

U.S. to Suffer the Fate of Soviet Union: Commander

► Page 3

Report

Russian president orders ceasefire

Russian President Vladimir Putin has declared a ceasefire in Ukraine over Orthodox Christmas while expressing Russia's readiness to talks. NATO has rejected the initiatives.

According to the Kremlin, Putin has ordered the country's defense minister to cease fire along the entire line of combat engagement, which has come into effect.

The U.S.-led NATO military alliance has opted to reject the truce, taking measures instead to ship more weapons to the warzone.

Critics of these arms deliveries say they will only prolong the war.

In a phone call with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Russian leader highlighted "the destructive role of Western countries who have been pumping [Ukraine] with weapons and military hardware as well as providing it with operational information and assigning targets to it," the Kremlin said.

In a statement posted on social media, the Kremlin said the Russian military will observe the 36-hour ceasefire in Ukraine from noon on 6 January to midnight on 7 January.

Putin's announcement followed a call by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church for both sides of the conflict to cease hostilities in the run-up to and during the Orthodox Christmas holiday.

In a press release, Putin said that taking into account the appeal of the Russian Orthodox Church "I instruct the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation to introduce from 12:00 January 6, 2023, until 24:00 January 7, 2023, a ceasefire along the entire line of contact between the parties in Ukraine. ► Page 5

Israel to suffer 'severe consequences' for defiling Al-Aqsa Mosque, Iran says

TEHRAN - Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Foreign Minister of Iran, on Thursday condemned the Israeli regime for desecrating the Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying the regime will suffer "severe repercussions" for its intrusion of the sacred place.

Amir Abdollahian made the remarks in a phone conversation with OIC Secretary General Hussein Ibrahim Taha.

Amir Abdollahian and Taha discussed the most recent events in the region and the Muslim world, including a controversial trip by far-right Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of al-Quds.

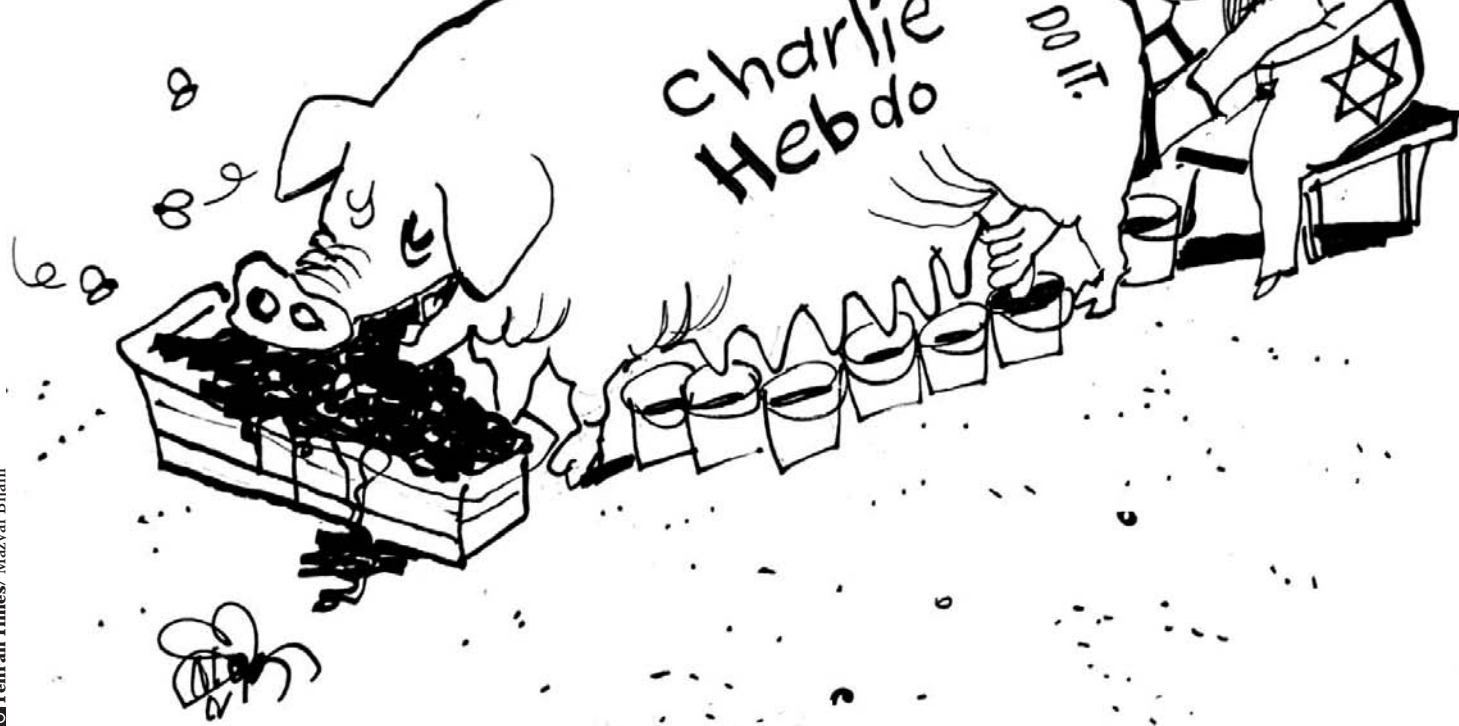
The senior Iranian diplomat warned, "The consequences of this action would be harsh for the fraudulent Israeli regime," appreciating Taha on his prompt denunciation of the recent Zionist sacrilege of al-Aqsa Mosque.

Amir Abdollahian suggested the creation of an "effective legal and international framework to halt aggressive activities against religious authority and holy places" in reference to Israel's provocative actions against the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Ben-Gvir entered the al-Aqsa Mosque on Tuesday through the Moroccan Gate, commonly known as the Mughrabi Gate, in what the Palestinians referred to as an "unprecedented provocation."

During the phone call, Amir Abdollahian also praised the OIC chief for taking a stand against the French weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo's most recent blasphemous attempt to offend the highest religious authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ► Page 2

Paris responsible for Charlie Hebdo's obscene cartoons



TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday saying the French government bears "undeniable responsibility" for an "anti-cultural and anti-human move" by the notorious Charlie Hebdo magazine.

The statement came after the infamous magazine published offensive caricatures of Iran's top politico and religious authority.

In response to this derogatory move, Iran announced it is revising its cultural relations with Paris by "ending the activities of the

French Institute for Research in Iran as a first step."

The move came a day after Iran had warned Paris of consequences and summoned the French ambassador. ► Page 2

Tehran, Doha urge developing monetary, banking cooperation

TEHRAN - The newly appointed Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammad-Reza Farzin in a meeting with his Qatari counterpart on Thursday stressed developing monetary and banking cooperation between the two countries.

Farzin met and held talks with Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saoud Al-Thani in Doha, Qatar.

In the meeting, Farzin called for strengthening mutual ties and developing monetary and banking cooperation with the Arab neighbor.

Emphasizing the positive prospects of economic relations between Iran and Qatar, he said: "By increasing monetary and banking cooperation between the two countries, we will definitely achieve

the goals set for Tehran-Doha economic relations."

Al-Thani, for his part, emphasized the interest of the country to enhance banking and monetary ties with Iran, noting that the development of banking relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of Qatar's main priorities. ► Page 4

Tehran, Minsk to deepen cooperation in water management

TEHRAN - Iran and Belarus discussed ways to expand technological cooperation in the field of water management.

In a meeting between Dmitry Koltsov, the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Belarus to Iran, and Vahid Haddadi-Asl, the Iranian deputy science minister for international affairs, the two sides also emphasized the need to deepen ties in the oil and gas sector, ILNA reported.

During the meeting, Haddadi-Asl referred to Iran's achievements in science and technology, saying that the country is currently ranked fifteenth in the world in terms of scientific progress.

"We are seeking to broaden relations with friendly countries, especially with neighboring countries," he added. ► Page 7

200 ancient human skeletons under study at anthropology laboratory

TEHRAN - Laboratory research is still underway on some 200 ancient human skeletons, previously discovered from an archaeological site and cemetery in Gilan, the provincial tourism chief said on Tuesday.

"Currently, some 200 ancient human skeletons, which had been unearthed in Liar-Sang-Bon, an archaeological site and cemetery in the Amlash region, are still under

investigation at an anthropology laboratory in Gilan province," Vali Jahani said.

The experiments conducted in this laboratory on a set of exposed skeletons provide information about subjects such as the shape of the bones and teeth of the people who lived in those times, as well as the type of food, their height, and face, and whether they were indigenous or non-indigenous, Jahani explained.

He made the remarks during a national conference attended dedicated to the latest archaeological achievements, IRNA reported.

There are six main historical settings in Gilan. The oldest [existing] monuments are related to the Seljuk period and the early Islamic period. ► Page 6

From Inside

- PM Sudani: Assassination of Gen. Soleimani, al-Muhandis 'brazen attack' on Iraq's sovereignty **P2**
- Iran reiterates need for protecting political geography in Caucasus **P3**
- Seoul welcomes co-op with Tehran in water industry **P4**
- Direct container shipping line launched from Iran's Bushehr to UAE **P4**
- 16 projects approved to develop oil, gas industry's value **P4**
- Pottery vessels of 1st millennium BC recovered by police **P6**
- Deputy tourism minister cuts ribbon on boutique hotel in Ardabil **P6**
- Some 86,000 migratory birds wintering at Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari wetlands **P7**
- 24% of foreign students studying in state-run universities **P7**
- "Aziz" director dedicates Cinéma Vérité award to Leader **P8**
- "Fahrenheit 451" appears in Persian **P8**

Tehran Papers

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

Fatherly advice for Iranian girls

The words of the Leader of the revolution in meeting with women received the highest attention of the newspapers. They put his remarks on top of their stories. The most important point of the meeting was the Leader's opinion about women and girls who have incomplete hijab, in which he said, "They are also our girls and they should not be considered counter-revolutionary." ► Page 2

Alleged provision of drones a 'clumsy excuse' for freezing Vienna talks: Ulyanov

TEHRAN - Mikhail Ulyanov, the permanent representative of Russia to international organizations in Vienna, has criticized the West for putting the Vienna talks over reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal on hold under the pretext of Iran's alleged provision of drones to Russia.

Ulyanov was commenting on an Al-Monitor report saying that Iran's alleged support of Russia in the Ukraine war has taken a toll on the Vienna talks aimed at reviving the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Alleged supplies of drones are a clumsy excuse for freezing (if not killing) the #ViennaTalks on #JCPOA," Ulyanov said on Twitter. ► Page 3

Ammar filmfest opens with tribute to victims of Shiraz terrorist attack

TEHRAN - The 13th edition of the Ammar Popular Film Festival opened on Wednesday at Shah Cheragh, the shrine of Ahmad ibn Musa (AS), with a tribute to the victims of the Shiraz terrorist attack.

Several pilgrims visiting the Shia site in the southern Iranian city were killed in the attack carried out by ISIS last October.

Established in 2010 by a number of Iranian revolutionary figures, the festival has been named after Ammar Yasir, a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

"The Ammar festival represents the revolutionaries' concern after the 2009 sedition," Argentinean Muslim cleric Edgardo Robin who is the new president of the festival said during the opening ceremony.

The unrest that erupted after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared ► Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

Fatherly advice for Iranian girls

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

from page 1 ► The Jam-e Jam newspaper mentioned the Leader's words in the meeting with women and wrote, "In the views of the Leader of the revolution, which can be called fatherly advice for Iranian girls, one should not be passive in the face of the Western commodification of women and emptying them of their identities. With such an enlightened view, one should defend the rights and status of women and at the same time, resolve the deficiencies that may cause abuse by the so-called claimants of women's rights.

It is clear that the attacks on the Islamic government under the name of women's rights are intended to invent more excuses. Now, if we pay attention to the words of the Leader, we will realize that on the horizon of Islamic civilization women have a pivotal role, and honoring the statue of women in Islamic society will reveal the hypocrisy of the patriarchal system.

Arman-e Melli: Issues surrounding JCPOA becoming more complicated

A political analyst on international relations says the atmosphere surrounding the Vienna talks are getting cloudy day by day.

Hassan Beheshtipour tells Arman Melli that Iran is unequivocally talking about bringing the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – to a conclusion; European Union foreign policy chief Borrell believes there is not "alternative" to the JCPOA; and Russia warns about consequences of a failure to revive the JCPOA. However, the three European countries – Germany, Britain, and France – and the U.S. show no willingness to return to Vienna and clearly announce that in their view the negotiations have ended, Beheshtipour adds.

Iran is willing to resume the talks but the other sides, though they send secret messages, apparently pretend that they don't not seek a resumption of the talks, Iran's former ambassador to the OIC notes.

"I think the U.S. and Europe are also seeking a revival of the JCPOA, but they have held back to see what will happen to domestic political issues (protests) in Iran. The American president says the nuclear deal 'is dead'; Robert Malley says there is still room for negotiations. However, the reality is that the Americans are waiting to see the result of protests in Iran. The reality is that the JCPOA is important for the U.S., Europe, Iran, Russia and China. No side wants the JCPOA to die. However, due to the recent developments (in Iran) they (Western sides) want to get more concessions in the negotiation table."

He adds if the economic situation was good in Iran, it was not that much important and each side could continue its policies but "the economic situation is not good and we are facing numerous economic problems."

The former diplomat goes to say that certain persons, who were basically opposed to the deal and even called it "treason" and "second Torkamanchay", are now talking about restoring the JCPOA.

"In my view the logic of these person is that dialogue is good if it is done by us; dialogue without us is bad."

Etemad: Treasury was not empty

Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, chief of the Planning and Budget Organization in the Rouhani administration, has answered allegations that the treasury was "empty" when Ebrahim Raisi took over as president.

However, Economy Minister Ehsan Khadrouzi had said the treasury reserves were favorable when the sitting administration was formed.

Nobakht said, "If the treasury was empty then how could the 13th administration (sitting administration) pay the salaries of employees without creating monetary base."

He went on to say that if formerly talks about empty treasury was a "signal to the enemy" and as "sign of weakness", today a competition is underway that seeks to convey this idea that the government and people's resistance against "maximum pressure" and unjust sanctions was nothing "except empty treasury"

Nobakht said the letter by Mahmoud Vaezi,

the presidential chief of staff, to Rouhani was that no money is left for "infrastructure projects which were in priority" and it did not mean that the treasury was empty. He said the copy of the letter by Vaezi, dated 9th Mehr, 1400 (July 31, 2022), is available which was related to completing and implementing the water project to Abyek (Qazvin province).

Jomhuri Eslami: Non strong will to resolve air pollution

President Raisi has tasked the interior minister to follow up the issue of clear air by closely monitoring the performance of responsible bodies. Likewise, the oil minister is obliged to regulate the consumption of fuel in different sectors and prevent fuel smuggling.

The newspaper also said Gholam-Abbas Torki, the deputy prosecutor general for judicial affairs, has said four government bodies, which had been tasked to implement "clean air law" have abandoned their task due to lack of budget.

Torki said the directors of the bodies accused of not implementing their duties have been summoned. He said more investigations are underway about the air pollution. The judicial official went on to say that in certain cases these bodies have taken certain steps but failed to do them effectively.

Torki went on to say that the main problem is that there is no "necessary will" to resolve the issue.

Keyhan: Membership in FATF not on government agenda

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance says joining the FATF is not by no means on the agenda of the "popular government".

The focus is on countering money laundering and clamping down on financial support for terrorism and not joining the FATF, the ministry said.

In another report, Keyan quoted chief of the Department of Environment who has said according to the Article 59 of the Constitution the government is obliged to implement policies in regard to the food health as people sometimes may consume food which would endanger their health. In line with this policy the entry of genetically modified food to the country is not allowed.

Javan: Do not take it seriously!

The inattention by some reformist newspapers last week to the third anniversary of Lt. Gen. Soleimani's martyrdom was criticized by the Javan newspaper.

"Basically, Soleimani lived and martyred in such a way that it is not easy to be an enemy to him and everyone loves him based on his own ideology," Javan wrote in its editorial.

Vatan-e-Emrooz: General Soleimani's deterrence strategy

In its editorial, Vatan-e-Emrooz addressed General Soleimani's deterrence strategy and wrote, "The deterrence strategy of Lt. Gen. Soleimani to establish the axis of resistance, had a major strategic achievement, and that is weakening the U.S. role in politics and military battles and moving towards the creation of a new regional order.

This type of 'combined deterrence' had 3 main features: First, the combination of military hardware with software tools for mobilizing the masses and anti-foreign forces.

The American long wars in the region resulted in nothing but destruction, spread of extremism, and increase in domestic and international conflicts.

Second, there was a balance between existing facilities and strategic limitations caused by regional rivals and extra regional powers. General Soleimani created a deterrent force against symmetric and asymmetric anti-Iran threats at a low cost.

The third was the creation of an effective and innovative method of warfare in the regional battlefields, which is called 'advanced defense'. In this method of fighting, dealing with potential and actual threats is done with the help of local forces and against the presence of foreigners in regional countries.

Israel to suffer 'severe consequences' for defiling Al-Aqsa Mosque, Iran says

from page 1 ► He blamed the French government for the caricatures and emphasized that the Zionists' involvement goes beyond the notorious French magazine's serial offenses against religious sanctuaries.

The foreign minister also reaffirmed Iran's position on the need to put a stop to the hostilities in Yemen, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

Taha also denounced the recent Israeli vandalism of the al-Aqsa Mosque and expressed his worry for the entry of the minister of the occupying regime into the sacred place.

"This conduct has wounded the sentiments of the Islamic Ummah," he said.

Taha emphasized that the Zionists' aggressive actions disrupt regional peace and stability and stated he is in discussions with several organizations to put pressure on the Israeli regime to stop taking such measures.

He also denounced the sacrilegious action taken by the infamous French magazine and emphasized that the subject is being looked into in order to respond to the move in a "proportionate" manner.

The Taliban's decision to forbid children and women from attend-



From left to right: OIC chief Ibrahim Taha, Iranian FM Abdollahian, and Kuwaiti FM Al Sabah

ing school in Afghanistan also drew strong criticism from both sides who asserted the move goes against Islamic law and teachings.

FM emphasizes legal means to stop demeaning holy places

Also, in another phone call on Thursday with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah, Amir Abdollahian called for creation of a legislative framework to halt the degradation of Islamic sanctuaries.

Iran's top diplomat and Foreign Minister Al Sabah also spoke on bilateral relations, as well as local and global issues, including the recent defilement of the al-Aq-

sa Mosque and the sacrilegious action by the infamous French magazine.

Amir Abdollahian condemned the recent desecration of the mosque by the illegal entity and urged coordination and cooperation among Muslim nations to maintain the historical and legal status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

He also emphasized the need to establish legal mechanisms to prevent desecration of Islamic sanctuaries.

In order to achieve peace and stability in the region, the senior Iranian diplomat emphasized the necessity of enhancing regional collaboration.

Al Sabah, also, reaffirmed the Kuwait's steadfast position on the Palestinian cause and severely denounced the Israeli regime for its recent vandalism of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

He also praised Iran's proposal for unified OIC measures to stop the occupying regime's offensive acts in harming regional peace and stability.

Referencing the infamous French magazine's history of demeaning the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Kuwaiti foreign minister denounced the repugnant action against the Islamic Republic and emphasized that disparaging religious figures denigrates all Muslims.

Tehran: Paris bears 'undeniable responsibility for Charlie Hebdo's obscene cartoons

from page 1 ► The ministry said the Paris government is first and foremost responsible to deal with violations of the sanctity of freedom, breach of human rights, insults against religious values and beliefs and threats to the national sovereignty of other countries by legal and natural persons.

The ministry condemned "in the strongest terms" the infamous magazine's move "to trample on recognized moral norms, savagely violate religious sanctities, disrespect the sanctum of the political religious authority, and insult the Iranians' state symbols and national values," Press TV reported.

The statement added that over the past years, the French magazine has repeatedly provoked Muslims' anger by publishing insulting cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Iran shuts down French research institute

In response to Charlie Hebdo's insulting cartoons, the Iranian Foreign Ministry on Thursday closed the French institute studying ancient Persian antiquities. The Institut Français de Recherche en Iran is part of the cultural wing of the French embassy.

The ministry said the closure of the institute was "the first step" in response to the sacrilegious cartoons.

The ministry said the infamous magazine's obscene move is an indication that Zionism has utilized media to act against Islam and promote hatred and division among human beings.

The controversial magazine had in early December announced a competition for producing the cartoons.

Such an offensive move amounts to the violation of the recognized moral norms, desecration of religious sanctities, a sacrilegious move against the political and religious authorities, and an offense against the administrative



symbols and Iranians' national values, the Foreign Ministry stated.

Charlie Hebdo's insult reveals once again that Zionism has taken advantage of media to promote anti-Islamic sentiments and foment hatred and division among societies and people, the ministry added.

Iran summons French ambassador

The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday afternoon summoned French Ambassador Nicolas Roche in reaction to the move by the satirical magazine.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran tolerates by no means any insults to its sanctities, and Islamic, religious, and national values," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani told the French ambassador.

"France has no right to justify insults to sanctities of other countries and Muslim nations under the pretext of freedom of expression," Kanaani remarked, expressing Tehran's "strong protest" to the French government.

The summoning comes as Charlie Hebdo is set to publish several insulting cartoons of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in a special issue later this week, Press TV reported.

Kanaani stressed that the French govern-

ment bears the responsibility for this "hateful, insulting and unjustified" action.

Pointing to the "dark history" of the French publication in insulting Islam, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the Quran, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said Tehran reserves the right to give a "proportionate response" to this profane move.

Kanaani stressed Iran expects the French government to provide explanations and take action in condemning the publication's "unacceptable behavior".

The French magazine has a long history of publishing derogatory and sacrilegious cartoons in the name of freedom of expression.

Back in September 2020, it republished blasphemous cartoons of Prophet Muhammad that were first released in 2015, sparking anger and outrage across the Muslim world.

The magazine has also adopted an aggressive anti-Iran stance since the outbreak of riots in Iran in September, releasing some cartoons deemed offensive and insulting.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry slapped sanctions against dozens of European individuals and entities, including Charlie Hebdo, on December 12 over their meddlesome measures pertaining to Iran's internal developments.

Earlier on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian denounced Charlie Hebdo for its insulting and obscene caricatures.

The French magazine will face a "decisive and effective" retaliation for its blatant and disrespectful action against the highly esteemed "religious and political authorities," Amir Abdollahian tweeted.

"We won't allow the government of France to overstep the mark. They have definitely taken a wrong path," Amir Abdollahian underlined.

PM Sudani: Assassination of Gen. Soleimani, al-Muhandis 'brazen attack' on Iraq's sovereignty

TEHRAN - Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani on Thursday paid tribute to top Iranian anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani and his Iraqi comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who were assassinated in a U.S. drone strike near Baghdad airport in January 2020, stating that their targeted killings were actually "a brazen attack" on Iraq's sovereignty.

"The crime of assassinating the 'Commanders of Victory' and their companions represented a flagrant violation of Iraq's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. The targeted killings of the commanders, who had a leading role in elimination of the scourge of terrorism, is an utter disrespect to bilateral agree-



ments [signed between Baghdad and Washington]," Sudani said at a ceremony in Baghdad in commemoration of the two legendary commanders.

"We woke up on January 3, 2020 to hear the terrible news about assassination of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the sec-

ond-in-command of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was on an official visit to Iraq," he added, according to Press TV.

The Iraqi leader went on to denounce the Trump administration over its brazen attack on Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Moreover, Chairman of the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council Faiq Zidane decried the assassination of Muhandis and Gen. Soleimani as "a vile and cowardly act."

He underscored that the Iraqi Judiciary bears the responsibility to shed light on all circumstances surrounding the assassination, calling on the country's security institutions to provide

judicial authorities with all necessary documents and findings in this regard.

'Iraq judicial chief highlights arrest warrant for Trump'

Zidan went on to note that Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council has issued an arrest warrant for former U.S. president Trump over the assassination of General Soleimani and the PMU deputy chief.

The council's president said that Trump has confessed to his "crime" in relation to the assassination of the "Leaders of Victory."

He called upon all Iraqi officials involved in investigations over the targeted killings to try their utmost, and identify all related architects, organizers and culprits.

U.S. to suffer the fate of Soviet Union: IRGC commander

TEHRAN – The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force has said that the United States will shamefully leave the West Asia region and suffer the fate of the Soviet Union.

General Ismail Qaani said think tanks have corroborated his assessment.

“The United States will be plagued with the fate of the Soviet Union and think tanks have confirmed this,” the commander averred.

General Qaani made the remarks in a commemorative ceremony in Kerman.

He also underlined the need for Iran to hold firm in its “true battle” with the U.S. “Thanks to the blood of Martyr General Qassem Soleimani, the bright dignified path of resistance will continue,” General Qaani said, according to Fars News.

The IRGC Quds force commander also took a jab at Israel, predicting it collapse in the near future. He said Israel’s army has turned into a mess, with no Israeli willing to join it. Referring to a letter put out by the former prime minister of Israel about the dire internal situation, General Qaani said, “The [former] prime minister enumerated their predicaments.”

He added, “In this letter, it is written that the Jews ruled twice in history, and in the first period, which lasted 80 years, discord caused their collapse. In the second stage, which



lasted for about 75 years, their rule was destroyed by disputes again. Even today, their differences are so great that they are collapsing.”

General Qaani said that now and for the first time in the life of the Zionist regime, more than half of its army is stationed in the West Bank.

The decline of Israel is seen as part of the broader decline of the United States, which has drawn the attention of many officials and exerts. Barbara F Walter, an American political scientist, is of the opinion that America will continue to decline due to a variety of factors. “America’s democracy declined rapidly between 2016 and 2020. Since 6 January 2021, the U.S. has failed to strengthen its democracy

in any way, leaving it vulnerable to continued backsliding into the middle zone,” she said, according to the Guardian.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, has pointed to the decline of the U.S. in a November speech. “One of the things that – I’m saying this now, some other people across the world have apparently said it too – I believe that one of the signs of America’s decline is the election of people like the current and the former president,” he said. “A country of 300 million, 300 million-plus people almost destroys itself and elects a president in the previous term – somebody like Trump whom the world considers to be crazy and

after he was defeated, a man like this current one comes to power, and well, you know the stories about him. This is evidence of the decline of a nation. This is evidence of the decline of a civilization. So, this was [matters] related to America.”

The decline of the U.S. in the style of the Soviet Union is now very much in the news. “Historians and political scientists say the Soviet Union’s morphing into a gerontocracy toward its end contributed to its demise, arguing that this serves as a cautionary tale for other countries — particularly the US, at a time when many of its top leaders are well beyond the age of retirement typical in other fields,” wrote Business Insider in a recent report.

Alleged provision of drones a ‘clumsy excuse’ for freezing Vienna talks: Ulyanov

From Page 1 ► He also said that the United States and the three European signatories to the JCPOA – Germany, France, and the UK (E3) – are moving to their “Plan B” on Iran.

“Looks like the US + E3 have a temptation to move to ‘Plan B’. Big mistake. It’s difficult to expect that such a plan can be a credible option. More likely just a non-starter,” the Russian diplomat added.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has recently said that the West is trying to scare the world with the Iranian threat. “The West is trying to scare the world with the Iranian threat, preferring to forget that #JCPOA was perfectly operational until #US suddenly decided to withdraw from the #nucleardeal in violation of its own obligations under #UNSC Res.2231 back in May 2018,” he said, according to a tweet by the Russian foreign ministry.

Earlier, Ulyanov had said that diplomatic efforts to revive the JCPOA are not exhausted yet. “Definitely diplomatic efforts are not exhausted yet (if the relevant political will exists, of course). Any alternative to the JCPOA can have very negative implications for regional security,” he tweeted.

Also, he said that the ball is in the U.S.’s court. “Recently #Iran confirmed a number



of times its readiness to conclude the #ViennaTalks on restoration of #JCPOA and rightly stated that the ball was in the Western court,” he noted.

Iran’s chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, has announced that talks over the JCPOA are still underway. He pointed out that the Vienna talks are “a continuous process which has not stopped.”

“The point that there is not much media work in this regard, means things are followed up seriously... The methods may have changed, but the process yet continues,” he added.

In response to assertions made by Germany and the United States that they do not regard the JCPOA discussions and are not focused on these issues, Bagheri Kani emphasized that

the talks have been a continuous process, and its ways may have altered.

In late December, Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), stated that the United States, not Iran, had imposed new terms on the JCPOA talks.

Eslami said that the U.S. is now signaling its desire for continuing negotiations in a variety of ways.

He asserted that it is unacceptable to conclude the negotiations while leaving fresh things open for putting pressure on the Iranian people and re-imposing sanctions on them.

The major difficulty in the JCPOA discussions is political and based on “the engine of maximum pressure,” such that Americans are occasionally duped and fall into the trap of Zionists and fanatics, and these ups and downs are always theirs, according to Eslami.

In order for the negotiations to continue, he suggested, the opposite side had to stop hatching schemes, wreaking havoc, and imposing sanctions.

The Vienna talks have come to a pause, though Iran and the European Union continue discussions on the matter.



Russian forces were. The existing preparations and arrangements that had been made indicated that first NATO had prepared for war and an attack on Crimea so that if the Russian government hesitated, it would have taken the first step by separating Crimea. Then it would have completed the puzzle of weakening Russia in Eastern Europe with Ukraine’s membership in NATO. Every war requires some preparations, and NATO had prepared for war before Russia. But Russia’s initiative in this matter not only stopped the next steps that were to be taken by NATO and the U.S. with regard to Russia, but it also turned the energy supply for Europe and the United States into their main concern.”

its borders right now, and we see pressure being brought on the countries in the region of Caribbean.”

He noted, “Of course, NATO forces were ready for war before the

SPORTS

Hamed Haddadi to undergo foot surgery

TEHRAN – Iran basketball team captain Hamed Haddadi will undergo foot surgery.

Sichuan Blue Whales defeated the Jilin Northeast Tigers 114-110 in the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) league on Wednesday but the winner wasn’t happy since their center Haddadi fell down in the game and was carried off on a stretcher.

The 37-year-old was later diagnosed with an Achilles tendon rupture.

Iran are scheduled to play Japan in its away match on Feb. 23 and will face China three days later. Team Melli will have to play Japan in Takasaki and meet the Chinese team in Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong.

Haddadi’s absence is a big blow for Iran since the Persians sit third in Group F.

The 2023 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualification for the FIBA Asia-Oceania region began on Nov. 26, 2021 and will conclude in February 2023.

Vafaei to represent Iran at 23-2022 Masters

TEHRAN – Following the suspension of Zhao Xintong, Hossein Vafaei has been invited to compete in the 2022-23 Masters.

Vafaei will make history as the first Iranian player to compete at the Masters and is the second player to be invited after the initial draw. David B Gilbert is the other player, who was brought in following the suspension of Yan Bingtao, a former winner.

Xintong was suspended earlier in the week as part of the on-going match-fixing investigation.

The World Snooker Tour (WST) confirmed on Tuesday that former UK Championship winner Xintong was suspended along with Zhang Jiankang, taking the total number of suspended players up to ten.

Neither player chose to challenge the suspension so Xintong’s place goes to the next eligible player, which is Vafaei. He becomes the first Iranian to ever play at the Masters and will face Mark Selby in his tournament debut.

The statement from WST on Vafaei’s inclusion said, “Hossein Vafaei has been awarded a place in the 2023 Cazoo Masters and will face Mark Selby in the opening round at Alexandra Palace in London on Sunday January 8th at 7pm.”

“Vafaei directly replaces Zhao Xintong, who was suspended by WPBSA on January 3rd and has decided not to appeal the suspension.

“Vafaei was 18th in the world rankings at the cut-off point for the Cazoo Masters so he is the next player in line. Vafaei will make his Masters debut and will become the first player from Iran to compete in the event. The Cazoo Masters runs from January 8 to 15.”

The 2023 Masters will take place at Alexandra Palace in London from January 8-15.

Tractor defeat Esteghlal: IPL

TEHRAN – Tractor football team defeated Esteghlal 2-0 in Iran Professional League (IPL) Matchweek 15 on Friday.

In the match held in Tabriz, Mohammad Ghanbari was on target in the 36th minute and he completed his brace in the 52nd minute.

Esteghlal are fourth in the table, five points behind IPL leaders Persepolis.

The match was initially scheduled to be held on Thursday but was postponed due to heavy snowfall.

Sajjad Anoushiravani elected AWF Executive Board member

TEHRAN – Iran Weightlifting Federation caretaker Sajjad Anoushiravani was elected as a member of Asian Weightlifting Federation (AWF) Executive Board.

Yousef Al Mana will lead the Asian Weightlifting Federation (AWF) through to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games after retaining his role as President in Doha on Thursday.

The Qatari national was first voted in as President in 2011, and will serve a third term after being unopposed when the only other Presidential candidate, Mohamed Alharbi from Saudi Arabia, withdrew.

The President, general secretary, first vice-president and five vice-presidents are joined by 11 others on the AWF Executive Board.

Among them are Eshaq Ebrahim Eshaq from Bahrain, his nation’s first-ever Executive Board member at the AWF, Mecu Chang from Chinese Taipei, who is also a member of the IWF Board and Anoushiravani, an Olympic silver medalist in 2012.

Shahrdari Gorgan coach Hatami lauds win over Al Naft: WASL

TEHRAN – Shahrdari Gorgan coach Mehran Hatami lauded his team’s performance against Al Naft in the WASL West Asia League.

Shahrdari defeated the Iraqi side 110-69 in Group in Group B Wednesday night.

Mohammad Jamshidi led the Iranian team with 31 points and Antwaine Wiggins scored 29 points for Al Naft.

Shahrdari Gorgan had lost to Lebanese team Al Riyadi 81-74 in Beirut in its opening match and defeated Syrian basketball team Al Karamah 83-78 in the second match.

“At the beginning of WASL, we didn’t prepare very well. But as the time goes on, we become better and better,” Hatami said.

“I’m very happy because everybody did their job very well, everybody took responsibility. They played together and really played as a team,” he added.

Al Naft coach Khalid Deroish also reacted to the result.

“We played three games last two weeks -- we played against Alkaramah, we played against Al Riyadi, and one in the Iraqi league. Our team, I feel like they are a little bit tired from three high-level games,” Deroish said.

Esteghlal likely to part ways with Ricardo Sa Pinto

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club will likely part ways with their Portuguese head coach Ricardo Sa Pinto.

Sa Pinto took charge of the Iranian giants in June 2022 but has failed to live up to expectations.

Esteghlal have not won in their last three matches. The Blues were held against Mes Rafsanjan and Paykan in Tehran and lost to Tractor in Tabriz.

The Esteghlal Board of Directors will hold a meeting next week to discuss about Sa Pinto’s future.

The titleholders sit fourth in Iran league table, five points behind leaders Persepolis.

Iran suffer two defeats at Poland handball tournament

TEHRAN – Iran handball team was defeated against Poland (32-27) and Belgium (35-31) at the 4 Nations Cup in Krakow, Poland.

Veselin Vujovic’s team will also play a friendly match with South Korea on January 8.

Team Melli compete in the tournament as part of preparation for the 2023 IHF Men’s World Championship, which will be held in Poland and Sweden from Jan. 11 to 29.

Iran have been drawn along with Chile, Spain and Montenegro in Group A.

The Persians will meet Chile on Jan. 12 in their opener.

Tehran, Doha urge developing monetary, banking cooperation

from page 1 ► Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari also accompanied the CBI governor on the trip.

Iran and Qatar have stressed preparing a roadmap to boost the value of trade between the two countries to three billion dollars by 2025.

In a meeting between Mohsen Rezaei, the Iranian vice president for economic affairs, and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani in October 2022, the two sides discussed ways of expanding trade ties between the two countries and emphasized the need for taking the necessary measures to reach the mentioned economic goal.

During the meeting, which was also attended by Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak, the Iranian side proposed drawing a roadmap for the two countries' trade development which was welcomed by Qatar's Emir.

Rezaei and Peyman-Pak visited Doha on top of a trade delegation to attend the opening ceremony of Iran's exclusive exhibition in the country.

As announced by the spokesman of Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, Iran's export to Qatar rose 30 percent in the seventh Iranian calendar month Mehr (September 22-October 22, 2022), as compared to the same month in the past year.

Omid Qalibaf said that trade between the two countries is on a growing path, so that in the seven months of this Iranian year, the exports of items such as semi-finished steel products, all kinds of glass, live shrimp and fish, greenhouse tomatoes, white cement, sweets and chocolates, and all kinds of grain products have increased 100 percent compared to the same period last year.

As previously announced by the vice chairman of Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, the value of Iran's export to Qatar is expected to rise to \$1 billion within two years.

Back in early June, 2022, Iran and Qatar inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the end of the two countries' eighth Joint Economic Committee meeting in Doha to outline avenues for future cooperation.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian and Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohammed Bin Hamad Bin Qassim Al-Thani who co-chaired the committee meeting.

This memorandum determines the framework of cooperation in various fields including transit, transportation, industry and trade, energy, customs and free zones, tourism, culture, agriculture, sports, etc.

Speaking at the eighth meeting of the Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, Mehrabian emphasized the Iranian government's approach to developing international relations and said: "Considering our good relations in the past, this meeting should be a new chapter in the development of cooperation between the two countries."

"We hope to see a significant increase in interactions with the agreements reached in this



CBI Governor Mohammad-Reza Farzin (L) met Qatari counterpart Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saud Al-Thani in Doha on Thursday.

meeting," he added.

"One of the most important goals of the meeting is to support the Iranian and Qatari private sectors, and we are happy to see that a large conference with the participation of Iranian businessmen is being held in Doha at the same time as the meeting of the joint committee," Mehrabian said

According to the official, eight MOUs on food, medical industry, knowledge-based companies, etc. were also signed between businessmen of the two countries on the sidelines of the mentioned meeting.

The Iranian energy minister noted that Iran and Qatar have set financial goals for 2023 and hope to see doubled economic relations and trade balance between the two countries.

Meanwhile, in the same day, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry also signed an MOU to form a Joint Economic Council.

The document was signed by Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim Al-Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and his Iranian Counterpart Gholam-Hossein Shafeie in Doha.

In the signing ceremony, Al-Thani hailed the formation of the council that makes up of elites of different economic sectors of the two countries.

He said that the council will help discover investment opportunities in both countries and develop mutual cooperation.

The Qatari official stressed the importance of the positive role that the private sector can play in developing trade between the two sides.

Shafeie, for his part, announced Iran's willingness to boost trade ties with Qatar and said that there are numerous grounds for cooperation in this regard.

In another event held on the sidelines of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting, TPO Head Alireza Peyman-Pak held talks with the private sector representatives of the two countries to discuss trade related issues and challenges.

Speaking in that meeting, Peyman-Pak expressed the Iranian government's determination to fully support Qatari traders and investors who decide to do business in Iran.

president, in Tehran on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by the ministers of oil, economy, industry, energy, agriculture, transport and urban development, as well as the head of the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) and the governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

TEHRAN – Iran has launched a direct container shipping line from the country's southwestern Bushehr Port to the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s Port of Jebel Ali, the director-general of Bushehr Province's Ports and Maritime Department announced.

According to Mohammad Shakibi-Nasab, launching the mentioned shipping line is going to boost the economic exchanges between the two countries, IRIB reported.

He further noted that with the new line going operational the cost of transporting export cargoes has also been reduced for the two sides' traders.

Mentioning the province's capacities for the expansion of transport ties with neighboring countries, Shakibi-Nasab said the infrastructure in the province's 11 ports has been positively developed over the past few years.

Earlier this week, the head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) met with the UAE's ambassador to Tehran, during which the two sides stressed the acceleration of mutual port, maritime, and transit cooperation.

In the meeting, UAE Ambassador Saif Mohamed Obaid Jasem Al Zaabi

Direct container shipping line launched from Iran's Bushehr to UAE



underlined the capacities of UAE companies for port and maritime investment in neighboring countries, especially Iran, and announced a field visit by his country's experts to Iranian ports in the near future.

The Arab official also referred to the very good transportation and transit infrastructure in his country and welcomed Iran's approach to developing transit cooperation with CIS countries.

Al Zaabi emphasized the need for the expansion of economic

relations between Tehran and Abu Dhabi, expressing the trust and interest of the UAE government in developing port and maritime cooperation with Iran.

PMO Head Ali-Akbar Safaei for his part stressed the strategy of the Iranian government to develop economic cooperation and good relations with neighboring countries, saying that the development of maritime relations between Iran and the United Arab Emirates is very important for the Islamic Republic.

Stating that Iran is ready for the development of maritime, transit, and port relations with Abu Dhabi, Safaei emphasized: "Transit and port connections between Tehran and Abu Dhabi with Central Asian countries and other nations can be formed quickly and prosper very fast."

The official also welcomed any investment by UAE port and maritime companies in Iran's southern ports, especially Shahid Rajaei Port and Chabahar Port.

"Chabahar Port has very good capacities and the private sector of the United Arab Emirates can forge long-term investment contracts in Chabahar port," he said.

Over \$131m of facilities allocated for agricultural mechanization

TEHRAN – Iranian Deputy Agriculture Minister Houshang Mohammadi has announced the allocation of 50 trillion rials (about \$131.2 million) for the mechanization of the country's agriculture industry.

Mohammadi made the announcement on the sidelines of a visit to the 11th Exhibition of Agricultural Machinery, Tools and Equipment in Ahvaz, IRNA reported.

According to the official, the mentioned funding will be provided to farmers in the form of low-interest facilities for the purchase of agricultural tools and machinery in order to modernize the agriculture sector and increase production.

"Of the mentioned figure, so far 20 trillion rials (about \$52.5 million) has been supplied and the rest will be paid by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20)," Mohammadi said.

Back in April 2022, Head of Iran's



Agricultural Mechanization Development Center Kambiz Abbasi announced the allocation of new resources for the mechanization of the country's agricultural sectors in the current Iranian calendar year 1401.

The official noted that the government had allocated 40 trillion rials (about \$148.8

Non-oil export from Khuzestan province rises 8% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN- The export of non-oil commodities from Khuzestan province, in the southwest of Iran, rose eight percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2022), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to an official with the customs department of the province.

Behrouz Qareh-Beygi said that 12.654 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$5.107 billion were exported from the province in the mentioned nine-month period

He named petrochemicals, benzene, agricultural products, steel, construction materials, mechanical and electronic devices, fisheries and food as the main exported items, and United Arab Emirates, Iraq, China, Southeast Asia, Turkey, Russia, Afghanistan and Pakistan as the major export destinations.



The official further announced that 13.817 million tons of non-oil products worth \$8.224 billion were imported to the province in the first nine months of this year, indicating seven percent growth in terms of value year on year.

He named basic goods including livestock feed, grains, chemical fertilizers, raw materials, steel, mechanical equipment and rubber as the main imported products, and China, Germany, United Arab Emirates, India, Brazil, Serbia, Argentina and Turkey as the

major sources of imports.

Based on the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil export rose 19 percent from the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21,2022) up to December 31, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

According to the IRICA data, Iran exported 97.843 million tons of goods valued at \$43.088 billion in the mentioned period, also registering a two-percent increase in weight

Liquefied natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, and film-grade polyethylene were the main exported products in the said time span.

Major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were China, Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and India.

The Islamic Republic has also

imported 28.18 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$44.337 billion in the first 286 days of the present year, with a 14.7-percent growth in value and a 10-percent increase in weight, year on year.

The major items of goods imported into the country in the said period include corn, rice, wheat, soybeans, sunflower seed oil, and cell phones, based on the IRICA data.

The United Arab Emirates was the top exporter to Iran in the mentioned period, followed by China, Turkey, India, and Germany.

Reportedly, the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 17 percent during the mentioned period, as compared to the same time span in the past year.

Iran traded more than 126 million tons of non-oil products worth over \$88 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

16 projects approved to develop oil, gas industry's value chain

TEHRAN – Iran's Resistance Economy Headquarters has approved 16 special projects for the development of the oil and gas industry's value chain, Shana reported.

The mentioned projects were approved in a meeting of the mentioned headquarters chaired by Mohammad Mokhber, Iran's first vice

Exports of eggs reach 30,000 tons

TEHRAN – Iran has exported 30,000 tons of eggs to the target countries since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022), Hamidreza Kashani, the chairman of Producers of Egg-Laying Hens Union, announced.

Kashani said Iran has the capacity to export 100,000 tons of eggs annually, IRNA reported.

Iranian eggs are mainly exported to neighboring countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Qatar.

Seoul welcomes co-op with Tehran in water industry

TEHRAN – Ambassador of South Korea to Tehran Yun Gang-Hyeon says Iran and South Korea have good capacities and vast fields for cooperation in the field of water resources management and using the modern knowhow in this field.

During his visit to the 18th International Water and Wastewater Exhibition of Iran, Yun expressed hope the cooperation between Iran and South Korea in the water industry would be reinforced, IRNA reported.



products to be registered, and from next year, agricultural products with a QR tracking code and according to the standards of the

destination countries must be exported", the official reiterated.

He further said that Iran has 4.2 million farmers whose per capita production is calculated at 30 tons per hectare. In fact, every Iranian has 1,500 kilograms of food security.

He put the total under-cultivation area in the country at 14 million hectares and Iran's total agricultural production at 125 million tons.

"In the agricultural sector, we enjoy climate and plant diversity, and have 8,000 plant species in the country", Alaei-Moqaddam stated.

From page 1 ▶ “Based on the fact that a large number of citizens professing Orthodoxy live in the combat areas, we call on the Ukrainian side to declare a ceasefire and give them the opportunity to attend services on Christmas Eve, as well as on the Day of the Nativity of Christ.”

Many Orthodox Christians, including those living in Russia and Ukraine, celebrate Christmas from 6 to 7 January.

The move has, however, been rejected by members of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance, the European Union, and Ukraine. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said it would be dangerous to underestimate Russia.

U.S. President Joe Biden reacted to Russia's ceasefire, saying “I think [President Putin] is trying to find some oxygen.”

Russia's ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Antonov, accused the White House of lacking any desire for a political settlement, adding that “even” the unilaterally declared ceasefire was being labeled an attempt to find some oxygen.

“All this means that Washington is set on fighting with us” to the last Ukrainian,” and the fate of Ukraine's people does not worry the Americans at all,” Antonov said in remarks on the embassy's social media platforms.

Meanwhile, Pentagon spokesman, Brigadier General Patrick Ryder, told reporters, “Our focus will continue to be on supporting Ukraine.” This is while a senior U.S. administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, says the intense fighting in eastern Ukraine will continue for months to come.

European Council President Charles Michel has also dismissed the ceasefire, while UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly claims the move “will do nothing to advance the prospects for peace.”

Reports say the U.S. will soon announce a new \$2.8 billion military package to be shipped to the warzone. The new weapons for Ukraine will include about 50 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, U.S. officials have been cited as saying.

On Wednesday, Biden said that sending these military vehicles, a U.S. Army staple, to Ukraine, was being considered to help fight Russia's invasion.

One senior U.S. official told media outlets that around \$800 million of the money will help Ukraine procure weapons.

The funds for the latest military hardware will be from the U.S. Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) for Ukraine, which allows Washington to transfer weapons from stocks very quickly without congressional approval in response to an emergency.

Ukraine pressures Israel to ‘take the right side’

Mikhail Podoliak, the top aide to Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, has urged Israel to overtly side with Kyiv after the new foreign minister said he would “talk less” about the conflict and held a phone call with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov.

“You can talk less, but the main thing is to take the right side,” Podoliak told Israeli outlet i24 on Thursday, insisting that Russia “started the war on its own initiative and without provocation.”

“We need to talk a lot about this kind of war because it is a genocidal war,” Podoliak also said, seemingly contradicting his own argument.

Zelensky's outspoken adviser was reacting to remarks by Eli Cohen, Israel's new foreign minister, who said on Tuesday that the Jewish state intends to continue sending “significant

humanitarian aid” to Ukraine but “talk less” in public about the “Russia-Ukraine issue.”

Kyiv's ambassador in Tel Aviv, Evgeny Korniychuk, swiftly complained about the perceived change in Israeli policy, pointing out that Cohen took a call from Lavrov while his predecessor had refused to do so.

“Israel is unique in terms of our partners. It remains silent,” he told local media, asking for a direct condemnation of alleged Russian actions.

Podoliak took a different tack from the ambassador, complementing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a potential go-between in eventual peace talks between Ukraine and Russia.

“I have no doubt that Netanyahu can be an effective mediator since he understands precisely what modern wars are and what

that fills me with satisfaction, but nor does it embarrass me,” he wrote.

Video cameras mounted on the nose of his Apache helicopter enabled him to assess his missions – and determine with certainty how many he had killed.

Harry has drawn criticism from some British security and military figures – and an angry rebuke from the Taliban.



Russian president orders ceasefire

The package will include an armored vehicle with powerful gunfire, which is manufactured by the British arms company BAE Systems.

The U.S. has been the largest military backer for Kyiv, sending tens of billions of dollars worth of weapons as Europe's biggest war since 1945 grinds on, killing tens of thousands.

The U.S. has increasingly sent more advanced and complex weapons to Ukraine, including High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS).

Critics say the move is prolonging the war and that Ukrainian forces are not trained sufficiently enough to fire U.S.-made advanced weapons.

Reports have surfaced that Ukrainian troops have shelled a residential area in the city of Vasylivka in the region of Zaporizhia, killing six people and injuring 37.

Officials in the region say Ukrainian forces had used a U.S.-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launcher to carry out the attack.

The city's roughly 13,000 population has been told to stay off the streets and seek shelter. As the fighting rages, attacks are claiming civilian lives from both sides, but with more advanced weapons supplied by the West, Ukrainian attacks in Eastern Ukraine have increased over the past month.

The latest attack follows reports that Ukrainian armed forces

destroyed a hospital in the city of Tokmak on Tuesday.

Moscow has repeatedly accused Ukraine of using HIMARS and other Western-made weapons to target civilians. Kyiv has exchanged similar allegations against Russian forces.

More recently, the Biden administration pledged to send a Patriot missile system to Kyiv.

French President Emmanuel Macron has also told President Zelensky that Kyiv would receive French tanks. Zelensky has said that “we will receive more armored vehicles, including French-made wheeled tanks.”

According to reports, citing the Elysee Palace, Macron had promised to supply AMX-10 RC wheeled tanks to Ukraine.

The UK and Germany have also indicated more military equipment will be sent to Ukraine soon.

Ukraine's military intelligence head says the country is planning a major push in the coming months saying attacks will reach “deeper and deeper” inside Russia. Kyrylo Budanov told U.S. news channel ABC News the fighting would likely be “hottest” in March, with Ukraine planning a major push in the spring.

This will come as a major blow to the countries advocating for a peaceful resolution to the conflict who have denounced the Western delivery of arms to the warzone, saying only negotiations will bring peace.

In his call with Turkey's Erdogan, Putin also discussed the prospect of peace negotiations with Ukraine. The Russian president reiterated

that Moscow was “open to serious dialogue” with Kyiv.

Turkey has expressed its readiness to mediate a political solution to the conflict.

“Putin reiterated that Russia is open to a serious dialogue, given authorities in Kyiv meet demands that have been repeatedly put forward, with the due account is taken of the new territorial realities,” Russian news agency TASS cited the Kremlin as saying.

However, the Ukrainian Security Council has rejected any talks with Russia. The Council Secretary Alexey Danilov said there will be “no talks with Moscow if the latter recognized the new territorial realities.”

Erdogan is reported to have told Putin that “calls for peace and negotiations should be supported by a unilateral declaration of ceasefire and a vision of a just solution” to the conflict.

Early last year, meaningful peace talks between the two sides appeared to be on the verge of success, but effectively collapsed in April.

Coincidentally, the peace talks collapsed amid the start of large weapons deliveries by the West to Ukraine, which Russia says will only prolong the war and suffering of Ukrainians.

Anti-war activists say this is a clear example of how the West is not willing to end the fighting in Europe, where the conflict has left many on the continent in poverty as a result of unprecedented inflation levels and a cost-of-living crisis among ordinary households.

is the essence of mediation under these conditions,” Zelensky's adviser told i24.

“Israel, which is constantly in a state of war from various entities, has the basic principles of protecting its territory, its right, and its freedom. Therefore, it would be desirable to focus on supplying aid to Ukraine,” he added.

He also argued that “it is not desirable” for Israel “to have relations with Russia with its current regime,” both from the historical standpoint “and the point of view of the country's development in the future.”

Ukraine has attempted for months to pressure Israel into sending weapons, most of all the Iron Dome air defense system. In October, Korniychuk enlisted U.S. assistance in the effort, but to little avail. The previous government said Israel simply doesn't have the industrial capability to do so.

The UK's former national security adviser Kim Darroch, who was the British Ambassador to the United States from 2016 to 2019, told Sky News he would have advised Harry against making the statements. And Colonel Richard Kemp, a retired British army officer, told the same network they “tarnished” his reputation and “unjustly” painted the British Army in a negative light.

WORLD HEADLINES

Taliban, China firm agree Afghanistan oil extraction deal

Afghanistan's Taliban government is to sign a contract with a Chinese firm to drill for oil in the country's north. It would be the first major energy extraction agreement with a foreign firm since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021.

The 25-year deal underscores China's economic involvement in the region.

On Thursday Taliban officials said security forces had targeted Islamic State group militants who attacked a hotel used by Chinese businessmen.

Eight IS militants were killed and several more arrested, the Taliban said.

December's attack on the Longan Hotel in Kabul saw at least three people killed and 18 more injured, including five Chinese citizens.

The oil extraction agreement would see Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Company (CAPEIC) drilling for oil in the Amu Darya basin, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said.

“The Amu Darya oil contract is an important project between China and Afghanistan,” China's ambassador to Afghanistan Wang Yu told a news conference in the capital Kabul.

A Chinese state-owned company is also in talks over the operation of a copper mine in the east of the country.

Afghanistan is estimated to be sitting on natural resources - including natural gas, copper, and rare earth - worth more than \$1tn.

U.S. warship sails through sensitive Taiwan Strait; China angered

A U.S. warship sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Thursday, part of what the U.S. military calls routine activity but which has riled China.

In recent years, U.S. warships, and on occasion those from allied nations such as Britain and Canada, have sailed through the strait, drawing the ire of China, which claims Taiwan against the objections of its government.

In a statement, the U.S. military said the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer Chung-Hoon carried out the transit.

“Chung-Hoon's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific,” the statement added.

In a statement, Liu Pengyu, spokesman for China's embassy in Washington, said China firmly opposed the move and urged the United States to “immediately stop provoking troubles, escalating tensions and undermining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”

“U.S. warships frequently flex muscles in the name of exercising freedom of navigation. This is not about keeping the region free and open,” the statement said. “China will continue to stay on high alert and is ready to respond to all threats and provocations at any time, and will resolutely safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

A spokesman for the Eastern Theatre Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army said it organized troops to monitor and guard the ship's transit, and “all movements were under control”.

U.S. House adjourns for third day after failing to elect new speaker

The U.S. House of Representatives voted Thursday evening to adjourn for the day after a third marathon day of voting again failed to result in the election of a new speaker.

Republican leader Kevin McCarthy failed for an 11th time Thursday in his bid to become the next Speaker of the House of Representatives, drawing support from just 200 Republicans.

Representative Hakeem Jeffries continued to gain the support of all of the chamber's 212 Democrats in stark contrast to the mayhem across the aisle.

McCarthy's bid for the mantle continued to be rejected by a core group of his partisan dissidents who have remained adamant in their opposition through 11 rounds of voting despite overtures from former President Donald Trump.

The decision of McCarthy's fellow Republicans to continue their opposition came after multiple media reports suggested McCarthy caved to several of their demands that he previously balked at, including a new rule that would allow a single House member to force a vote on removing the speaker.

As with the previous two days of votes, Thursday began with one of McCarthy's supporters appealing for the rank-and-file to line up behind him, with Representative-elect John James urging fellow Republicans to unite.

The group of nearly two-dozen Republicans is largely comprised of stalwart Trump allies, and their opposition has led to a milestone that has been reached for the first time since the U.S. Civil War in the mid-1800s.

Medvedev says Kyiv's refusal to cease fire on Christmas Day is ‘less trouble’ for Moscow

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev believes that Kyiv has rejected ‘the hand of Christian mercy’ by refusing Moscow's proposed Christmas truce. However, according to him, this situation will pose ‘less trouble and slyness’ to the Russian armed forces.

“A hand of Christian mercy was extended to the Ukrainians on the great holiday (Christmas, which is celebrated in Russia on January 7 - TASS). Their (Kyiv's - TASS) leaders rejected it. I think most of our servicemen taking part in the special military operation exhaled when they heard the refusal <...> to cease fire on Christmas Day. Fewer problems and slyness,” the politician wrote on Friday on his Telegram channel.

Medvedev noted that he felt sorry for the people who were deprived of the opportunity to go to church. “But pigs have no faith and no innate sense of gratitude. They understand only brute force,” he noted.

On Thursday, the Kremlin press service reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed that a ceasefire regime be imposed along the entire line of contact in the zone of the special military operation from 12:00 on January 6 until 24:00 on January 7. Later, the Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoygu issued a corresponding order. In their turn, the Ukrainian authorities reacted negatively to the idea of a ceasefire for Christmas.



A number of people in Northern Ireland, in a gathering on Friday, while announcing their support for the Palestinians, also called for a boycott of the Zionist regime

Handicrafts backbone of employment in Baharestan county, president says

TEHRAN – The handicraft industry is an important source of employment for men and women in Baharestan, a county in the southwest of Tehran province, Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi has said.

He made the remarks during a visit to the county on Thursday, which is one of the densest counties in Iran with the smallest geographical area, CHTN reported on Friday.

Today in the county of Baharestan, people are actively engaged in the production of bags, shoes, wood, and metal goods, the president added.

Various statistics show that not only men but also women are involved in making handicrafts here, he mentioned.

It is important that a strong Iran is realized with strong production and industry, he noted.

It also needs to have strong women and men, whose efforts are directed towards production and work, otherwise, Iran becomes dependent on other countries, he explained.

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.”

The first time Tehran is mentioned in historical accounts is in an 11th-century chronicle in which it is described as a small village north of Ray.

Ray, in which signs of settlement date from 6000 BC, is often considered to be Tehran's predecessor. It became the capital city of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th century but later declined with factional strife between different neighborhoods and the Mongol invasion of 1220.

Tehran has many to offer its visitors including Golestan Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, and Carpet Museum of Iran, to name a few.

Mazandaran tourism welcomes foreign investment



TEHRAN – The northern province of Mazandaran has issued seven foreign investment permits since the beginning of the current Iranian year (started in March 2022), a local official has said.

Despite different sanctions imposed by Western countries against Iran, including banking and infrastructural sanctions, seven foreign investment permits have been issued for this region so far this year, Seyyed Esmaeil Hashemi explained on Thursday.

New investment opportunities in agriculture, infrastructure, industrial and knowledge-based production have been identified in the province over the past year, the official added.

To develop these new capacities, however, the cooperation of the private sector seems necessary, he noted.

New ideas in these areas and the support of academic elites are helping identify other investment opportunities across the province, which will ensure the creation of at least 200,000 job opportunities in the near future, he mentioned.

Throughout the year, Mazandaran hosts millions of tourists from all parts of the country due to its many natural sights, such as the forest and the sea.

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.

UNESCO sites at a glance

Palace and Park of Versailles

The Palace of Versailles was the principal residence of the French kings from the time of Louis XIV to Louis XVI. Embellished by several generations of architects, sculptors, decorators, and landscape architects, it provided Europe with a model of the ideal royal residence for over a century.

Located in the Ile-de-France region, south-west of Paris, a privileged place both of residence and the exercise of the power of the French monarchy from Louis XIV to Louis XVI, the Palace, and Park of Versailles, built and embellished by several generations of architects, sculptors, painters, ornamentals and landscape artists, represented for Europe for more than a century, the perfect model of a royal residence.

The architectural planning and the majestic composition of the landscape form a close symbiosis, serving as a setting for the magnificence of the interior decorations



of the apartments.

The inscribed property includes the zone enclosing the prestigious ensemble of the Palace, the Trianon chateaux, and their gardens, as well as a narrow band of land offering the perspective from the extremity of the Grand Canal. It is the result of a century and a half of work commanded by the kings of France and entrusted to its greatest artists.

200 ancient human skeletons under study at anthropology laboratory

From Page 1 ► and most of the historical buildings in Gilan are related to the Qajar period and the late Safavid epoch, the official explained.

“Before the Qajar and Safavid era, there were many buildings in Gilan, but due to its [humid] climate, they have been destroyed and based on archaeological excavations, we can obtain valuable information from such relics and monuments.”

According to Jahani, DNA samples extracted from the skeletons reveal that human remains date back to the Parthian (247 BC –224 CE) and Sassanid (224 CE–651) periods.

Studies and experiments on the discovered skeletons, which have been performed by experts from the University of California, and the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, show all the skeletons were natives of the region, the official said.

Liar-Sang-Bon was initially identified in [the Iranian calendar year] 1391 (March 2012–March 2013) while its related mapping and demarcating projects were completed in 1393 and its first season of excavation



commenced in 1395, Jahani said.

“The archaeological site of Liar-Sang-Bon is one of the most significant cemeteries in Gilan. And the site underwent an exact five-year archaeological survey, which was started in 1391 under my supervision... The result was the discovery of about 100 ancient tombs, a considerable number of historical objects, and very important information about the style and custom of burial

of the people of that period.”

By conducting dating experiments in a comparative method, it was determined that the ancient site of Liar-Sang-Bon dates from the Parthian and Sassanid periods, he said.

Amlash was a small village in southeastern Gilan. The name originates from the nearby Alborz valleys, where archaeological artifacts were discovered during excavations.

The discovered artifacts range in date from the late

second millennium BC through the Partho-Sasanian period, but most of the objects are dated to the 9th-8th century BC.

The dating and meaning of the known objects (bronze weapons and animal figurines, human statuettes of terra cotta and bronze, pottery animal effigy vases, and burnished black, gray, or orange pottery vessels) are complicated by insufficient archaeological contexts.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, Gilan, in the far past, was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

Sophisticated Rasht, the capital of Gilan province, has long been a weekend escape for residents of Tehran who are looking to sample the famous local cuisine and hoping for some pluvial action – it's the largest and wettest town in the northern region. Gilan is divided into a coastal plain, including the large delta of Sefid Rud and adjacent parts of the Alborz mountain range.

Meeting to discuss architectural features of Hegmataneh

TEHRAN – A national conference focusing on the architectural features of ancient Hegmataneh, is scheduled to be held in the historical site in west-central Hamedan province on Saturday, the director of the site has announced.

Using of adobe structures in ancient cities and the checkered design of Hegmataneh, which was once the capital of Medes and later the summer residence for Achaemenid kings, will be discussed during the meeting, Saheb Mohammadian explained on Friday.

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

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 Deioces, 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 has 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 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.

Deputy tourism minister cuts ribbon on boutique hotel in Ardabil

TEHRAN –On Thursday, deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalbafian inaugurated a boutique hotel in the historical core of Ardabil in northwest Iran.

Covering an area of 1,350, square meters, the fully restored hotel has 21 rooms and 65 beds, CHTN reported.

The four-story hotel has been renovated by private investors in line with a provincial scheme to expand the hospitality sector, the report said.



Ardabil represents the cultural capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization during

2023.

Earlier this year, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami called “Ardabil 2023” a great opportunity to promote the city on an international scale.

Ardabil is rich in cultural heritage and tourism, but suffers from a lack of investment and infrastructure, he added. “Ardabil's potential in tourism, as well as tourists' interest in visiting this province, has created the need for a better infrastructure

and investments in this field.”

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well known for having abundant natural beauty, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and the Shrine Ensemble.

It is freezing in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Pottery vessels of 1st millennium BC recovered by police

TEHRAN– Iranian authorities have recently recovered pottery vessels estimated to date from the first millennium BC.

Police have recently found three earthenware objects during their regular inspections of cultural heritage properties in the Tarom county of Zanjan province, IRNA reported on Friday.

The appreciation and tradition of making potteries go back a long way in Zanjan and many other Iranian cities for millennia. Some say, the ancient city is an open-air museum of handicrafts where potteries can be just as special as fine art.



Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180–242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katale-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins nearby.

The first well-documented evidence of human habitation on the Iranian plateau is found in deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites in the Zagros Mountains, which dates back to Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian times (c. 100,000 BC).

From page 1 ▶ Referring to the fact that Iran is located in a semi-arid climate, he said that the country is willing to benefit from the experiences of Belarus in water management.

Since ancient times, Iran has been constantly struggling with water shortage, which caused the creation of qanats, so people actually accepted that water is scarce in the country.

But for several years, along with the industrial and agricultural development, it seems that the available water resources have been used unbridled, and the result is being on the verge of a water crisis.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society estimates that 4.8 million people are at medium to high risk of drought-related impacts, mostly in remote and rural areas of the provinces.

Unfortunately, over 70 percent of the country is suffering from severe drought. The severity of the drought is devastating in areas such as the Zagros, which is both a source of water and natural habitats, Hassan Akbari, deputy head of natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment, has said.

Roadmap being drawn up Some 86,000 migratory birds wintering at Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari wetlands

TEHRAN - Based on the latest survey, some 86,000 migratory birds are wintering at wetlands in the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province.

The director general of the provincial Department of Environment said the migration season of aquatic and coastal migratory birds to the wetlands and natural habitats of the province started in late October.

It is expected that the number of birds will be more than the announced figure considering that it was not possible to monitor and survey some parts of the wetlands, IRNA quoted Saeed Yousefpour as saying.

Greater white-fronted goose is one of the most prominent birds that entered the province's wetlands for wintering, he highlighted.

"Because this species is in danger of extinction, an action plan for the protection of this bird in the environment is being implemented, and we are particularly pursuing the protection of this species," he added.

In this survey, 60 species of birds have been identified, such as crested duck, oak duck, marbled duck, black-winged gladiolus, white-tailed sea eagle, wetland spotted eagle, wetland sable, types of ducks (green, fawn, eider), herons, geese, woodcock, and types of Gulls.

Safe habitats

In Iran, 141 wetlands with ecological value with an area of over 3 million hectares have been identified, of which 25 wetlands are designated as wetlands of international importance (registered in the Ramsar Convention) covering more than 1.4 million hectares and four sites are biosphere reserves.



Tehran, Minsk to deepen cooperation in water management

In November 2022, Iran's Vice President Mohammad Mokhber announced that Tehran and Minsk are drawing up a roadmap to develop economic and commercial ties. Mokhber made the remarks after a

meeting with Belarussian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko in Tehran.

"The will of the two countries is developing economic ties in different areas, and one of the issues that were decided in this meeting was to activate the private sector of the two countries by the houses of the chamber of Iran and Belarus."

He added, "Today it was agreed that foreign ministers of Iran and Belarus and heads of joint commissions follow these issues seriously."

Mokhber went on to say that Iran and Belarus have great potential in areas of commerce, transit, energy, and industry.

The two sides also can share technical knowledge.

The vice president also said Iran and Belarus are determined to promote political and economic interactions. "Political relationship between Iran and Belarus is at a good level but it is not commensurate with economic ties and it is decided to increase economic ties to a good level."

place for birds and other wetland animals, and due to the relatively extensive reed beds, it is an important overwintering site for northern migratory birds.

Located in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province, Choghakhor Wetland is flowing over 1687 hectares; designated as a hunting restricted area. It supports more than 47 bird species, with breeding populations of migratory birds such as the Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*).

It supports more than 1 percent of the population of Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and harbors threatened species such as the endangered White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) and the vulnerable Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*).

Plans to conserve wetlands

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working closely with national and international development partners to conserve Iran's wetlands.

Projects on the ground are informing best practices, improving systems, building capacities, and informing better national policies and plans, here are two examples:

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP) is a joint initiative between Iran's Department of Environment (DOE), the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, and UNDP in Iran.

To date, the project has supported the introduction of integrated and participatory ecosystem-based approaches for the conservation of around 38 wetlands in Iran in more than 25 provinces.

SOCIETY

JANUARY 7, 2023
Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

7

RAMSAR SITES IN IRAN

Part 35 Hydrology and Hydrodynamics

Apart from precipitation, the wetland has generally depended on Gharedagh spring water sources and also, surplus water from upstream agricultural lands in Mahabad Plain (south and west of the wetland) and Miandoab Plain (Simineroud River Basin in the south and east of the wetland).

Due to the seasonal nature of this resource, Kanibarazan Wetland has in the past, been a seasonal wetland and in past years was completely dry.

However, with the construction of the Mahabad Plain Irrigation Network in 1971, Gharedagh Spring and surrounding submerged lands were cut by drainage canals.

Now water enters the wetland from a main drainage canal adjacent to the western side and the wetland receives surplus water from another drainage channel to the east.

Also, on the Mahabad River, downstream of Khorkhore Village, an opening has been built in the right bank through which some of the water has been diverted to an old river bed.

After irrigation of agricultural lands in its path, the surplus water is discharged to the northern part of Kanibarazan Wetland as a seasonal source of water.

The maximum depth of water in spring (high water) is about 1.2 m and over most of the area it is less than 0.8 m. The deepest parts of the wetland are along the southern margin. In the northern part of the wetland the water depth is usually less than 0.5m.

Physical features of the catchments area

Kanibarazan Wetland is situated partly within the Mahbad River Basin. This basin is a sub-basin of the Urmia Lake Basin.

Kanibarazan catchment has an area of 4,010 hectares. Its area stretches from the south reaches of Ghahredagh Mountain and from west, east and north.

From a hydrological point of view, the wetland receives water from this basin including some water from irrigated land in the Mahabad Plain.

Hydrological values

The wetland also prevents saltwater from Lake Urmia intruding into upstream areas and helps to regulate the region's micro climate.

General ecological features

This wetland has a wide variety of habitats including areas with different depths, reed beds and extensive plant communities.

It is important internationally for feeding, resting and breeding of different waterbird species. The wetland receives nutrient water from agricultural lands and is biologically productive with rich plankton and benthic invertebrate populations.

Noteworthy flora

In the Kanibarazan region, 45 plant species have been identified (so far) from 35 genera and 17 families. Altogether, 21 plant species make up the wetland community.

Most species identified within the wetland are Graminae and Chenopodiaceae. The wetland also includes common reed, bulrush, sedge and tamarisk.

Factors adversely affecting ecology

In the past, wetland water was supplied by Gharedagh Spring, water also came from surplus agricultural water from upstream lands on Mahabad Plain (in the south and the west of wetland) and also surplus water from Miandoab Plain (Simineroud River Basin in the south and the east of wetland). As a result of the seasonal nature of these sources, Kanibarazan Wetland was a seasonal wetland and in some years was completely dry.

However, with construction of drainage canals and irrigation on Mahabad plain and Miandoab the wetland hydrology has changed and most of water now entering wetland is supplied through drainage channels and through a branch of Mahabad River and creeks. The wetland has become permanent.

Conservation measures taken

The wetland is currently located in a No-hunting Area of West Azarbaijan and is managed by the general office of DOE, the Mahabad Bureau.

However, the administrative process is now underway to designate the area as a Wildlife Refuge under the Protected Area system of Iran.

A management plan for the wetland is being prepared by the general office of DoE with the assistance of the UNDP/GEF and DoE funded project on the Conservation of Iranian wetlands.

The ecosystem approach will be applied and will be a participatory process involving local communities and environmental NGOs.

Current recreation and tourism

Kanibarazan has been zoned for different uses and work is underway to establish it as a bird watching site. A 120 square meter, two floor building for bird watching has been constructed and traditional daily bivouacs can be seen around the wetland.

Source: Ramsar.org
To be continued

24% of foreign students studying in state-run universities

TEHRAN - Twenty-four percent of foreign students in Iran are studying in state-run universities, the deputy science minister has said.

More than 94,000 foreign students are studying in the country, and 24 percent of them, equaling 27,000, are studying in state-run universities, IRNA quoted Hasham Dadashpour as saying.

Attracting foreign students is among the priorities of the science ministry, he said, adding that president [Ebrahim Raisi] has emphasized the need for attracting foreign students.

All the universities across the country should be prepared to attract foreign students, Dadashpour stressed.

The Planning and Budget Organization is of the opinion that the higher education sector should help the national economy by attracting foreign students.

For the time being, 107 universities are authorized to enroll foreign students. Some 56,000 Iraqi students, 33,000 Afghan students, and 5,000 students from other countries are studying in Iranian universities, he concluded.

In December 2022, Dadashpour said the number of foreign students will double in Iranian universities in the next three years.

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.

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.

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.

Health insurance coverage, longer residency, shorter visa processing time, and awarding exemplary students are among the conditions provided for foreign nationals studying in Iran, Jafar Razeqi, the deputy minister of science for foreign student affairs, has stated.

The residency is currently extended for one year, but for the first time, some international students have been granted long-term residency based on the length of their education.

One of the most important problems for non-Iranian students, especially in recent months, was the visa processing time, which took time due to problems at the host university and administrative processes in different parts of the organization, but now this time has been reduced by one third, he noted.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Iran finds herbal medicines effective in COVID-19 treatment

Two herbal drugs that are effective in healing the symptoms of COVID-19 have been permitted to be produced domestically.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved four domestically produced herbal medicine effective in the treatment of COVID-19 and has issued a production license for two of them.

Kianoush Jahanpour, the spokesman for the Food and Drug Administration, told IRNA on Monday that "none of these drugs are a cure for COVID-19, but they have effects to reduce the symptoms of this disease and should be further investigated."

The first herbal medicine in this collection is an oral spray containing six herbal essential oils, and according to the results of a clinical trial presented, if used, it helps to improve the pulmonary complications of coronavirus, including shortness of breath, cough, and arterial oxygenation, he explained.

تولید دو داروی گیاهی موثر در درمان کرونا در ایران

سازمان غذا و داروی ایران چهار فرآورده طبیعی تولید داخل با اجزای گیاهی برای بهبود علائم کووید ۱۹ را تایید کرده و مجوز تولید را برای دو مورد آنها صادر کرده است.

کیانوش جهانپور سخنگوی سازمان غذا و دارو روز دوشنبه در گفت و گو با ایرنا گفت: هیچکدام از این داروها داروی درمان کووید ۱۹ نیستند اما اثراتی برای بهبود علائم این بیماری داشته اند و باید مراحل بررسی بیشتر را طی کنند.

وی گفت: اولین داروی گیاهی از این مجموعه یک اسپری دهانی حاوی ۶ اسانس گیاهی است و با توجه به نتایج کارآزمایی بالینی ارائه شده در صورت مصرف به بهبود عوارض ربوی کووید ۱۹ شامل تنگی نفس، سرفه و اکسیژن رسانی شریانی کمک می کند.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 6

New cases	77
New deaths	5
Total cases	7,561,701
Total deaths	144,704
New hospitalized patients	41
Patients in critical condition	148
Total recovered patients	7,336,366
Diagnostic tests conducted	54,810,846
Doses of vaccine injected	155,182,194

