who were handed over to the judicial system for further investigation, the official added.

Sandwiched between the towering Alborz mountain range and the Caspian Sea, Mazandaran has a rich yet turbulent history. An early

civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabarestan).

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty.

The northern section of the region consists of lowland alongside the Caspian and upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Marshy backlands dominate the coastal plain, and extensive gravel fans fringe the mountains. The climate is permanently subtropical and humid, with very hot summers.

UNESCO World Heritage sites in Iran: Cultural Landscape of Maymand

Maymand is a rocky and dugout village and one of the primary habitats of man in Iran with approximately 2 - 3 thousand years history. The close relationship between life and the surrounding nature is the particular values of this historical village in such a way that it continues, even currently and in spite of the new technology developments, to be an original site and keeps its original appearance without any tangible manipulating the nature.

Each dugout house in Maymand which may include one or more rooms and stables is totally called a Kicheh. The structure of all Kichehs is not the same and they are different in the number and size of rooms. In addition, the rooms have been separated, in Maymand houses, from the back part of the house (Pastoo) and sometimes they cover the niches using certain fabric curtains.

Maymand bathrooms are especially wonderful

because of their traditional system with a Khazaneh and they also indicate the importance of hygienic conditions. There are also other places in this historical village such as mosques, schools, Hussaynia, Caravanseraï.

Some special customs are popular in the village and the words of Sassanid Pahlavi are still used in their language and conversations.

In the first four months of the year, people live in the lower plains of Maymand in order to graze their cattle. They immigrate to the neighboring villages, farms, and gardens to live there in the second four months of the year and for the third four months, they prefer to stay in the dugout houses at the heart of the mountains to seek shelter from the cold winter. These houses are cool during summer and get warm in winter due to their architectural style.

(Source: Visit Iran)

Iran eyes UNESCO tag for its Sassanid fortress

From Page 1 ► The unmissable eight-towered fortress dominates Khorramabad as one of the most visited travel destinations in the region for both domestic and foreign sightseers. The fortress seems particularly imposing and dramatic when floodlit at night, offering picturesque views of its encircling crenelated battlements.

Experts believe that the fortress is comparable with similar works in Naqsh-e Rostam, Naqsh-e Rajab, Tape Chugan, and Firuzabad in Fars province.

In 2018, UNESCO added an ensemble of Sassanian historical cities in southern Iran -- titled “Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region”-- to its World Heritage list. The ensemble is comprised of eight archaeological sites situated in three geographical parts of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan. It reflects the optimized utilization of natural topography and bears witness to the influence of Achaemenid and Parthian cultural traditions and of Roman art, which later had a significant impact on the architecture and artistic styles of the Islamic era.

The Sassanid era is of very high



importance in the history of Iran.

Under Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions such as palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan which are amongst the highlights of the ensemble. Crafts such as metalwork and gem engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state. In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the

language of the Sassanians.

Efforts made by the Sassanids also yield a revival of Iranian nationalism took place, for example, Zoroastrianism was declared the state religion. The dynasty evolved by Ardashir I and was destroyed by the Arabs during the period 637 to 651. The dynasty was named after Sasan, an ancestor of Ardashir I.

Under his leadership who reigned from 224 to 241, the Sassanians overthrew the

Parthians and created an empire that was constantly changing in size as it reacted to Rome and Byzantium to the west and the Kushans and Hephthalites to the east, according to Britannica Encyclopedia. At the time of Shapur I (reigned 241 CE–272), the empire stretched from Sogdiana and Iberia (Georgia) in the north to the Mazun region of Arabia in the south; in the east, it extended to the Indus River and the west to the upper Tigris and Euphrates river valleys.

Soaked in history and culture, Lorestan is one of the lesser-known travel destinations in Iran, which mainly acts as a gateway to the sweltering plains below in the adjoining Khuzestan province. Lorestan is also a region of raw beauty that an avid nature lover could spend weeks exploring.

The region was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC.

Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid dynasties.

Excavation sheds new light on ancient mine in Zanjan

TEHRAN – A team of Iranian archaeologists has recently finished an archaeological season on a sloping hill situated near an ancient mine that previously yielded well-reserved corpses of entrapped miners in Zanjan.

The remains of a workshop space with large quantities of ash and charcoal as well as clay and stone structures were discovered during this survey, archaeologist Abolfazl Aali said on Saturday.

“Based on the existing findings, including pottery pieces, it is likely that the uncovered works are from the Sassanid period, which will give us more information about the purpose and exact date of the site,” he added.

Authorized by the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism, the excavation also aimed to explore any possible connections existing between the hill and the ancient mine of Chehrabad, he mentioned.

Previous rounds of excavations of the mine yielded some well-preserved salt mummies and their belongings from 1993 onwards. The findings have been put on a show at the National Museum of Iran, Zanjan's Zolfaghari Archaeological Museum, and joint Iranian and German exhibitions under the names “Man in Search of Resources” and “Death in Salt.”

What was a catastrophe for the ancient miners has become a sensation of science. Sporting a long white beard, iron knives, and a single gold earring, the first salt mummy was discovered in 1993. He is estimated to be trapped in the mine in ca. 300 CE. In 2004, another mummy was discovered only 50 feet away, followed by another in 2005 and a “teenage” boy mummy later that year.

Hegmataneh’s global registration to boost tourism in west Iran

TEHRAN – Tourism in the west of the country will benefit from the possible inclusion of ancient Hegmataneh on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The possible global registration of ancient Hegmataneh in west-central Hamedan province will lead to double prosperity for the tourism axis in the west of the country, a local tourism official said on Saturday.

Before traveling to Iran, foreign tours prepare their itinerary and find out where most World Heritage sites are located, Ali Khaksar added.

Foreign tourists will bring economic prosperity to Hamedan, so the province will be introduced to the world as a travel destination, he explained.

Back in May, the official announced that a working group has been formed to identify, investigate and solve potential problems in the path of possible registration of Hegmataneh in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Moreover, Hamedan authorities

are ready to take preliminary measures to pave the way for the global registration of Hegmataneh and prepare it to be assessed by UNESCO evaluators, he said.

Earlier this year, a traffic fellow related to a nearby steel marketplace was declared as one of the major barriers faced with the possible registration based on UNESCO criteria.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations. Ecbatana was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenid kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

Ecbatana is widely believed to be once a mysterious capital of Medes. According to ancient Greek writers, the city was founded in about 678 BC by Deioeces, who was the first king of the Medes.

French Assyriologist Charles

Fossey (1869 – 1946) directed the first excavation in Tepe Hegmataneh for six months in 1913. Erich Friedrich Schmidt (1897 – 1964), who was a German and American-naturalized archaeologist, took some aerial photos from Hamedan between 1935 and 1937.

According to the Greek historian Xenophon of Athens (c.430-c.355), Ecbatana became the summer residence of the Achaemenid kings. Their palace is described by the Greek historian Polybius of Megalopolis. He writes that the city was richer and more beautiful than all other cities in the world; although it had no wall, the palace, was built on an artificial terrace, according to Livius, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Furthermore, an inscription unearthed in 2000 indicates that Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358) built a terrace with columns in Ecbatana. Some twelve kilometers southwest of



the fibers of the garments, and not least they offer an excellent overview of the changes in cloth types, patterns of weaving, and the changes of the fibers through time.

Saltman No. 5 had tapeworm eggs from the Taenia sp. genus in his system. These were identified during the study of his remains. The find indicates the consumption of raw or undercooked meat, and this is the first case of this parasite in ancient Iran and the earliest evidence of ancient intestinal parasites in the area. The best preserved and probably the most harrowing of the saltmen is Saltman No. 4. A sixteen-year-old miner, caught in the moment of death, crushed by a cave-in.

The oldest-known mine on the archaeological record is believed to be the Ngwenya Mine in Eswatini (Swaziland), which radiocarbon dating shows to be about 43,000 years old. At this site, Paleolithic humans mined hematite to make the red pigment ochre. Moreover, mines of a similar age in Hungary are believed to be sites where Neanderthals may have mined flint for weapons and tools.

Hamedan is Ganjnameh, where Darius I and his son Xerxes had inscriptions cut into the rock.

Polybius, a Greek historian of the Hellenistic period noted for his work The Histories, tells that the builders used cedar and cypress wood, which was covered with silver and gold. The roof tiles, columns, and ceilings were plated with silver and gold. He adds that the palace was stripped of its precious metals in the invasion of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great and that the rest was seized during the reigns of Antigonus and Seleucus. Later, Ecbatana was one of the capitals of the Seleucid and the Parthian Empires, sometimes called Epiphaneia.

Around 1220 Hamedan was destroyed by the Mongol invaders. In 1386 it was sacked by Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, and the inhabitants were massacred. It was partly restored in the 17th century and subsequently changed hands often between Iranian ruling houses and the Ottomans.

Preventive measures intensified to deal with new Covid wave

TEHRAN – With the emergence of new Omicron strains, people should take preventive measures and observe health protocols strictly, a spokesman of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, has said.

There is a possibility of an increase in corona-infected cases in the coming weeks due to the spread of the disease in the countries of the region, East Asia, and European countries, ISNA quoted Abbass Shir-Ozhan as saying on Saturday.

It is planned to encourage people to receive booster doses in order to deal with the surge in infected cases, he noted.

At the same time, the necessity of observing hygiene measures such as keeping social distance and wearing masks in closed and crowded places, especially in schools and universities, was underlined, he added.

Preparing the medical centers in order to provide proper treatment services was another issue that was emphasized. In addition, all travelers at air, land, and water borders should be screened or undergo tests, he announced.



It is impossible to make an accurate prediction about the future; Because the behavior of the virus in different strains may be different, but it seems that if people follow both vaccination and observance of health protocols, we will not face a dangerous situation, he stated.

A week earlier, Behnam Arshi, head of the office of infectious diseases of the Ministry of Health, warned that there is a high risk of a new coronavirus wave while the existing variants are not over yet.

Facing different strains over the

last 2 years proved that coronavirus has numerous unpredictable and surprising behaviors; therefore, people should continue to prioritize compliance with health guidelines and vaccination, he explained.

Currently, the country is in a favorable condition in terms of low transmission rate so that after 26 months of fighting, the number of Covid mortality has reached less than 10 people and it claimed no lives in several days.

But recently, medical researchers announced the risk of an Omicron variant emerging in the world that is

resistant to all existing therapeutic antibodies, and the findings indicate that new treatments must be identified to deal with this variant.

According to new research at a German institute, BQ1.1, is resistant to all approved antibody treatments.

All travelers entering the country via air, land, and water borders should be screened or undergo tests.

Omicron escapes neutralizing antibodies and causes symptomatic disease even in vaccinated or convalescent individuals due to mutations in the spike protein. This is known as an immune escape and is dangerous for high-risk populations, including the elderly and people with weak immune systems.

Intl. students in Iranian universities to double in 3 years

TEHRAN – The number of foreign students will double in the Iranian universities by the next three years, Hashem Dadashpour, the Iranian deputy science minister has said.

Universities should increase their interactions and scientific exchanges in order to attract international students and accelerate internationalization in the region and the world, he highlighted.

Iranian universities achieved good ranks at the global level and based on the evaluations of the world's most prestigious institutions so that there is the capacity to attract international students, he said.

He mentioned holding the cultural and sports Olympiad for international students as a way to make them more aware of Iran's capabilities, ISNA reported.

By the next three years, the number of foreign students from 120 countries will increase by two times in the universities of the country, he predicted.

Some 108,000 students from 117 countries have enrolled in Iranian universities for the current academic year (started September 23), Mohammad Mohammadi Masoudi, an official with the Ministry of Science, has said.

Leading in attracting international students

Iran is among the 15 successful countries in attracting international students, according to Mohammad Javad Salmanpour, the deputy head of the Organization for Student Affairs.

The education of foreign students in Iran has

grown significantly compared to previous years, even last year, it has doubled, he said.

However, it is far from the desired position; Because Iranian universities have higher capacities in all respects than the universities of regional or European countries, he noted.

Iran has the ability and capacity to have more than 250,000 foreign students by 2026, he stated.

Currently, nearly 100,000 foreign nationals are studying in Iran, more than 90 percent of whom are from Iraq and Afghanistan and the rest are from other countries.

Some 108,000 students from 117 countries have enrolled in Iranian universities for the current academic year (started September 23).

These students are studying in different fields of science, research and technology, health and medical education, and also in the fields of humanities, Islamic sciences, Persian language and literature, law, fundamentals of Islamic law, management fields, economics, psychology, social sciences, as well as engineering, agricultural sciences, animal sciences, and basic sciences.



Foreign nationals constitute 1.64% of students

Currently, foreign nationals constitute 1.64 percent of the country's student population, which is about 0.14 percent higher than the goal set by the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), Mohammad Javad Salmanpour, the deputy head of the Organization for Student Affairs, said in April.

Twenty-five percent of the foreign students studying in Iranian universities are Afghan nationals, he added.

Afghan students attend Iranian universities in three ways; some enter the university by participating in the national entrance exam of Iran, and some others receive admission from universities that have non-Iranian student licenses. The third group also attended the country's universities through scholarships, he explained.

Health insurance coverage, longer residency, shorter visa processing time, and awarding exemplary students are among the conditions provided for foreign nationals studying in Iran.

Charity generates 277,000 jobs for the needy

TEHRAN – Over 277,000 jobs have been created for financially-struggling individuals since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21), Morteza Bakhtiari, head of the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, has said.

This year, 50 percent of the employment budget has been allocated to job seekers, he stated,

IRNA reported on Saturday.

The Foundation has opened up 277,000 job opportunities for needy individuals, he further said.

The Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has created over 900,000 job opportunities during the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-

2021), according to Morteza Bakhtiari, head of the Foundation.

He noted in October that 6,000 elites, 52,000 school students, and about 730,000 college students are under the support of the foundation, which can guarantee the future of the country in various fields of science and technology.

Since the beginning of this year, about 50,000 cases of skill training have been provided to clients, he added.

The Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has launched 3,285 projects to support job seekers over the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year.

Tehran, Caracas to develop technological co-op

From page 1 ► Medicines, vaccines, agricultural products, environmental products, medical equipment, information technology, and telecommunications are the fields of cooperation between Iran and Venezuela, according to Stiri.

In September, more than 82 knowledge-based firms attended an exhibition in Caracas with the aim of exchanging experiences and holding meetings.

Some 200 companies attended this event and 60 cooperation contracts were signed. We tried to provide a field for interaction and synergy between companies, she said.

Nicolás Maduro, the president of Venezuela, said in September that today, Iran is an exemplary country and a country of progress, production, knowledge, and production of products.

Knowledge-based ecosystem

Over the past year, in order to realize a resilient and knowledge-based economy, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has implemented a series of activities to further develop the ecosystem of innovation and technology in the country.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology was founded in 2006 as one of the



sub-sets of the government with the slogan of moving from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based one, aiming at increasing technological capabilities and innovation in order to generate wealth from the knowledge and improve people's quality of life.

So, over 7,000 knowledge-based and 1,600 creative companies have so far been registered and started operations.

The fields of biotechnology, agriculture, food industries, chemical technologies aircraft maintenance, steel, gas, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and medicine, oil, electronics and telecommunications, information technology, and computer software are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies are working in.

A delegation from Iran recently visited Venezuela, introducing achievements in knowledge-based fields to Venezuelan investors.

RAMSAR SITES IN IRAN

Part 30

Physical features

Hamoun-e-Saberi and Hamoun-e-Helmand form together with Hamoun-e-Puzak the main three lakes in the Sistan Basin.

The last lake is the most northern one of those three lakes, which is always flooded first and is largely situated in Afghanistan.

At times of peak-flooding the entire complex of lakes can cover over 200,000 ha. The lakes are unusual in that although they lie within an internal drainage basin, they are predominantly freshwater lakes.

The system lies in an extremely arid region, and receives the great bulk of its water from the Helmand River, Fara River and several smaller rivers rising in the highlands of central and northern Afghanistan.

During long periods of droughts, only Hamoun-e-Puzak receives enough water not to dry out.

However, during years of heavy rainfall, the floodwater sweeps through all the lakes and overflows into a vast salt waste to the south-east, flushing the salts out of the system.

Hamoun-e-Saberi receives its water from the Fara Rud, which enters in the north-east (in Afghanistan), and from overflow of Hamoun-e-Puzak to the east.

Hamoun-e-Helmand receives its water from the southern branch of the Helmand river, and from overflow of Hamoun-e-Saberi to the north.

In wet years the average water depth is about 50

cm, and the maximum depth is about 1.5 m.

Since prolonged drought in the 1980s, very little submerged vegetation is growing at the lakes.

Recently (after 1992), most of the wetlands were dry. The bottom of the lakes consists of alluvial silts.

To the south the wetlands are bordered by low-lying plains. Much of the land around the town of Zabol and around villages to the east of the lakes is under irrigated cultivation.

The plains to the south consist of extensive bare salt flats and sparsely vegetated sandy plains with sand dunes and some tamarisk scrub.

An isolated volcanic plug, Kuh Khvajeh, rises abruptly out of the marshes on the east side of Hamoun-e-Helmand, and in the west is a line of low earthen cliffs situated at the edge of a vast undulating, gradually rising desert plain. The climate is hot and dry.

Ecological features

Hamoun-e-Saberi and Hamoun-e-Helmand support habitats that include fresh to brackish lakes, extensive mudflats, reed-beds, sedge and salt marshes, riverine tamarisk thickets, bare salt flats, and vast sparsely vegetated desertic plains.

The marshes are predominantly eutrophic. In years of prolonged flooding, an abundant submerged aquatic vegetation develops on the floodplain. Halophytic vegetation fringes the wetland.

Surrounding areas are desertic, with very few settlements and limited irrigated cultivation to the south and east.

Source: Ramsar.org

To be continued

COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 31

New cases	82
New deaths	3
Total cases	7,561,140
Total deaths	144,685
New hospitalized patients	39
Patients in critical condition	90
Total recovered patients	7,336,146
Diagnostic tests conducted	54,765,297
Doses of vaccine injected	155,121,377

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran gets ready for two-week coronavirus closure

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control will implement a plan, according to which all occupations, except for emergency services and basic food suppliers, will be closed for two weeks in more than 100 cities in an attempt to curb the coronavirus.

Alireza Reisi, a spokesman for the Headquarters, said that "the plan will go into effect on November 21."

The plan divides cities into three levels of alert, according to which, if a city is in a state of high alert, all other occupations will be closed, except for the most essential jobs, which are related to the provision of basic necessities, security, and health.

Deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi has predicted that the COVID-19 death toll would double in the next two weeks.

"Unfortunately, daily deaths reached over 450 in the past 10 days, and an upward trend in infection, hospitalization, and death is predicted," he lamented.

اجرای طرح تعطیلی دو هفته ای سراسری برای مقابله با کرونا هفته آینده

ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا در ایران طرحی را اجرا خواهد کرد که بر مبنای آن بیش از ۱۰۰ شهر از جمله تهران با وضعیت هشدار بالای کرونا به مدت دو هفته تعطیل خواهند بود.

به گزارش ایسنا، علیرضا ریسی سخنگوی ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا گفت: این طرح از اول آذرماه آغاز می شود.

این طرح شهرها را به سه سطح هشدار تقسیم بندی می کند که بر اساس آن، اگر شهری در وضعیت سطح هشدار بالا قرار گیرد به جز مشاغل خیلی ضروری که مربوط به تهیه مایحتاج ضروری مردم، امنیت و سلامت می شوند، بقیه مشاغل همه تعطیل هستند.

ایرج حریرچی معاون وزیر بهداشت از پیش بینی ها در دو برابر شدن مرگ ناشی از کرونا در دو هفته آینده خبر داد. به گزارش ایرنا، حریرچی گفت متأسفانه بیش از ۱۰ روز است که مرگ های بالای ۴۵۰ مورد را تجربه کردیم و پیش بینی ها این است که فعلا روند صعودی در ابتلا و در بستری و در مرگ را خواهیم داشت.

* Were you acquainted with Ashraf Al-Sadat Montazeri, the mother of the martyr Mohammad Memarian, before creating the book?