

All Under One Flag

More than 20 million celebrate the 44th anniversary of the revolution; from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf ▶ Page 3



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Report T

China hits out at NATO 'double standards'

Beijing has called on NATO to end its double-standards and abandon its Cold War mentality?

The remarks were made in response to NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's comments on China's military developments.

Apparently only NATO has the right to develop its military while the rest of the world is prohibited from making any military progress to defend and preserve its territorial integrity, independence or sovereignty. ▶ Page 5

Op-ed T

Washington DC gun laws apply only to citizens—not criminals

By J. Michael Springmann

Background. Like most medium to large American cities, Washington, D.C., i.e. the State of Confusion, is "governed" by Democrats who have failed every city they govern in terms of criminal activity and heinous crimes. ▶ Page 5

Iran's Fasihi wins gold at Asian Indoor Athletics C'ships

TEHRAN – Farzaneh Fasihi of Iran claimed a gold medal in the 10th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

In the women's 60 meters run, Fasihi finished first with 7.28 seconds. Kazakhstan's Olga Safronova won a silver medal with a time of 7.32 seconds, while Indonesian Valentin Vaneza came third with 7.37 seconds. ▶ Page 3

Iran's export to Africa rises 19% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN- The value of Iran's non-oil export to Africa rose 19 percent in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-January 20, 2023), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the vice president of Iran and Africa Merchants Club Ruhollah Latifi said.

Latifi noted that Iranian traders exported

over 2,247,619 tons of commodities worth \$1,108,357,000 to African countries in the mentioned 10-month period, IRIB reported.

According to the official, Iran exported commodities to 45 African countries and the exports also increased by nine percent in terms of weight.

Latifi put the total Iran-Africa trade in the

said 10 months at 2.330 million tons valued at \$1.188 billion, of which the share of Iran's import was 84,280 tons valued at \$79.685 million.

The trade between Iran and Africa increased by 11 percent in terms of weight and 22 percent in terms of value in the said period, Latifi said. ▶ Page 4

Nanotechnology, a paragon of success in Iran

By Mehdi Garshasbi

The nanotechnology sector is a prime example of success in Iran, an arena consisting of expert and program-oriented human resources with significant goals that shines like a jewel in the innovation and technology ecosystem of the country.

With the support of talented academicians and knowledge-based companies, the nanotechnology sector has indigenized many technologies to solve the main challenges of the country in various areas, including industry.

Producing coronavirus diagnostic kits by Iranian knowledge-based companies and receiving requests for buying the product from around 40 countries are among the notable achievements of the nanotechnology sector.

ICU ventilators for Covid-19 patients, face masks and laser thermometers, household appliances, cars, medicine and medical supplies, textiles, air purifiers, catalysts, power plant filters, ▶ Page 7



© Mehr/Alireza Haddadi

Closing ceremony of 41st Fajr Film Festival

Coinciding with the anniversary of the Iranian Islamic revolution, the closing ceremony of the 41st Fajr Film Festival was held at the International Conferences Hall of Milad Tower in Tehran on Saturday night. The ceremony was attended by a number of officials, artists and journalists. The names of the winners of the international and national sections at this year's festival were also announced.

Culture Ministry holds banquet for Fajr filmfest foreign guests

TEHRAN – The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance held a banquet on Thursday at Tehran's Azadi Hotel in honor of foreign guests attending the 41st Fajr International Film Festival.

Festival president Mojtaba Amini, Culture Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili and Cinema Organization of Iran director Mohammad Khazaei welcomed diplomats from the embassies of Syria, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Malaysia, the organizers announced in a

press release.

The festival is part of Iran's Ten-Day Dawn celebration, which is organized annually to mark the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

"You, dear guests, are in Iran on the days during which Iran's great celebration is held," Esmaeili said in a brief speech.

"The Islamic Revolution is a great cultural development and the sole cultural revolution in the modern age," he added.

"Due to the revolution's cultural nature, cultural activities have always been acknowledged across the country," he noted.

He said that the history of the Fajr film festival is almost as long as the history of the revolution, and added, "Culture and art enjoy a high status in Iranian society, and cultural and artistic personalities are very popular."

Esmaeili thanked the guests for their attendance at the Fajr festival, which ended on Saturday. ▶ Page 8

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Tehran Papers T

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

Biden had nothing to say about Iran

The successful resistance of the Iranian people against the U.S. pressures and complete failure of the riot project made U.S. President Joe Biden not mention Iran in his annual speech to Congress, Kayhan wrote. ▶ Page 2

Iran arrests elements behind sabotage at military facility

TEHRAN – Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps have jointly announced the busting of elements implicated in an effort to commit an act of sabotage in Isfahan.

The two intelligence agencies announced in a joint statement that the detainees are the main elements of a failed attempt to commit an act of sabotage at an industrial facility belonging to the Ministry of Defense.

The statement said the arrests in this connection were made this month. The statement also said that Israel is complicated in the act of sabotage.

TEHRAN PAPERS

Biden had nothing to say about Iran

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

from page 1 ► America's many problems and the failure of the country's maximum pressure against Iran and the failure to cause disorder caused Biden to have nothing to say.

In his annual speech, Biden talked about the challenge posed by China, the war in Ukraine, and the suicide of American soldiers, but he did not even once mention Iran and the unrest in Iran, while in the past two decades, almost all presidents, including Biden himself, had mentioned Iran many times in their annual speech.

Iran: Passing of time did not affect Iranians' revolutionary fervor

On the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the revolution, the Iran newspaper wrote: This revolution was supposed to have the upper hand in the developments from the very beginning.

The fact is that the West and the East are still amazed at how the revolution continues to move forward. From the very first days of victory, America put the project of containment of the Islamic Republic on its agenda, but today the challenge of the West is how to prevent the collapse of the American world order.

For about three months, which started in mid-September, the enemies of the Islamic Revolution provoked riots in the form of a hybrid war in Iran. They were about to disintegrate Iran, arguing that the new generation is different from the revolution's.

Political science theorists say that if the victory of a revolution is based on ideals and values, after a while the ideals will be weakened under the influence of reality, but in the recent riots, the enemy made a miscalculation about the Islamic revolution, failing to understand that it was rooted in people's beliefs.

Arman-e-Melli: Tehran should not allow its differences with IAEA to increase

Seyed Jalal Sadatian, the former ambassador of Iran to the UK, writes in Arman-e-Melli that Iran's "challenges" with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and "accusations" against Tehran regarding sale of weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine have made the conditions to revive the nuclear agreement "more difficult".

Iran should move towards presenting solutions for an agreement with the IAEA to get out of the current situation and prepare the grounds for the revival of JCPOA shortly.

Mr. Grossi's visit to Tehran for technical negotiations and settling some remaining ambiguities will be positive because the depth of the gap between Iran and the IAEA should not be allowed to increase.

Of course, it is not clear what the agenda of Grossi's trip to Tehran will be and what

issues he will discuss exactly, however, efforts should be made to remove the obstacles that exist in the way of closing Iran's nuclear file in the IAEA.

Aftab-e-Yazd: UN should ignore sanctions against quake-hit Syria

An expert on West Asia affairs advised the United Nations to ignore the sanctions against Syria and help the people affected by the devastating earthquake.

Aftab-e-Yazd, quoting Hassan Hani-zadeh, wrote: The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, also known as the Caesar Act, and unilateral U.S. sanctions against Syria are one of the important obstacles in providing aid to the earthquake victims in Syria.

The Caesar Act sanctions the Syrian government, including Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, for so-called war crimes against the Syrian population. The Act was signed into law by President Trump in December 2019 and came into force on June 17, 2020.

Unfortunately, the daily writes, international organizations failed to fulfill their missions in providing relief to the Syrian people.

These unilateral sanctions in the state of emergency shows that humans are "sacrificed for political purposes," and give an excuse to some international entities not to fulfill their duties in providing aid, the analyst laments.

In such a situation, the United Nations should ignore these sanctions and fulfill its duties by considering the priority of humanitarian affairs and human rights, Hani-zadeh suggests.

Khorasan: Biden's speech and divided America

Biden's annual speech, which was supposed to show the unity of America, was criticized by Republicans. They strongly criticized Biden's policies.

According to Khorasan, this division existed in the past and increased when Trump took the office, and now the US is a divided country. A recent example is the dispute regarding the intrusion of a Chinese balloon into the U.S. airspace.

Republicans criticized Biden for not acting quickly, claiming that this would not have happened if Trump had been president.

But, Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser of the Biden government, stated that the U.S. intelligence agencies did not detect the infiltration of Chinese balloons in the U.S. airspace during Trump's presidency.

Therefore, the two parties, instead of taking a unified position towards a security crisis, accuse each other and openly display America's weakness against China.

academic figures, company managers, representatives of the private sector, foreign ambassadors in Kuala Lumpur and Iranians living in the country participated in the ceremony.

Speaking at the ceremony, Iranian ambassador to Malaysia Ali Asghar Mohammadi highlighted the Islamic Republic's achievements in terms of political and military independence. He said despite "oppressive sanctions" the Islamic Republic has made great scientific progresses.

Elsewhere, he pointed to Iran's efforts to improve ties with neighbors with a special attention on developing ties with Islamic and Asian nations.

The ambassador also said has always welcomed regional integration based on mutual respect without interference of foreigners. Iran has been insisting on using all diplomatic capacities to resolve regional disputes based on shared interests, the diplomat insisted.



Raisi says Iran has made inroads in strategic fields since 1979

TEHRAN - President Raisi said on Thursday afternoon that the Islamic Republic has been seeking economic self-sufficiency in strategic areas since the early days of the Islamic Revolution.

Raisi made the remarks at a meeting with the ambassadors and heads of foreign missions in Iran on the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Diversifying economy despite comprehensive economic sanctions and establishing religious democracy are only a few examples Iran's success all through these years.

"Strengthening and diversifying economic infrastructure, creating inclusive networks in economic co-operation despite the full-scale war of enemies, and political development based on religious democratic system is only a part of the achievements of the Iranian nation in the past 44 years," Raisi stated, according to the president.ir.

Pointing to Iranians' struggle against the despotic Pahlavi ruling system, the president said, "The history-making uprising of the proud nation of Iran against the puppet and autocratic Pahlavi regime is a response to decades of foreign intervention, coup, tyranny, dependence, backwardness and all-round humiliation of a cultured nation that is among the most civilization-building nations in the region and the world."

Honoring the memory of Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic system, and those who were martyred in the struggle against the Pahlavi regime, the president

added, "The Islamic Republic, as the fruit of this nationwide uprising, is formed based on the idea of religious democracy, the will and vote of the people, and based on the divine and spiritual teachings of the Iranian nation."

Throughout history the Iranian nation has rebelled against the tyrants, stood up to achieve justice and independence and refused to tolerate "captivity either for itself or for any nation," the president noted.

He added Iran is advancing on the path of freedom, justice, independence and progress.

The Islamic Republic is still emphasizing the "same lofty ideals of the first days of the Revolution" and "it has been an inspiration to all the free nations of the world, especially in the region," the president remarked.

Some politicians and analysts around the world imagined that Iran would surrender under pressure from the West, especially after the Donald Trump administration launched the "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

"Seeing the progress of the Iranian nation despite the cruel sanctions, it was not far from expectation that the Arrogant in the world would not tolerate such a resurrection and would conspire against it with all their might to silence the voice of the Iranian nation's desire for freedom and independence, but the Islamic Republic, despite the plots of the U.S.-led domination system and various conspiracies are stronger and more powerful than ever before in the path of prosperity... and have

achieved proud achievements in various fields."

Progress in modern science and technology

Raisi also highlighted the Islamic Republic's progresses in higher education system, healthcare services, and successes in modern sciences and technologies such as nanotechnology, nanomedicine, biotechnology, aerospace, nuclear, military industries, etc.

The president said Iran is ready to share its scientific and technological achievements with other nations in line with promoting peace and development and achieving "common collective benefits".

In another part of his speech, the President said that an important part of the problems of human society and the conflicts created at different levels between countries and the damages caused by them are affected by the implementation of policies derived from the approach of dominance and unilateralism, without considering the interests of other countries, which has led to a decrease in the level of global trust and the inciting of wars and bloodshed.

'Maximum smart interaction'

The president went on to say that the Islamic Republic has proven that it has been a reliable partner for all parties who seek to establish, maintain and promote international relations based on mutual respect, principles and interests.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is a strong and impenetrable barrier against those who seek to ignore or attack the interests of the Iranian

people and seek domination or implement colonial plans for the region and the world."

He added, "I would like to once again emphasize that 'maximum smart interaction' with the world and economic multilateralism has been the slogan and macro approach of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the international stage."

Raisi who came to power in August 2021 said this has been the approach of his administration to prioritize ties with neighbors with a focus on Asia, and empowering economy and neutralizing oppressive sanctions and pursuing the lifting of these sanctions.

This policy, the president said, has yielded very good results in "many areas".

'U.S., E3 suffer from illusion, miscalculation'

Raisi also reiterated Iran's policy to finalize the Vienna talks intended to revive the tattered 2015 nuclear deal - officially known as the JCPOA - saying despite failure by the Western parties to fulfill their obligations under the JCPOA, Iran has announced it is ready to "finalize the negotiations for the lifting of sanctions and reach a good and fair agreement months ago and has shown its goodwill" in this regard, the president insisted.

However, the president said, the U.S. and the three European trio (Britain, Germany and France that still party to the JCPOA) are suffering from "illusion" and "miscalculation" toward Iran.

"Instead of using the opportunity to negotiate and return to the commitments... they have preferred to interfere in Iran's internal affairs and create deviant debates as another way to avoid accepting responsibility for not adhering to their commitments," Raisi lamented.

The president further pointed to the statements and interventions of Western countries in the recent riots in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody in September, saying, "In the past few months, we have closely witnessed a new wave of complex plots and interventions of some Western countries in Iran's internal developments."

By relying on the sanctions and "completely false information of the enemies and opponents of the Iranian nation, these countries placed themselves against the resistant and proud nation of Iran and launched one of the most obvious examples of perceptual and combined war against" Iran, he lamented.

Resolution proves 'deep bond' between Washington and MKO, Iran says

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Ministry on Friday denounced a recently-introduced Congressional resolution that backs the terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO), saying the move demonstrates 'deep ties' between Washington and terrorism.

"Support of 165 US lawmakers for MKO proves deep bonds between #US and #terrorism," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani wrote on his Twitter page.

"No strange!" he noted, adding, "The regime that founded #Daesh & used it as tool, not ashamed of supporting and instrumental using of murderers of 17k Iranians."

The bipartisan resolution was introduced to the House by Congressman Tom McClintock on February 7 and has 164 other cosponsors. It has been referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Backing unrest in Iran, the resolution expresses support for what it calls the "Iranian people's desire for a democratic, secular, and nonnuclear Republic of Iran." It also levels baseless accusations against Iran for what it describes as "state-sponsored terrorism" and violation of human rights.

Maryam Rajavi, the leader of the notorious



Congressman Tom McClintock addresses a briefing about an anti-Iran resolution on February 8.

organization, also addressed a press briefing planned for the introduction of the resolution on February 8, lauding the representatives' efforts.

American use of terrorism against Iran

Also, the Iranian foreign minister on Saturday slammed the House resolution, describing it as an indication of Washington's insatiable appetite for employing terrorism for the purpose of "destroying" Iran.

"The US Congress' worthless resolution in support of Monafeghin (MKO) terror cult

demonstrates, just once more, their insatiable appetite for instrumentalizing terrorism and DAESH modeled scenarios -that wrecked Syria and Iraq- for destroying Iran," Hossein Amir Abdollahian tweeted.

More than 17,000 Iranians, many of them civilians, have been killed at the hands of the MKO in different acts of terrorism including bombings in public places, and targeted killings.

The MKO, that was on the U.S. terrorist list until 2012, fled Iran in 1986 for Iraq and was given a camp by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

They fought on the side of Saddam during the Iraq's war on Iran (1980-88). They were also involved in the bloody repression of Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq in 1991 and the massacre of Iraqi Kurds in the north.

This is not the first anti-Iran resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives. Back on January 25, American lawmakers adopted a resolution praising rioters and calling for more sanctions against Iranian officials.

It also encouraged the administration of President Joe Biden "to immediately impose, under existing authorities, additional human rights sanctions on officials and entities responsible for the repression of the current protests."

Judiciary dismisses report on 'exacting commitments' from freed inmates

TEHRAN - The Judiciary on Friday dismissed reports about alleged exaction of various commitments from the inmates, who were recently pardoned as part of an amnesty by Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

The denial came after some reports emerged on certain social media and cyberspace alleging that the inmates were freed after they had

made some commitments.

The reports are "inexact" and "erroneous," the Judiciary said in a statement.

Such allegations had been circulated in order to try to tarnish the sanctity of the amnesty by the Leader as well as the joyful social atmosphere that followed the issuance of

the decree.

Less than a week ago, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei either pardoned or commuted the sentences of a large number of prisoners, who had been arrested during the recent riots in the country.

The Leader issued the decree on the occasion of the 44th anniversary

of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the birth anniversary of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam.

Further down the statement, the Judiciary clarified that the only commitment that had been asked of the prisoners to make was for them to give a voluntary pledge not to repeat the crimes they had committed, Press TV reported.

Mahathir visits Tehran embassy in Kuala Lumpur



TEHRAN - Mahathir Mohammad, the former Malaysian prime minister, has visited the Iranian embassy in Kuala Lumpur to participate in the ceremonies marking the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, IRNA reported on Saturday.

In addition to the 97-year-old Mahathir, the Malaysian parliament speaker, health minister, deputy economy minister and a number of government officials as well as cultural and

All under one flag

***More than 20 million celebrate the 44th anniversary of the revolution;
from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf***

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – With nationwide rallies and celebrations, Iran marked the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution amid renewed efforts by the enemies to bring the Islamic Republic to its knees.

Iranians from all walks of life poured into the streets on Saturday to mark more than four decades of resistance and progress. From the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, thousands of Iranians gathered at the main city squares to show support of the Islamic Revolution.

The rallies were massively attended by people of all ages and ranks, which nullified the enemy's propaganda that is aimed at driving a wedge between the state and society. Despite the hardships of recent years, the Iranian people attended the anniversary rallies across the country and foiled yet another plot by the enemy to sow chaos and division in Iran.

Over the last four decades, the enemies of the Islamic Republic have done everything in their power to harm the Islamic Republic, but their plots have been foiled by the Iranian people's support of the Islamic Republic. In recent months, the enemies pinned much hope on the wave of unrest that gripped Iran in the wake of the death of Mahsa Amini.

But as usual, the Iranian people overcame the plots and indicated that they stand by their government even during the harshest of times.

Iran FM talks with UN chief, receives congratulatory messages

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres have discussed some regional and international developments including the massive earthquakes in Turkey and Syria as well as the latest state of the sanctions removal talks.

Amir Abdollahian pointed to the UN chief's initiative to hold regional dialog and emphasized on the balanced foreign policy doctrine of the Iranian government. He said the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes continuation of such meetings and increased regional cooperation, according to the Iranian foreign ministry.

The top Iranian diplomat then stressed the need to increase international aid for quake-hit people in Turkey and Syria. He said people are facing a catastrophic situation in Idlib, Syria, because the Syrian government has no access to the region.

Amir Abdollahian added that the UN chief's deputy for the coordination of humanitarian affairs is expected to pay special attention to the issue.

He further referred to relief aid Iran is giving to the quake-stricken people and announced Tehran's readiness to send relief teams to Idlib, Syria.

The Iranian foreign minister also spoke about the sanctions removal talks and the necessity of the International Atomic Energy Agency acting professionally. Amir Abdollahian said the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and the IAEA have worked out a framework for cooperation.

He noted that a visit by the IAEA chief to Tehran is on the agenda of both sides.

The UN secretary general for his part congratulated the Iranian president and foreign minister on the National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Guterres described the continuation of regional cooperation as important.

The UN chief pointed to the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria and stressed that his deputy for humanitarian affairs is heading to Turkey and Syria and that the UN will do its utmost to help the people in the quake zone including in Syria.

Guterres said, "We believe that helping the people of Syria is a completely humanitarian issue."

He further referred to the sanctions removal talks, saying there is no choice but the return of all sides to the Iran nuclear deal, JCPOA.

Guterres said that he will continue supporting the diplomatic path and negotiations until a final agreement is reached.

The two sides held consultations on the latest state of the sanctions lifting talks and some other issues of mutual interest.

Congratulatory messages



More than 20 millions took part in the rallies nationwide.

In Tehran, huge crowds gathered at the Azadi Square, where Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi delivered a live speech. Standing on an elevated podium before thousands of Tehran people, Ayatollah Raisi said that "today is another 22 Bahman (February 11) in the history of the glorious Islamic Revolution," according to a readout by the official website of the Iranian president.

The Iranian president pointed to the issue of unity in his anniversary speech.

President Raisi stated that today is the manifestation of national unity, solidarity, integrity, epic and the presence of people in every part of the country.

He said, "Today, people in hundreds of cities and thousands of villages appeared at the stage not only with votes, but above votes, make a pledge with Imam Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the martyrs and the high and glorious ideals of Islam."

He added, "Look at what seditions and conspiracies the enemies did in this one year, but how did the proud nation of Iran, the history-making men and women, identify the evil hand of the enemy, and appeared on the stage and shone brightly, in such a way that once again in the history of the people's revolution, they defeated the enemy."

Referring to the brilliant achievements of the country, which have been achieved by the young people in various fields of science, technology, economy, defense,

health, medicine and other fields, Ayatollah Raisi said, "Today, the Islamic Republic is in the first place in many fields in the region and has the best positions in the world; Our position today cannot be compared with the time of the oppression, which is the result of the Iranian nation's self-belief and trust in God."

President Raisi stated, "Since the beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian nation has gone through many conspiracies, the eight-year imposed war and the assassinations by the hypocrites, which killed 17 thousand innocent people and many officials and Friday imams in Iran, are part of this. But on the other hand, the Americans remove the hypocrites from the black list of terrorist groups; This is the shame for America."

President Raisi also made an important announcement on the sidelines of his anniversary speech. He said in continuation of the pardons offered by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the government will pursue amnesty for cultural, sporting, and media figures who have been subject to restrictions as the result of their involvement in illegal actions over the last months.

Ayatollah Raisi also said that unprecedented facilities have been created for Iranians living abroad to return home, including those who have once committed actions in violation of the law, according to Tasnim.

people were also killed by the rioters who were armed with firearms or other weapons. However, these astronomical and exaggerated figures are entirely fabricated. You know in that period even if an individual had died naturally or in a car accident, they would have released their photos in social networks and media and said they had been killed by the Iranian police. We have evidence of tens of such cases."

Commenting on violence in Iran, the foreign minister said, "We are intending to hold an exhibition very soon in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and invite ambassadors and diplomats to come and visit the exhibition. And do you what is going to be exhibited here? The weapons that had been smuggled from outside and handed in to the rioters. For example, one of these weapons had been smuggled from one of our neighboring countries in the guise of a set of suit and clothes. When you unpack a chique package of suit, you will find an automatic gun inside it. Tens of such weapons were smuggled into Iran."

As for detentions, the foreign minister said he did not confirm that journalists have been arrested. "We do not confirm the detention of journalists in Iran. Very easily, they attach a label to a person who has been arrested and call that person a human rights defender, journalist or other untrue titles. During the riots, no journalist was arrested. See, just two weeks ago something happened in Iran. There was a fraudster who owed money to people but wanted to run away from Iran. He released a footage of himself in social media and claimed he had been a protestor and had been tortured. He began a hue and cry. This is while he was a fraudster and had a lot of private complainants. The police arrested him and it turned out that he had lied. You see, in the West, they had planned for the riots deliberately and purposefully. Let me ask you a question. The media in the West maneuvered on Ms. Mahsa Amini. But did they really cover that much the story of Shireen Abu Akleh as well? Shireen Abu Akleh was shot killed by the Israeli police."

Amir Abdollahian also answered questions on the developments regarding the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally called the JCPOA. "Definitely we are not seeking nuclear weapons. However, as with the negotiations we have conducted with the JCPOA parties, if the other sides take steps within the framework of logic and respect for the rights of the people of Iran, we have taken important measures during the past months to reach the final step. And the American side repeatedly sends messages that the JCPOA is important to them and they want to return to the deal. I think the Americans are unable to make a decision. I do not know what is going on in the White House. But what is clear is that still we do not see the power in the US to make a decision to return to the JCPOA," he said.

IRAN IN FOCUS

FEBRUARY 12, 2023

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran's Fasihi wins gold at Asian Indoor Athletics C'ships

From Page 1 ► The 2023 Asian Athletics Indoor Championships is to run through Feb. 12 in the Kazakh capital.

The championships are being held in the athletics sports complex Qazaqstan. The competition is one of the most important events of the Asian Athletics Association calendar in 2023.

Farzaneh Fasihi, Reyhaneh Mobini, Hamideh Esmailnejhad and Fatemeh Mohitizadeh represent Iran in the female section and Hamidreza Kia, Arshia Mosadeghi, Masoud Kamran and Jalil Naseri compete in the male division.

The tournament has brought over 500 athletes from 31 countries together.

Esteghlal midfielder Amanov linked with Nasaf

TEHRAN – Esteghlal midfielder Azizbek Amanov has been linked with a move to Uzbekistan's Nasaf Qarshi.

The 25-year-old Uzbek midfielder joined Esteghlal from Lokomotiv Tashkent last season but he feels frustrated at the lack of playing time in the team.

Iranian media reports suggest that Amanov has canceled his contract with Esteghlal and is weighing up his offers.

Nasaf Qarshi will meet Al Shabab of Saudi Arabia in a one-off tie on Feb. 19 in the 2022 Asian Champions League knockout round.

Amputee football team players dead in quake

TEHRAN – Three Iranian amputee football players have lost their lives in the earthquake in Turkey.

Mohammadreza Mirahmadi, Mehdi Saeedavi and Hamed Matroudi were trapped under rubble.

Jafar Asgari, head of Iran's Amputee Football Association, said that the players were found dead.

The players were member of Malatya Metropolitan Belediyespor team.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to his family, loved ones, and friends over their demise.

The total death toll from the earthquakes that struck southwest Turkey and northern Syria on Monday has climbed to above 20,000, a tally that is expected to rise as crews comb the rubble of thousands of toppled buildings.

Iran take bronze at 2023 FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup



TEHRAN – Iran's men's team beat the U.S. in the FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup South Africa 2023 bronze medal match on Saturday.

The match ended 4-4 in regular time but Iran won the game 3-2 on penalties.

Team Melli also claimed bronze in 2018 after beating Australia.

Titleholders Austria and the Netherlands will play for the gold medal.

The competition is being held in Pretoria, South Africa from Feb. 5 to 11.

Tractor complete signing of Spanish winger Gomez

TEHRAN – Spanish left winger Jaime Romero Gomez joined Iran's Tractor football team.

The 32-year-old player has signed for the Iranian top-flight side for an undisclosed fee.

Gomes started his playing career in 2008 in Spanish team Albacete. He joined Italian club Udinese a year later.

The former Spain U19 player has also played in Real Madrid B, Osasuna and Cordoba.

He has most recently played at Cartagena.

Iran 5th at "Development Cup"

TEHRAN – Iran U17 football team defeated Belarus 2-0 on Saturday in the international tournament "Development Cup" in Belarus.

Esmail Gholizadeh opened the scoring for Iran in the 17th minute and Amir Mohammad Razaghi made the scoreboard 2-0 in the 30th minute.

Iran, who started the campaign with a 4-0 win over Belarus U16, lost to Tajikistan and Russia in their following matches.

The tournament was held from Feb. 5 to 11 in Minsk.

A total of six U17 football teams, namely Belarus, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, as well as Belarus U16 and Russia U16 teams competed in the tournament.

Khosravi Vafa sends message of condolence to Turkey and Syria Olympics Committees

TEHRAN – Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa, head of Iran's National Olympic Committee, on Saturday sent a message of condolence to his Turkish and Syrian counterparts due to recent earthquake in the countries.

Khosravi Vafa has expressed his condolence to Ugur Erdener, Turkish Olympic Committee President, and Feras Mouala, head of Syria Olympic Committee, in separate messages.

"Our hearts go out to the victim's family and friends during this difficult time. We offer our sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of all of those killed in the devastating earthquake.

"On behalf of the National Olympic Committee of Iran and the sports community, we once again offer our condolences to your colleagues and your nation and declare our full support and solidarity with you and your country's government to overcome this tragedy.

Khuzestan province records lowest inflation rate

TEHRAN – A review of the data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) shows that Khuzestan province with 41.3 percent recorded the lowest inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on January 20, which marks the end of the tenth Iranian calendar month Dey.

The highest 12-month inflation rate is related to Lorestan province with 51.6 percent, according to the SCI's statistics.

The SCI has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on January 20 at 46.3 percent, rising 1.3 percent from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the ninth month.

The center put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 51.3 percent in the tenth month, which means families have paid an average of 51.3 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The inflation rate was 50.6 percent for the urban households, rising 2.7 percent from the previous month, and 54.9 percent for the rural households, increasing 3.5 percent from the previous month.

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month



period ended on March 20, 2022, which marks the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1400, at 40.2 percent.

The center put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 34.7 percent in the last month of the past year, which means families have paid an average of 34.7 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 20, 2022 was 39.7 percent for urban households, and 42.8 percent for rural households.

The point-to-point inflation rate was reported to be 34.5 percent for urban households and 35.8 percent for rural ones, according to the SCI.

199 idle production units revived in South Khorasan



TEHRAN- As announced by a provincial official, 199 idle production units were revived in South Khorasan province, in the east of Iran, since the current government took office in August 2021.

Javad Qena'at, the governor-general of the province, said that the mentioned units returning to the production cycle have created jobs for 2,000 persons.

With the launch of the movement to activate the stagnant units in the economic affairs coordination department of the governorate, from the total of 360 stagnant units, 199 units have returned to the production cycle and this process continues, the official added.

As announced by the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), 2,170 idle production units have returned to the production cycle since the current government took office.

According to Ali Rasoulman, who is also the deputy industry, mining and trade minister, this approach is very important since the country has been dealing with the most severe international sanctions for many years; and while it relies more than ever on domestic production.

Of course, what is seen as the result of the efforts of the ISIPO, as one of the main organizations in charge of boosting the country's production, planning and diligent follow-up to revive the stagnant production units, fortunately the work in this due is on the right track, the official has stated, highlighting that revival of each stagnant production and industrial unit leads to job creation and return to work of 18 people on average.

As previously announced by Rasoulman, 2,067 idle industrial units were revived in the country's industrial parks and zones during the previous

Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022).

According to the official, with the reviving of the mentioned units job opportunities were created for over 39,000 people.

"ISIPO had put it on the agenda to revive 2,000 stagnant units inside and outside industrial parks and zones in the previous year and by the end of the year 2,067 idle units returned to the production cycle, which provided employment for more than 39,000 people," Rasoulman said.

The official noted that 1,433 small workshop units were also established in the mentioned year most of which were the production and knowledge-based units with high technology.

The necessary licenses were also obtained for establishing 26 new industrial parks and zones across the country in the previous year, he added.

He stressed that reviving idle production units is the main approach that the government is currently following in the industry sector.

The government is seriously pursuing its programs to resolve production units' problems in collaboration with the private sector; Very good planning has been done in this regard, Rasoulman said.

He mentioned providing infrastructure and supporting small businesses and enterprises as two major programs of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade in relation to industrial parks and said that 2,023 projects related to providing infrastructure for industrial parks, including water, electricity, and gas supply are underway in different parts of the country.

Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization and its affiliated provincial companies now have 509 industrial parks and 340 industrial zones and five special economic zones in operation, 85 specialized industrial parks and zones, six technology parks, 40 technology and business service centers, two information technology and software service complexes; 100,058 contracts have been concluded and operation of 49,882 industrial units and 3,270 workshops has provided direct employment for 998,595 people across the country.

According to NISOC Head Alireza Daneshi, the signed MOU is going to pave the way for the expansion of relations between the two neighbors' oil industries.

The 13th Specialized Exhibition of Khuzestan Manufacturing Oil Industry Equipment was held in the southwestern city of Ahvaz (the capital city of Khuzestan) during February 6-9.

NISOC inks co-op MOU with Iraq's BOC

TEHRAN – National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) has signed a cooperation memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Basra Oil Company (BOC), Shana reported.

The MOU was signed on the sidelines of the 13th Specialized Exhibition of Khuzestan Manufacturing Oil Industry Equipment in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan Province.

Iran's export to Africa rises 19% in 10 months on year

from page 1 ► According to Latifi, imports from Africa increased by 70 percent and 79 percent in terms of weight and value, respectively.

The official named South Africa, Mozambique, Ghana, Sudan, Nigeria, and Kenya as the main export destinations and Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana as the major sources of imports for Iran among the African countries in the first 10 months of the present year.

Latifi earlier said that trade between Iran and Africa reached \$1.250 billion last year with a 100 percent growth, and considering the current trend of trade with the African continent the figure is expected to reach \$1.7 billion by the end of the current year (March 20, 2023).

Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak has also said the country is taking the necessary steps to increase annual trade exchanges with African countries to \$5 billion by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (begins in March 2025).

Peyman-Pak said the trade with the mentioned countries is expected to reach \$2.5 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2023).



Referring to the preparation of the country's trade development roadmap at the beginning of the work of the 13th administration, the official said: "In this roadmap, major factors including exports and the share of different sectors are specified, and in the case of Africa, the priorities and targets for trade with different countries and the requirements for reaching these targets are determined."

Peyman-Pak put the share of African countries in Iran's export basket at \$1.2 billion, saying: "Africa's annual imports amount

to about \$580 billion, and our share of this figure is still small despite all the efforts. We have managed to export \$1.2 billion to this market."

He further mentioned the capacities of the mentioned continent for the export of technical and engineering services and said: "The total exports of technical and engineering services to Africa is currently \$300 billion; But our share last year, despite a slight increase reached only \$200 million, which is still small."

According to the TPO head, in

order to increase the level of trade with Africa certain infrastructure including transportation and direct shipping lines, as well as proper legal, commercial, monetary, and banking relations must be provided, and TPO has been recently focusing on providing such requirements to facilitate trade with Africa.

"To solve the transportation problems, four countries have been selected in East, West, South, and North of Africa, to launch air and shipping lines," he said.

Ground broken for construction of 450 National Housing Movement units in Hormozgan

TEHRAN- The ground was broken for the construction of 450 National Housing Movement units in Hormozgan province, in the south of Iran on the occasion of the Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-11), which marks the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, a provincial official announced.

Addressing the ground-breaking ceremony in Bandar Abbas, the capital city of the province, Abbas Kamali, the head of Hormozgan Transport and Urban Development Department, said that for the construction of the mentioned 450 units, a land with an area of 1.9 hectares was provided by this department.

In early November 2022, a board member of the National Land and Housing Organization announced that about 57,000 hectares of land within the boundaries of the cities has been provided for the National Housing Movement plan.

Arsalan Maleki also said that the private sector owners in provinces with land shortages can participate in the National Housing Movement to provide land.

National Housing Movement to construct four million housing units in four years is one of the major plans of the current government in the housing sector.

According to the plan, out of these four million residential units, 3.2 million units will be constructed in cities and 800,000 units in villages, some of these units are currently being constructed after providing lands and preparing the necessary conditions.

In early November, Hadi Abbasi-Asl, the deputy minister of transport and urban development, announced that currently, at least one million units of the National Housing Movement are under construction with average progress of about 30 percent.

After National Housing Action Plan (started in 2018), National Housing Movement is the government's second major program to provide affordable housing units for the low-income classes.

The operation for the construction of 209,212 residential units of the National Housing Movement began in early February 2022.



The ceremony to begin the mentioned operation and also to launch some development projects in the housing sector was attended by the former Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi.

Also, in late July, Qasemi inaugurated a project for the construction of the first group of affordable housing units for laborers under the framework of the National Housing Movement.

And on November 5, the deputy head of the Housing Foundation of Islamic Revolution announced that 195,000 units of the National Housing Movement are under construction in the rural areas.

Greenhouses inaugurated in 45.5 hectares of lands in Sistan-Baluchestan

TEHRAN- New greenhouses were inaugurated in 45.5 hectares of lands in Sistan-Baluchestan province, in the southeast of Iran, on the occasion of the Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-11), which marks the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, a provincial official announced.

Mohammad-Reza Seyed-Hosseini, the head of the province's Agriculture Department, said that these greenhouses were constructed through making five trillion rials (about \$12.5 million) of investment.



"In line with the development of intensive cultivation in controlled environments, the Agriculture Department was committed to the construction of new

greenhouses in 80 hectares of lands, fortunately, 70 hectares of it have been built and exploited", the official added.

Referring to the achievement of top ranks in the fulfillment of the obligation to develop greenhouses, he stated: "Currently, for the construction of greenhouses in 700 hectares of lands, applicants have registered and are waiting for the process of selecting land and obtaining water permit."

In recent years, the water crisis has caused serious challenges in

Iran's agriculture sector.

To solve this problem, several solutions, including the implementation of pressurized irrigation project and greenhouse cultivation, have been emphasized by experts and officials in this sector.

Iranian Agriculture Ministry's Greenhouse Development Program is one of the priority projects of this ministry which aims at increasing productivity, efficiency, and water consumption management in the agriculture sector.

Iran, Russia customs hold joint meeting on educational co-op

TEHRAN – In a joint meeting in Tehran, delegations from the customs of Iran and Russia have exchanged views on ways to develop educational cooperation between the two sides.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the meeting was held under the framework of a memorandum of understanding signed between the customs of the two countries.

In this meeting, the attendees explored ways of using the educational, scientific, and specialized customs and commercial capacities of the two countries.

Over 1.3m tons of basic goods transported from Chabahar port in 10 months

TEHRAN – As announced by a provincial official, 1,347,907 tons of basic commodities were transported from Chabahar port, in the southeast of Iran, to the designated destinations throughout the country in the first 10 months of the current

Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-January 20, 2023), IRIB reported.

Mehrollah Damough, the head of the goods transportation office of Road Maintenance and Transportation Department of

Sistan-Baluchestan province, where the strategic port lies, said Wheat, rice, corn, and barley were the major transported items in the said period.

Chabahar is an important port and a low-cost route for Central

Asian countries, which with its strategic unloading and loading equipment has the potential to become a key transit corridor for international transit and transportation, the official further underlined.



China hits out at NATO ‘double standards’

From page 1 ► But the NATO chief went a step further claiming the country was becoming a “more and more authoritarian power” that was displaying assertive behavior, threatening Taiwan, and developing military capabilities.

This is while the military alliance led by the United States have military bases at every corner of the planet to wage wars, instigate or incite violence, provoke wars, and occupy large chunks of countries against the wishes of the respective country’s legitimate government.

If there is a conflict on this planet, the U.S. and its NATO allies have fanned the flames of it.

The terror which the U.S.-led military alliance has unleashed around the world under its so-called “war on terror” since 2001 has created terror groups in West Asia that had no existence before the mysterious and dubious war mission began.

For example, Daesh and the Nusra Front that are similar to al-Qaeda but on heavy steroids.

When Washington doesn’t care about the communities it terrorizes back at home or its neighbors in Latin America as a direct result of its own actions, never mind West Asia and beyond, that makes the U.S. the most authoritarian regime in the world today.

Of course, the NATO chief can’t speak out against his master in Washington DC, but he can take orders from the Pentagon to regurgitate U.S. rhetoric against Beijing.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, did hit back, saying “that NATO, on one hand, keeps breaching its traditional defense zones and areas, asking member countries to increase military spending and military build-up. But on the other hand, it’s talking down to China. This is a typical double

standard move. China adheres to the path of peaceful development and is the country with the best record on peace and security issues. We have never invaded any country nor never engaged in proxy wars, never engaged in military operations around the world, and never threatened other countries with force.”

The facts on the ground show that China has never waged a war against another country.

The region where Beijing has dispatched its troops outside the Chinese mainland is a very small contingent in Africa as part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces. In other words, to preserve the peace in Africa under the United Nations.

On the contrary, the wars waged by the U.S.-led military alliance, the number of proxy wars it has engaged in, the numbers of conflicts it has stirred as well as the number of countries it has threatened are too long to list.

The facts on the ground show how much NATO has destabilized international peace and security.

“What NATO should do is to abandon its Cold War mentality and ideological bias and seriously reflect on what role it actually plays for the stability of Europe and the world, instead of stirring up conflicts and playing up the Chinese threat everywhere.” the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said.

NATO claims China is not an adversary, but the military measures and provocations it has made against China, in particular the U.S., would suggest the opposite.

Contrary to Stoltenberg’s remarks, Taiwan is a province of China. Under international law it is part of China, something that is recognized by the U.S. itself. Under the one-China policy, which has a clear and unambiguous meaning, there is only one China and

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. The government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the entire China.

If anything, it is U.S. and NATO-backed separatist forces in Taipei that are displaying assertive behavior, threatening the Chinese mainland.

China has also reacted to White House allegations that the Chinese balloon shot down was part of a fleet that spanned five continents.

This is in reference to a weather balloon which sent the American establishment into a frenzy, alleging it was a spy object despite Beijing’s logical statements that the unintended and unexpected entry of the unmanned civilian airship into U.S. airspace was entirely caused by “force majeure”.

The Chinese foreign ministry said, “The U.S. is the number one country in surveillance and reconnaissance. It has long-running intelligence programs across the globe.”

It added that U.S. aircraft and warships frequently conduct close-in reconnaissance around China, which seriously threatens China’s national security and undermines regional peace and stability.

“The Chinese side has repeatedly voiced our grave concerns. The U.S. needs to put an immediate end to such provocations,” it said.

China also says it is not aware of any “fleet of balloons”, saying “That narrative is probably part of the information and public opinion warfare the U.S. has waged on China. As to who is the world’s number one country of spying, eavesdropping and surveillance, that is plainly visible to the international community.”?

The country’s vice-foreign minister, Xie Feng, has lodged a formal complaint with the U.S. embassy over

the incident, accusing Washington of overreacting to an accident “caused by force majeure”.

Xie emphasized that the Chinese civilian unmanned airship strayed into the U.S. airspace due to accidents and incidents caused by force majeure. The facts are clear and cannot be distorted or smeared. However, the U.S. turned a deaf ear and insisted on indiscriminate use of force against the civilian airship that was about to leave U.S. airspace. It obviously overreacted and seriously violated the spirit of international law and international practice.

China says it resolutely opposes and strongly protests the use of force in shooting its unmanned civilian aircraft, and has called on the U.S. not to take further actions that harm China’s interests, and not to escalate or expand the tension.

The Chinese government says it is paying close attention to the development of the situation, and will resolutely safeguard the rights and interests of Chinese companies, resolutely defend the interests and dignity of China, and reserves the right to take further necessary reactions.

“The facts are clear ... but the United States turned a deaf ear and insisted on indiscriminate use of force against the civilian airship that was about to leave the United States airspace. It obviously overreacted and seriously violated the spirit of international law and international practice,” Xie has been quoted as saying.

The irony is that during the era of President Donald Trump, the White House rhetoric against Beijing was more intense and provocative.

The Pentagon now says there were three instances during the Trump administration of Chinese balloons swaying over the U.S., yet even Trump did not make a fuss as experts say the intelligence clearly suggested at the time these were balloons of a civilian nature. (Trump has since denied the claim).

The suspicious timing of the U.S. announcement and its sinister accusations against China, on the eve of U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken’s proposed trip to Beijing (which China didn’t even announce) indicates that Washington wants to resume its provocative measures against the growing economic superpower.

However, the Biden administration appears to have fewer cards to provoke China with.

This is why it resorted to the use of force over a weather balloon with limited self-steering capability and deviated far from its planned course and entered into the airspace of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Washington is clearly desperate and its latest dramatic filmed actions of warplanes overreacting by shooting down a civilian aircraft (at the orders of President Biden) is yet another sign of America’s weakness.



different restrictions on its citizens seeking to exercise their Constitutional rights.

- Licenses were still required for handguns and long arms
 - The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is the licensing/registering authority
 - Some firearms are banned, generally ugly ones, albeit in common calibers, such semi-automatic “assault” weapons
 - Magazines are limited to 10 rounds capacity
 - Background checks by a Federal Firearms Licensee are required for private transfers of weapons
 - A 10-day “waiting period” is required between the purchase and possession of a firearm
 - Registrants must have a mental and criminal background check
 - It’s illegal to possess ammunition unless the firearm using it is registered with the police
 - Blind people may not apply to own a weapon(!!!)
- At one point, there was talk that the police were

required to test fire each weapon and retain the spent cartridge. In the event that it were used in a crime, the owner could be easily traced. The validity of this process seems to have disappeared. Conversations with the spokesman for the MPD, Maketha Watson, and the National Rifle Association did not clarify the matter.

Amazing! However, Mrs. Watson did note in an email that the city kept no records on legal or illegal firearms being used in criminal activity!

What’s really astonishing about this story is that the Washington Post almost daily has articles briefly describing shootings and/or killings with firearms. However, each of these small pieces omits the most salient point: was the weapon used legal or illegal? (The Post, like most U.S. mainstream media, vigorously opposes the possession of weapons by anyone except the police and the armed forces. We’ve all seen how that works—police everywhere are damned for their excessive use of force and U.S. soldiers are or have recently been engaged in wars in Europe, North Africa, as well as South and Southwest Asia—besides Korea, Panama, and Vietnam.)

Lookit This! The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (a Berkeley, California non-profit) released a study in December 2021 noting, inter alia, that only a few, readily-identifiable people were responsible for violent crime in Washington, D.C. And that the courts and police knew who they were!

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

WORLD HEADLINES

Five million may be homeless in Syria after quake: UN

More than five million Syrians may be homeless after Monday’s devastating earthquakes that struck the country and its neighbor Turkey, according to a United Nations official.

“As many as 5.3 million people in Syria may have been left homeless by the earthquake,” Sivanka Dhanapala, the Syria representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on Friday. “That is a huge number and comes to a population already suffering mass displacement”

“For Syria, this is a crisis within a crisis,” he added, “We’ve had economic shocks, COVID and are now in the depths of winter, with blizzards raging in the affected areas.”

Survivors of the magnitude 7.8 and 7.6 quakes have flocked to camps set up for people displaced by nearly 12 years of war from other parts of Syria. Many lost their homes or are too scared to return to damaged buildings.

Some 24,000 people have already died across Turkey and Syria because of the quake – more than 3,300 of those in Syria.

Dhanapala said the UNHCR has been “rushing aid” to the badly affected parts of Syria, but “it’s been very, very difficult”.

“There are 6.8 million people already internally displaced in the country. And this was before the earthquake.”

Meanwhile, a second UN aid convoy of 14 trucks has crossed into rebel-held areas of Syria – after an initial six vehicles went in on Thursday.

The Syrian government has said it will allow aid deliveries to rebel-held areas outside of its control, in cooperation with the UN and humanitarian organizations.

“The full scale of the devastation in Syria is only beginning to come to light” said Al Jazeera’s Kristen Saloomy, reporting from the UN in New York.

Renowned journalist says U.S. navy behind Nord Stream explosions

The U.S. Navy was involved in the Nord Stream explosions, American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said Wednesday on the U.S. portal Substack.

According to Hersh, a Pulitzer Prize winner, last June, the U.S. Navy divers, operating under the cover of a widely publicized mid-summer NATO exercise known as BALTOPS 22, planted the remotely triggered explosives that destroyed three of the four Nord Stream pipelines three months later.

“(President Joe) Biden’s decision to sabotage the pipelines came after more than nine months of highly secret back and forth debate inside Washington’s national security community about how to best achieve that goal. For much of that time, the issue was not whether to do the mission, but how to get it done with no

overt clue as to who was responsible,” the report noted.

EU fail to agree on Ukraine, migration policy

An extraordinary European Council summit convened in Brussels to discuss Ukraine, economic policy and migration wrapped up on Friday with unresolved differences among leaders over key issues.

Sweden beefs up security following Quran-burning

Swedish police said on Friday that they had launched an operation to bolster security in the capital Stockholm after the Security Service reported an increased number of threats against the country.

Security will, therefore, be increased at “symbolically important” objects, a police source told Swedish Television (SVT).

According to a statement published on the Security Service website on Wednesday, “The reactions to the burning of a Quran outside the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm in January have been considerable.”

“This development means that violent Islamist circles globally are currently focusing more on Sweden,” the statement said, adding that the terrorist threat level remains elevated but could be raised further “if this development continues.”

Russia ready for talks with Ukraine, but without preconditions

Russia is ready for negotiations with Ukraine, but without preconditions, and based on the reality that exists, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin announced it in an interview with Zvezda television.

“Yes, any military operation ends with negotiations, and, naturally, we have already said that we are ready for such negotiations. But only to negotiations, without preconditions, on the basis of the reality that exists, and taking into account the goals that we have publicly voiced,” he said.

At the same time, Vershinin noted that the decision regarding talks with Moscow is not made in Kyiv, but in Washington and Brussels, TASS reports.

“First, negotiations have already taken place in Minsk and Istanbul. And you recall that they were interrupted by the Ukrainian side. But you know very well that the decision is not made in Kiev; the decision is made in other capitals, first of all, in Washington, Brussels. Therefore, they should be addressed,” he added.



UK police have arrested three people on suspicion of violent disorder during an anti-immigration protest by far-right protesters outside a hotel used to house asylum seekers near Liverpool.



Semnan has considerable potential for nature, rural tourism

TEHRAN – The north-central Semnan province has important capacities in rural tourism and nature tourism, an official with the tourism ministry has said.

A variety of historical and natural attractions have made Semnan a popular tourist destination, Ahmad Tajari explained on Friday.

By holding tourism events and marketing and advertising, the province could demonstrate its capacities in cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, the official added.

In this regard, the private sector can provide the necessary infrastructure and create tourism facilities to attract more tourists, he noted.

Nature-based tourism is any type of tourism that relies on experiences directly related to natural attractions and includes ecotourism, adventure tourism, extractive tourism, wildlife tourism, and nature retreats.

Eco and nature-based tourists seek and expect a high level of service and products directly related to natural attractions, and they are willing to pay for it. They deliver more economic benefits than other tourists because they spend more and stay longer.

Iranian officials and policymakers in the realm of travel expect such a branch of tourism



development will end and possibly reverse the trend of migration from villages to cities by creating sustainable jobs and prosperity for local communities.

When it comes to rural tourism, Iran, which has many pristine yet diverse natural settings, has many to offer to nature lovers. Rural tourism as well as agritourism and farm stays can be regarded as a win-win both for local communities and post-modern travelers who are tracing unique experiences.

Sightseers may stay with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

Qajar-era palace reopens doors to public following years of closure



TEHRAN – After years of being closed, the Qajar-era (1789-1925) Soleymanieh Palace in Karaj, Alborz province, has reopened its doors to the public, a local tourism official has said.

Previously, there was the only access to this palace during Noruz holidays (Iranian New Year) for years, ISNA quoted Yahya Darai as

Alasht jajims offer original designs, vibrant colors

TEHRAN - The village of Alasht in Savadkuh, Mazandaran province, is famous for its Jajim weaving. For centuries, it has been a tradition that daughters learn from their mothers, and has been passed down from one generation to the next.

Jajim is a type of floor covering that is between thick fabrics and “Palas” (a type of rough fabric) in terms of thickness.

By weaving Jajims, the local crafters not only contribute to the family's income but also establish a sort of social structure by bringing together the suppliers of the raw materials and the weavers of this item.

The supply of all the raw materials from local

resources, in addition to its long history and high quality, was what caused this recognition. These Jajims are woven from yarn made from locally bred sheep, and they are herbal pigmented with plants that are commonly found in Iran's northern region.

The designs and motifs used in this vibrant hand weave from Alasht, which has become known around the world due to its exportation, are entirely original. The majority of them are characterized by geometric and striped designs in hues like green, orange, yellow, brown, white, and blue. Occasionally, cotton wraps and wool weft are combined, but the wrap and weft threads themselves can be made of wool.

Restoration completed on historical cistern in northeast Iran

TEHRAN – The first phase of a restoration project on a Qajar-era (1789-1925) Ab-Anbar (cistern) in Chenaran county in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi has come to an end, a local tourism official has said.

A budget of 700 million rials (\$1,750) was allocated to the project, Mohammad Taherian explained on Friday.

The project involved strengthening the structure, repairing damaged parts, and replacing worn-out materials, the official added.

The term Ab-Anbar is common throughout Iran as a designation for roofed underground water cisterns. It associates with water

management systems in arid areas that are reliant on permanent springs or seasonal rainwater.

Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains.

Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

Located 50 kilometers northwest of Mashhad, the provincial capital, Chenaran is a mountainous destination with rich wildlife for local holidaymakers.

TEHRAN – The main appeal of a bicycle is that, in its most basic form, it is merely a very effective method of transportation for humans.

Simply grab the bike, hop on, and pedal quickly to the store, the bar, or wherever you need to go. However, some cyclists prefer to add a little more excitement to their rides via more scenic, remote, and arduous routes.

Since Iran has a varied climate, you can ride between mountains, deserts, forests, and the coastal roads of your choice, from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea.

Due to the vastness of the ancient land and the different weather conditions from the north to south, it is possible to cycle in the ancient country at any time of the year.

There are no dedicated cycling lanes on the roads in urban areas like Tehran, Shiraz, and Isfahan. Cycling is not appealing on the roads because of how congested they are with so many motorcycles and cars.

Although there is a problem with air pollution, the majority of the roads connecting the cities are highways or motorways. On these roads, cycling is not suggested for safety reasons.

You can choose from a variety of cycling routes in Iran depending on your schedule, whether you have three days or one week. Here is a selection of the 10 most beautiful places for cycling in Iran:

Shiny southern coasts

There are numerous off-the-beaten-path cycling destinations in Iran's south. Small towns, villages, and hamlets can be found in great numbers along the Persian Gulf coastal road.

About 2000 km of coastline stretch from Pasabandar, in the southeast of Iran, near the Pakistani border, to Abadan City, in the west.

Along this coastal road, there are four distinct provinces, each with its own terrain, cuisine, culture, language, traditions, and tourist attractions. In this area, winter is the ideal time to travel.

Shemshak to Dizin

North of Tehran, there is a village and a ski area called Shemshak. It is about 65 km outside of Tehran and takes about one and a half hours to get there via a mountainous road.

Shemshak is surrounded by a plethora of mountains that rise to elevations of at least 4000 m. The village is located at an altitude of about 2600 m.

There is an old hotel, a few private lodges, and a few local homes available for lodging. The mountain road leading to the Dizin Ski resort is pleasant.

The two ski resorts of Shemshak and Darbandarsar can be seen beautifully from the road. The road leads to a 3300 m mountain pass, which connects to a different valley and the Dizin Ski resort.

Two well-known peaks in central Alborz can be seen in stunning detail from there. You can ride a bicycle on this beautiful road from mid-spring to mid-autumn. There is a chance of an avalanche in some areas of the road in the spring if the snowfall is heavy.

On two wheels: 10 best bike routes in Iran



Scenic ribbon of road through Iran's Zagros Mountains.

Alamut-Tonekabon route

Alamut is the name of a valley in the Qazvin province that is west of the Alborz mountains. Reaching the village of Gazorkhan, which is close to Alamut Castle, from Tehran takes about 4 to 5 hours.

From there, cycling to Tonekabon and the Caspian Sea requires two to three days. Up to a pass that is about 3100 meters above sea level, the road is a combination of a partially paved and dirt road.

Village houses are occasionally used as lodging. On the road leading to the Caspian Sea, there are a few eateries.

One of Iran's most fascinating regions is passed through while cycling along this route. The view of the road winds through the mountains and canyons is breathtaking.

Mid-spring through mid-autumn mark the best time of year for cycling the route. The pass will be snow-covered in the early spring. In the spring, it is important to confirm the opening hours of the road.

Kavir National Park

The Kavir national park, which is a section of the Dasht-e Kavir desert (also known as the Iranian Central Desert), is another desert area in Iran.

The Environment Organization of Iran has designated it as a protected area, and it is located to the southeast of Tehran.

Entry into the park requires permission, which must be requested one month in advance. The desert's combination of sand dunes, a dry salt lake, and mountains with striking rock formations makes it the ideal location for cycling.

The park is home to seasonal birds and a wide range of wild animals. The best times to go cycling in Kavir national park are in the spring and fall.

Hyrcanian Forests

There are thick forests all over the region to the south of the Caspian Sea. It is partially covered

by the Hyrcanian forests, which are listed as a natural UNESCO World Heritage site.

Various roads cut through the forests in the direction of the Caspian Sea, depending on which area of the forests you choose to cycle through. Kandelus to Noshahr is among the most gorgeous sections.

60 kilometers south of Nowshahr, in the heart of the Alborz mountains, is the mountain village of Kandelus.

Cycling in this area is most enjoyable in the spring and fall. Summer is also enjoyable, but the forest gets a little warm at noon. Your cycling trip in Iran's north would be complete if you went swimming in the Caspian Sea and spent one night there.

Qeshm Island

Iran has numerous islands, with Qeshm being one of the most beautiful and largest. The island in the Persian Gulf is listed as a Global Geopark by UNESCO.

Depending on how many days you want to spend on the island, you can cycle for up to a week. It is about 120 km long. The island is ideal for cycling because it has so many towns and tourist destinations.

Qeshm Island is home to a scenic salty lake, mangrove forests, stunning canyons, and arrays of spectacular coastal roads. The best riding season starts at the end of autumn and finishes at the beginning of spring.

Lavasanat

Tehran's Lavasanat district is just 40 minutes away from Tehran by car on a mountain road and is situated in the Central Alborz Mountains.

Lavasanat contains the main town of Lavasan, which is now a wealthy neighborhood where residents prefer to live outside the capital. With a population of over 15 million, Tehran is a sizable capital city, so many residents who can afford to do so prefer to commute to work instead of living there.

Lavasan, a rural and

mountainous area of Tehran, has experienced a recent surge in population. Various paths connect to a collection of villages all around the town of Lavasan. An insignificant lake and dam can be found nearby, and the summer is the best time to visit them.

Early spring through mid-autumn is the ideal cycling season in the Lavasanat region. Although there are no hotels nearby, there are locals who provide local homestays in the area.

Maranjab Desert

South of Tehran and east of Kashan is the Dasht-e Kavir desert, which includes the region of Maranjab. There are two ways to approach the desert. Both routes originate in the towns of Aran-Bidgol and Abozidabaad.

The amazing renovated caravanserai in Marajab is the perfect place to stay while on an adventure cycling tour through Iran's desert.

A dirt road connects the caravanserai and the center of the desert from both sides.

Sometimes, a sandstorm or rain can cause the road to vanish. On your way to the caravanserai, it's also possible that a tiny muddy lake will appear. The best seasons for the Maranjab cycling tour are spring and fall.

Yazd-Isfahan direction

The two main tourist destinations in Iran are Yazd and Isfahan, along with a few UNESCO sites, which are where the majority of visitors to the country want to go.

Cycling through the Dasht-e Kavir desert is one of the best experiences you may have in the spring or fall.

Depending on the timing of the journey, you might require a support vehicle for transfer to complete this route. Between these two cities, you can cycle on paved roads, dirt roads, or a combination of both.

When traveling through the desert, there are a few oases that add adventure to your journey compared to taking the road.

Cycling from Tehran to Caspian Sea

Following a straight line on the map, the distance from Tehran to the Caspian Sea is less than the 90 km you can see on the road.

Between central Iran and the Caspian Sea, the 900 km-long Alborz mountains form a snowcapped wall. This makes the journey more difficult and requires crossing the range from the southern to the northern slopes to reach the Caspian Sea.

There are many options, even though there isn't a designated cycling route from Tehran to the Caspian Sea. You can choose between a moderate level of cycling and challenging adventure cycling, depending on when you want to start your journey.

A few nights must be spent traveling to have a unique experience. You need a support vehicle on every route because each part requires a few transfers. Spring, summer, and autumn are the seasons for this route.

You might encounter rain in the early spring and the end of the fall. Weather conditions can change quickly, so you must be ready.

Hamedan to become children’s tourism hub

TEHRAN – The west-central city of Hamedan will become a hub for children's tourism, an official with the city's municipality has said.

There is a plan to develop Hamedan into the country's hub for children's tourism, Amir Fathian explained on Friday.

With its 250-hectare park of Ekbatan, Hamedan will become a child-friendly vacation destination, the official added.

Private sector investors can make good returns by investing in this park, which has an investment capacity of 20 trillion rials (\$50 million), he noted.

Experts say that nomadic tourism, children's tourism, virtual museums, and training guides for cultural heritage sites are among the untapped potentials of the travel sector.

However, tourism for children and adolescents is somehow a neglected topic, despite the importance of a child's life trajectory up to the age of 17/18 in terms of the psychological and social impact it has on their formation of subjectivity.

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 Achaemenian kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

Hamedan has had many names: it was possibly the Bit Daiukki of the Assyrians, Hangmatana, or Agbatana, to the Medes, and Ecbatana to the Greeks. One of the Median capitals, under Cyrus

II (the Great; died 529 BC) and later Achaemenian rulers, it was the site of a royal summer palace.

About 1220 Hamedan was destroyed by the Mongols. 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.

Sitting on a high plain, Hamedan is graciously cool in August but snow prone and freezing from December to March. In summer, the air is often hazy.

Ali Sadr cave, Ganjnameh inscriptions, Avicenna Mausoleum, Hegmataneh hill, Alaviyan dome, Jameh mosque, and St. Stephanos Gregorian Church are amongst Hamedan's attractions to name a few.

From page 1 ► oil well drilling equipment, valves and pipe fittings, water disinfectants, and waterproof coatings are among the products that have been produced by domestic nanotechnology companies.

The national document on promoting the application of nanotechnology has outlined the path to achieving the major goals of the development of nanotechnology in the country.

According to the document, 12,199 articles by Iranian researchers related to nanotechnology were indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) in 2021, which was equivalent to 41.5 percent of all articles published in the nanotechnology sector.

This share of the nanotechnology articles placed Iran fourth in the world in 2020 and 2021.

It is noteworthy that before the establishment of the national headquarters for nanotechnology development in 2000, the country ranked 58th in the world and 6th in the Middle East with publishing just eight articles.

Iran currently ranks fourth in nanotechnology in the world after the United States, India, and China

Currently, 66 Iranian universities accept students in the master's program and 22 universities in the doctoral program in various fields of nanotechnology.

The expansion of exports in recent years and the creation of bases in China, India, Indonesia, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq have provided a platform for the entry of Iran's nanotechnology goods, equipment, and services into the world markets.



Nanotechnology, a paragon of success in Iran

So far, Iranian nanotechnology products have been exported to 49 countries from five continents. The sale of nanotechnology equipment in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2021-March 2022) grew by about 59 percent.

Textiles, with an export value of nearly four million dollars, have the most diversity in terms of destinations by being exported to more than 20 countries.

After textiles, the most diverse export destinations have been nanotechnology equipment. However, in the fields of optoelectronics, automobiles, oil, and gas, the destinations have been limited to one or two

countries.

On November 28, 2022, President Ebrahim Raisi declared to implement the national document for promoting the application of nanotechnology.

Consisting of 7 articles, the ten-year document aims to train human resources and provide infrastructure for the development and commercialization of technology. Priority industrial areas are water and environment, energy, agriculture, health, and construction.

In this document, Iran was targeted to be among the top 15 nanotechnology countries in the world and aimed to generate wealth and improve people's lives.

In order to continue the nanotechnology progress, the upcoming national document has been compiled with new goals and approaches such as being a reference in science and technology, industrialization, maximum impact of nanotechnology in priority industrial areas, and entry of nano products into the global markets and the promotion of people's lives.

By 2033, the advancements of nanotechnology in Iran will improve the quality of life and the production of wealth. The country moves towards global authority in science and nanotechnology by producing innovative products while having a stable place in the market of other countries.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science celebrated

TEHRAN - On December 22, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish an annual International Day to recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology.

Gender equality has always been a core issue for the United Nations. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution not only to the economic development of the world but to progress across all the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well.

Even though women have made tremendous progress toward increasing their participation in higher education, they are still under-represented in these fields.

The International Day of Women and Girls in Science celebrated on February 11, is implemented by UNESCO and UN-Women, in collaboration with institutions and civil society partners that aim to promote women and girls in science.

This Day is an opportunity to promote full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls. Gender equality is a global priority for UNESCO, and the support of young girls, their education, and their full ability to make their ideas heard are levers for development and peace.

This year, the International Day of Women



and Girls in Science focused on the role of Women and Girls and Science as relates to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On March 14, 2011, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a report at its fifty-fifth session, with agreed conclusions on access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, and for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

On December 20, 2013, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on science, technology, and innovation for development, in which it recognized that full and equal access to and participation in science, technology, and innovation for women and girls of all ages is imperative for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of

women and girls.

In 2020, the United Nations Women, a UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, honored seven women scientists, including Iran's Maryam Mirzakhani, who have made significant contributions to the field of science, highlighting their world-altering and trailblazing careers.

"They've discovered life-saving remedies, devised world-altering inventions, and produced far-reaching research, but in many cases, their invaluable advances are minimized or neglected," the UN Women website wrote on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, February 11.

Maryam Mirzakhani, an Iranian-born genius mathematician and Stanford University professor, obtained her BSc in mathematics (1999) from Sharif University of Technology, Tehran.

Later, she earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University and was a leading scholar on the dynamics and geometry of complex surfaces. In 2014, she became the first female winner of the Fields Medal, the most prestigious award in mathematics.

Although Mirzakhani passed away in 2017, her invaluable contributions to the field of mathematics endure, and her trailblazing career has paved the way forward for many women mathematicians to come.

ENGLISH IN USE

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‘Further measures required to preserve forests’

Iran's forest area is approximately 12 million hectares with 0.2 hectares per capita, which is one quarter of the world average, so attention to preserve the forest areas must be four times the global attention, faculty member of the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands has said.

Mohammad Darvish made the remarks on the occasion of the National Tree Planting Day, in which people are encouraged to plant trees across the country, held on the first day of the National Week of Natural Resources annually observed on March 6 to 13.

Unfortunately, forests have been taken for granted in the country, as 2 million hectares of the northern forests has been depleted since 1330s (1950s), thus no serious protection measures have been taken, he said.

حفظ جنگل ها نیازمند اقدامات بیشتر

بر اساس آخرین آمار موسسه تحقیقات جنگل ها و مراتع، وسعت رویشگاه های جنگلی ایران حدود ۱۲ میلیون هکتار و سرانه هر ایرانی از جنگل، کمتر از دو دهم هکتار است که یک چهارم سرانه جهانی می شود بنابراین باید توجه ما به حفظ رویشگاه های جنگلی، ۴ برابر توجه جهانی باشد.

محمد درویش روز چهارشنبه همزمان با روز درختکاری و آغاز هفته منابع طبیعی در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: به نظر می رسد در کشور آن طور که باید به درختان و حفاظت از آنها توجه نمی شود؛ نابودی دو میلیون هکتار از جنگل های شمال از دهه ۳۰ تاکنون گواه این ادعاست.

Rural administrations inaugurate over 7,500 development projects

TEHRAN - A total of 7,509 development projects came on stream in villages across the country by rural administrations.

The projects were inaugurated on the occasion of the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution (February 1-11), IRNA reported.

Some 36 trillion rials (about \$90 million) were spent on the development projects.

The largest number of projects were related to the improvement of rural roads with 5786 projects, equivalent to 77 percent of all projects.

Creating parks and green spaces, establishing firefighting stations, as well as sports and cultural places were also among the major projects.

More than 37,300 rural administration offices are operating in the country, offering services to about 95 percent of the country's rural population.

The Majlis (the Iranian Parliament) has approved a total of 31 trillion rials (nearly \$77 million) for rural development in the budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year (March 2022-March 2023), IRIB reported.

By allocating this amount of budget, the whole credit of comprehensive development plans will reach 42 trillion rials, Akbar Nikzad, head of the Housing Foundation, said in June 2022.

The comprehensive development plans aim to develop rural areas in line with cultural, economic, and social conditions, as well as housing provision for the rural residents and improving environmental services.

"There are around 40,000 villages in the

country with more than 20 households, for all of which comprehensive development plans have been approved every 10 years, and after this period, the village comprehensive development plans need to be reviewed.

The plans have so far been reviewed and re-implemented for 4,000 villages with more than 20 households in the country," he stated.

Currently, 26 percent of the country's population lives in villages, around 39,000 villages have more than 20 households and 23,000 villages have less than 20 households.

Thus, more than 97 percent of the country's rural population lives in villages with over 20,000 households.

In Iran, where villages account for generating 20-23 percent of the value-added in the country, the development of rural areas has been always a top agenda of the government's activities.

Many efforts have been made over the past couple of years by the government to support villagers and slow down the trend of migration from rural areas to cities.

Rural tourism, agritourism, religious tourism, and ecotourism are alternatives or complementary economic activities that could further stimulate rural development while decreasing rural community dependency on one main economic sector (agriculture, forestry, energy, or mining).

Mohammad Omid, the then vice president for rural development, said in November 2020 that for the first time in the country, the migration of people from rural areas to cities has reached zero.

RAMSAR SITES IN IRAN

Part 63

Rice fields are under cultivation activities during spring and summer (April-early September), and become flooded in autumn and winter (October-March) with a depth of 10- 30cm.

Forestry and Rice farming are from the main activities at the site's catchment.

Hydrological values

Flooded condition is important for ground water recharge and also provide a supply of water for irrigation during the dry summer months.

General ecological features

The shallow impoundments support abundant floating and submerged aquatic vegetation and some fringing reed-beds of *Phragmites australis* and *Typha* sp. *Cyperus rotundus* (the principal food of the wintering cranes) is common. The surrounding plains are under rice cultivation.

Noteworthy fauna

The artificially-maintained shallow impoundments and extensive rice fields at Fereydoon Kenar provide excellent feeding and roosting habitat for large numbers of wintering waterfowl, notably *Phalacrocorax carbo* (maximum 1,560), dabbling ducks (maximum 200,000), *Anser albifrons* (maximum 1,700), *A. anser* (maximum 6,000), *Vanellus vanellus* (maximum 16,000) and *Limosa limosa*

(maximum 5,000).

Peak counts of dabbling ducks have included 14,500 *Anas penelope*, 20,000 *A. strepera*, 80,000 *A. crecca*, 80,000 *A. platyrhynchos*, 60,000 *A. acuta* and 12,000 *A. clypeata*.

A small flock of 11 *Anser erythropus* was present in January 1992. Other wintering waterfowl have included up to 500 *Aythya ferina*, 330 *A. fuligula*, 900 *Fulica atra*, 15 *Pluvialis apricaria* and 40 *Gallinago gallinago*.

These large concentrations of waterbirds attract a variety of wintering raptors including *Haliaeetus albicilla* (maximum 4), *Aquila heliaca*, *A. clanga* and *Falco peregrinus*.

Large concentrations of *Philomachus pugnax* (maximum 2,800) have been recorded on spring migration.

The wetland gained international fame in 1978 when ornithologists from the Department of the Environment discovered a tiny wintering population of the endangered Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) at the site. The local duck-hunters were very familiar with the cranes, and reported that they had been coming to this area for many years.

The cranes arrive in October and depart in mid-March. Since the discovery of the cranes in mid-January 1978, their numbers (except recent years that their numbers decreased to only 3 birds) have fluctuated between 7 and 14.



Quake-hit Khoy back to normal life

Children are playing inside the yard of a school which has been turned into a camp for people affected by a magnitude 5.9 earthquake that struck the northwestern city of Khoy on January 28.

