

Iran-Saudi deal unleashes wave of optimism

Who Won, Who Lost?

► Page 3

Opinion

One agreement and seven achievements

By Mohammad Sarafi
Editor in Chief

The agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia to resume bilateral relations after seven years is tangible and analyzable from various aspects.

Except for the Israeli regime and to some extent the United States, the reactions have been positive, and regional and international actors have welcomed this agreement. This agreement is considered a victory for the Islamic Republic from various perspectives. Of course, one should be cautious about the depth and scope of this victory and wait to see how the details of the agreement will play out in practice, but so far, some of its achievements for Tehran can be listed.

The first achievement for Iran is that it shows that Tehran is willing to engage in dialogue. And tensions, no matter how extensive and complicated they may be, can be managed if both sides show flexibility and rationality. This demonstrates that contrary to Western propaganda and claims, the deadlock between America and Europe ► Page 2

Yasin training jet production line goes on stream



© Mehr/Mohsen Rounghkaman

TEHRAN- The production line of the domestic Yasin training jet, which can also be used for close air support (CAS), was inaugurated on Saturday morning in Tehran.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony in Tehran on Saturday morning, Iran's De-

fense Minister Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said, "Training fighter pilots is one of our key concerns since the procedure is of utmost importance and involves training aircraft in different classes."

The defense minister also said that the

second prototype of the Yasin training jet, which was displayed on Saturday, was designed by professionals and specialists at the Iran Aviation Industries Organization (IAIO) years ago. ► Page 2

Huge "white gold" discovery draws spotlight on Iran's mining industry

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN – In late February, Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry announced the discovery of one of the largest lithium reserves in the world, an achievement that has put the Islamic Republic's mining sector on the map of the global mining industry.

According to Iran's industry officials, the lith-

ium reserve, discovered in western Hamedan Province, holds up to 8.5 million tons of the element, and considering the world's current discovered lithium reserves, Iran could hold up to 10 percent of the total global reserves.

The U.S. Geological Survey, which maps raw materials deposits across the planet, estimated the world's total lithium reserves to

stand at roughly 89 million tons.

Considering the estimation of the Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran (GSI), the reserve discovered in the country could be one of the largest lithium ore discoveries in the world and could hugely support Iran's manufacturing sector and boost its exports. ► Page 4

Science ministry to facilitate admitting foreign students

TEHRAN – The minister of science, research, and technology has said the situation will be facilitated for foreign nationals to study in the country's universities.

The universities highly welcome foreign students and there is constructive competition between the universities in this field, Science Minister Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol said.

In fact, the ground is ready and the conditions should only be eased to increase the number of foreign students, he added.

"Plans are underway to facilitate the issuance of visas for non-Iranian students as much as possible."

Scientific diplomacy is the priority of the ministry, he said, adding: "This issue requires a broad and cross-departmental determination." ► Page 7

National conference discusses mother tongue

TEHRAN – A national conference focusing on mother tongue and first language was held in Kharg Island, Bushehr province on Friday.

Organized by Kharg Island's national base of cultural heritage, the meeting emphasized the importance of mother tongues in preserving local culture and the identity of human societies, the director of the base has said.

Inscribing the local language of the island on

Iran's national heritage list was also discussed during the conference, Shahram Eslami explained on Saturday.

Persian language, also called Farsi, is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family. Old Persian, spoken until approximately the 3rd century BC, is attested by numerous inscriptions written in cuneiform, the most notable of which is the great monument of

Darius I at Bisotun, western Iran.

Middle Persian, spoken from the 3rd century BC to the 9th century CE, is represented by numerous epigraphic texts of Sasanian kings, written in the Aramaic script; there is also varied literature in Middle Persian embracing both the Zoroastrian and the Manichaean religious traditions. Pahlavi was the name of the official Middle Persian language of the Sassanian empire, according to Britannica. ► Page 6

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Tehran Papers

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

Regional agreement without the sheriff

The Sobh-e-Now newspaper refers to the resumption of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and writes: The resumption of relations between Tehran and Riyadh is being done while former and current prime ► Page 2

Iranian, Uzbek foreign ministers hold talks

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian received on Saturday the acting Uzbek foreign affairs minister in Tehran.

The two parties discussed the most recent regional developments and shared opinions on ways to improve economic cooperation in a variety of ways.

The acting Uzbek foreign minister is set to meet with a number of top Iranian officials while in Tehran.

Iraqi FM lauds Riyadh-Tehran move to re-establish diplomatic ties

In a phone call with his Iranian counterpart Amir Abdollahian, ► Page 2

Blast in northern Afghanistan martyrs at least 2

An explosion during an award ceremony for journalists in Afghanistan's northern Balkh province has martyred at least 2 person and wounded five others, according to a Taliban police spokesman.

The explosion took place at the Tabian Farhang centre in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of the province, as journalists gathered for the award event at 11am on Saturday, said Mohammad Asif Waziri, the Taliban-appointed spokesman for Balkh police.

"A blast has taken place in the second police district of Balkh," he said. Waziri confirmed the casualty toll, adding that three children were among the injured.

The incident came two days after a bomb in Mazar-i-Sharif killed the provincial governor, Daud Muzmal, and two others. Four were wounded. ► Page 5

Iranian Artists Forum to review political drama "Mephisto"

TEHRAN – Hungarian director Istvan Szabo's 1981 political drama "Mephisto" will be reviewed at the Iranian Artists Forum on Monday.

Following a screening arranged for 5 pm, critic and film expert Saeid Aqiqi will deliver a speech on the relations between art and power.

Szabo and Peter Dobai co-wrote the film based on a novel of the same title by German writer Klaus Mann.

Set in early-1930s Germany, the story of the film is about Hendrik Hoefgen, a passionate stage actor who craves center stage. After years spent slogging it out in provincial theaters, he's grown sufficiently desperate that when the Nazi party effectively offers to make him a star, he doesn't hesitate. Great roles and plenty of praise accumulate quickly, and Hendrik revels in his success. He dreams of ultimately playing Mephisto, and to that end blithely overlooks the profound moral compromises of his situation. ► Page 8

Report

West on edge amid Nord Stream revelations

By Ali Karbalaee

TEHRAN- Western leaders anxiously await developments on the Nord Stream explosions as more reports emerge contradicting their account that Russia was behind the sabotage.

After three of the four pipelines which form Russia's Nord Stream 1 and 2 undersea gas supply to Germany were destroyed by explosions September 2022, Western officials were quick to point the finger of blame at Moscow.

They made strong TV arguments that Russia wanted to punish the West, in response to sanctions on Moscow's energy, by destroying the Nord Stream Gas pipelines and effectively cutting off all gas supplies to Europe ahead of winter and make households suffer further. ► Page 5

Interview

Iran futsal in the right way: Shamsaei



© Tehran Times

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN – Iran futsal head coach Vahid Shamsaei says that his side's recent success in the Thailand tournament means that they are in the right way.

Iran won the 2023 NSDF Futsal Championship by defeating Japan 4-1 in the final.

"Since March 2022 when I took over the national team to March 2023, I tried to follow my pre-planned programs," said Shamsaei in his exclusive interview with the Tehran Times.

"Our plans focused on changing the generation and using more and more young players in the ► Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

Sobh-e- Now: Regional agreement without the sheriff

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

from page 1 ► ministers of Iraq such as Adil Abdul Mahdi, Mustafa al-Kazemi, and Shia al-Sudani had visited Tehran and Riyadh to finalize it.

In the end, China played a role as a great mediator and showed that Beijing's constructive presence in the West Asian region is a stabilizing alternative to the U.S., which has been managing crises in the West Asian region for decades.

In other words, China is trying to define a role for itself in the region by developing its relations with the countries of the Middle East and stepping into the U.S. shoes in this region.

Even though the friendly relations of the region countries will be a serious obstacle to the U.S. as a troublemaker in the region and pro-Western elements inside Iran, the renewal of relations between Tehran and Riyadh is a big defeat for the opposition.

During the last 5 months, the opposition did the best of its ability to isolate Iran, but these days they see that not only Tehran is not isolated, but is repairing its relations with the countries and international entities.

Arman-e-Melli: Iran, S. Arabia; the end of the role of extremists

Arman-e-Melli writes: Re-establishment of Tehran-Riyadh relations is very important and can be effective for the security of the entire region.

In 1990, Iran and Saudi Arabia had cooperation, agreement, or at least widespread de-escalation but several factors disrupted the rapprochement:

- Transregional challenges, especially between Iran and the U.S.
- Extremists of two countries (especially the attackers on the Saudi embassy in Tehran).
- Hardliners imposed high cost on Iran's foreign policy.

Israel is the only party that is extremely angry about the re-establishment of relations between Tehran and Riyadh. Because if the relations expand, the Abraham Accords will face a lot of challenges.

The Abraham Accords is an agreement that was supposed to normalize relations between Israel and Arab countries.

The developments of the past 7 years showed that Iran and Saudi Arabia have a wide strategic depth, and unfortunately in many cases, they were against each other, and if the differences are put aside, the strategic depth of the two sides would play a big role in improving political, economic and even cultural relations.

Etemad: Normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia

In an article in the Etemad newspaper, former Iranian ambassador to Iraq Hassan Danaeifar writes Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume relations.

The Saudi policy change towards the West is a serious thing, but it can be temporary or tactical. This change, along with Iran's will to improve relations with neighbors, was the case that made China take the opportunity.

Some analysts consider the hegemony of the United States in the region as unchangeable. But it seems that the leaders of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar feel that the U.S. is not the same as before and they can use the case to create some kind of convergence among the countries of the region.

The United States is not interested in development of relations between regional countries with Iran. Even if they are interested, they surely want the ties to be in accordance with Washington's views.

What is happening in the region are some unexpected moves from countries that did not seem to take a step against the will of the United States, but now they are doing so.

The normalization of relations can be interpreted as changing Saudi cultural, media, and nuclear policies towards Iran.

Keyhan: Agreement between Tehran and Riyadh is a blow to U.S., Israel

After 7 years, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume diplomatic relations and reopen embassies within two months.

Keyhan writes the agreement angered three parties;

The U.S., and Israel, the pro-Western currents in Iran are the three parties that were angered by the agreement.

The U.S. and the Zionist regime, who were happy with the unrest in Iran for months, were angered by the deal.

The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia made the Zionists mourn.

Barak Ravid writes: "I don't know what will be the outcome of the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran and whether it will be implemented or not, ... but if the agreement is implemented, it will be a severe blow to Israel and the peace agreements, and it shows that the prime minister of Israel has been dealing with nonsense for the past 10 weeks."

Kayhan also believes that the agreement, in addition to angering America and Israel, also pleased the pro-Western groups in Iran.

Hamshahri: Towards a new order

Hamshahri writes in recent months, Iran had tried to improve its relations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, but had not succeeded because they were aware of Iran's obstacles and used the talks just to control the tension, not to reach an agreement. But China's need for security in the Persian Gulf changed it.

China's relations with Tehran and Riyadh and the Saudis' need to distance themselves from the U.S. created a new condition.

An important lesson that can be learned from the agreement is that such an accord should be made with Kuwait, Bahrain, and also with Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Iran could not create a new positive order after the change in the nature of U.S. presence in the Middle East, but it can control the new order or at least participate in it.

injured, and the Afghan journalism community.

He went on to add that those who plan and carry out such vicious terrorist actions are the opponents of stability, security, and tranquility for the Afghan people, and their main objective is to prevent Afghans from having access to knowledge, enlightenment, and peaceful cohabitation.

At least one person has been killed and five others injured in an explosion that occurred in Mazar-i-Sharif at a ceremony honoring journalists.

The event occurred two days after a bombing in Mazar-i-Sharif claimed the lives of Daud Muzmal, the provincial governor, and two other people.

Officials embrace Tehran-Riyadh rapprochement

TEHRAN- The reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, two regional powerhouses who on Friday agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations after a seven-year hiatus, has been enthusiastically greeted by certain Iranian and foreign officials as well as bodies.

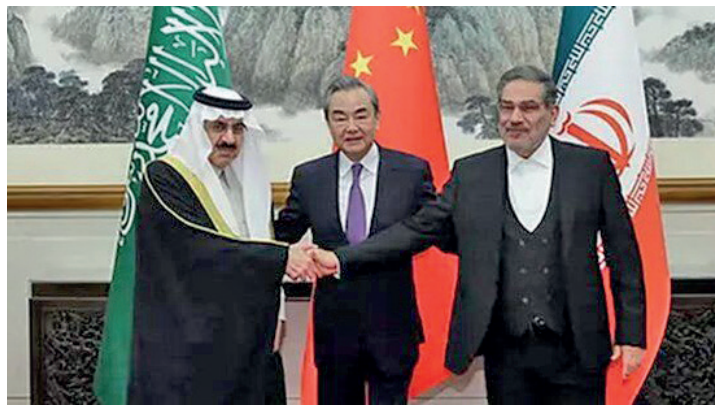
Iran and Saudi Arabia decided to restart diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies and diplomatic missions over the next two months after days of intense negotiations in Beijing.

Hezbollah Secretary General Seyed Hassan Nasrallah on Friday praised the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia as a positive development that might broaden possibilities in the region.

Nasrallah's remarks were broadcast live on TV.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council's secretary expressed appreciation to Iraq for holding five rounds of talks that ultimately led to rapprochement between Tehran and Riyadh.

Ali Shamkhani thanked Iraq for its efforts in a phone conversation



with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani on Friday.

Shamkhani credited the success of Tehran and Riyadh's reconciliation to five rounds of preliminary talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which were hosted by Iraq and Oman.

He also said that the establishment of "new and extremely serious conversations" between the Iranian and Saudi delegations was made possible by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's trip to Beijing in February and his meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament,

praised the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia as a crucial step in maintaining security in the Persian Gulf.

The foreign ministers of Oman, Qatar, and Iraq expressed their congratulations on the warming of ties between Tehran and Riyadh in separate phone calls with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Friday night.

The Iran's top diplomat tweeted, "The return to normal of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia will provide great capacities for the two countries, the region, and the Islamic world."

Amir Abdollahian further emphasized that the government of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi places a strong emphasis on good neighborliness as a cornerstone of its foreign policy.

Hours after Iran and Riyadh struck the arrangement with Chinese mediation in Beijing, the Syrian Foreign Ministry issued a statement expressing Damascus' appreciation for the agreement.

The deal was hailed as "a triumph for dialogue, a victory for peace, giving substantial good news at a time of tremendous volatility in the globe," according to Wang Yi, China's top diplomat.

The European Union foreign policy chief's spokesperson stated that the EU welcomes the reported agreement on the resumption of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi kingdom broke diplomatic ties with Iran in January 2016 after some Iranian protestors stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran in response to the execution of famous Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr.

One agreement and seven achievements

from page 1 ► with Iran has not been due to Tehran's obstinacy, but rather these Western countries lack interest or readiness to resolve issues and differences due to various reasons.

The second achievement goes back to America's efforts to isolate Iran. The agreement with Saudi Arabia, which was achieved through the mediation of various countries led by China, is the latest evidence of the failure of this effort. Iran's dynamic diplomacy from East Asia to Latin America indicates that most countries prefer their national interests over U.S. dictates when interacting with Iran.

The third point relates to the strategic alliance of Islamic countries. Although we should not be delusional about the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, it cannot be denied that these two countries are important and influential in the Islamic world. The closer Tehran and Riyadh get to each other, the less successful will be those who seek to create divisions among Muslims. We must not forget that uniting sects and Islamic countries has always been a permanent strategy for Iran.

from page 1 ► Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein also on Friday congratulated Iran and Saudi Arabia on their decision to restore ties and resume diplomatic ties within two months.

Fuad Hussein mentioned that Baghdad will shortly release an official statement on the matter.

Prior to the signing of the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Beijing, Baghdad hosted five rounds of security talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Iran's senior diplomat commended Iraq for mediating security talks between Tehran and Riyadh.

The recent visit of the German



foreign minister to Iraq was also discussed by the two parties.

They highlighted the importance of adopting a pragmatic stance to ameliorate ties between Berlin and Tehran.

The fourth achievement concerns the situation of the Zionist regime and its relation to the aforementioned agreement. Israelis, especially in the past decade, have intensified their efforts to demonize Iran and form alliances against Tehran in the region. The "Abraham Accords" is at the peak of these efforts. They seek to change friends and foes in Muslim countries' calculations. The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is an undeniable blow to this Zionist effort.

The fifth achievement is related to Iran-U.S. relations. America is trying to deceive Iranian society into believing that there is no way out other than a bigger JCPOA, i.e. surrendering to the White House's extortion or that Iran has no choice but to kiss the wolf's paw to solve its problems. The agreement with Saudi Arabia, which was struck in Beijing outside U.S. equations, showed that it is possible to reach an agreement without the involvement of a self-proclaimed master. This was in contrast to the previous government's mistaken belief that if we reach an agreement with the U.S., our relations with others, including regional

countries, would also improve. However, in practice, the opposite happened.

The Iran-Saudi Arabia agreement signed in China can be considered as Beijing's first political-security entry into the complex relations in West Asia. This successful entry is a sign of transition and departure from the current global order. In the new global order, the U.S., unlike the past, will not have hegemony and will lose its leverage. For example, it can no longer bully others through petrodollars. The marginalization of the U.S. role in the region and its exclusion from negotiations and equations is a significant sixth achievement.

And finally, the seventh achievement: those who were dreaming of an "easy regime change" through media hype in autumn and enjoying the open and hidden support of the Saudi kingdom. Riyadh's sudden agreement with Tehran came down like an avalanche on this complacent and treacherous group and once again showed that mercenaries also have an expiration date for their masters. Now they are humiliated and wounded and must look for a new master.

Iranian, Uzbek foreign ministers hold talks

Oman, Qatar also welcome new move in Iran-Saudi ties

In phone talks on Friday, the foreign ministers of Qatar and Oman also expressed their delight over the decision by Tehran and Riyadh to put their ties back on track.

Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani also voiced optimism that a win-win accord will result from Iran's nuclear negotiations with international powers to relieve the sanctions.

In the phone conversation with Amir Abdollahian, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi of Oman expressed his happiness over the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Tehran slams terrorist assault on Afghan journalists

TEHRAN- The Balkh region in northern Afghanistan was the scene of a terrorist incident that was severely denounced by Iran's Foreign Ministry.

Nasser Kanaani, the spokesman for the foreign ministry, issued a statement on Saturday blasting the terrorist assault on the gathering of journalists at the Tabian Farhang center and Afghan Voice Agency (AVA) office in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of Afghanistan's Balkh province.

The Iranian official expressed regret over the heinous act that resulted in the death and injury of several journalists and cultural activists while also showing support for the victims' families, the

Yasin training jet production line goes on stream

from page 1 ► The qualities of the homegrown training jet make it appropriate to be deployed for close air support of military aircraft against hostile targets, Brigadier General Ashtiani pointed out.

Ashtiani stated that the majority of the sophisticated aircraft's military gear and equipment have been localized.

For his part, Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi, who is in charge of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF), said, "Previously, our fighter pilots used to be trained abroad. The first sector affected as a result of the sanctions against our country was this field, which created difficulties for us in terms of training."

Vahedi added, "Utilization of the new aircraft will make training duration more complete and shorter."

In comparison to the initial prototype presented on October 17, 2019, during a ceremony in the

Shahid Noje Airbase in Iran's western province of Hamadan, the current version of the Yasin training aircraft appeared to have been far more advanced and evolved in terms of tactics.

The avionics, engine, landing gear, and ejection seat for the Iranian jet trainer were all developed domestically.

Its radome is equipped with aerial weather radar that was produced by domestic knowledge-based firms. Yasin is able to fly up to 1,200 kilometers and weighs 5.5 tons.

The aircraft can land and take off at a speed of at least 200 kilometers per hour due to the shape of its wings.

Iranian military specialists and engineers have achieved great advances in manufacturing a wide range of indigenous weaponry in recent years, allowing the armed services to become self-sufficient.

Authorities have frequently stated that Iran



would not hesitate to develop its military capabilities, particularly its missile power, which is only for defensive purposes, and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be open to negotiation.

Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has consistently called for measures to preserve and strengthen Iran's military capabilities, criticizing foes for doubting the country's missile program.

Iran-Saudi deal unleashes wave of optimism

Who won, who lost?

By Sadegh Fereydounabadi

TEHRAN – In a surprise deal that put an end to seven years of tensions, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to patch up their ties. The deal had many winners and losers.

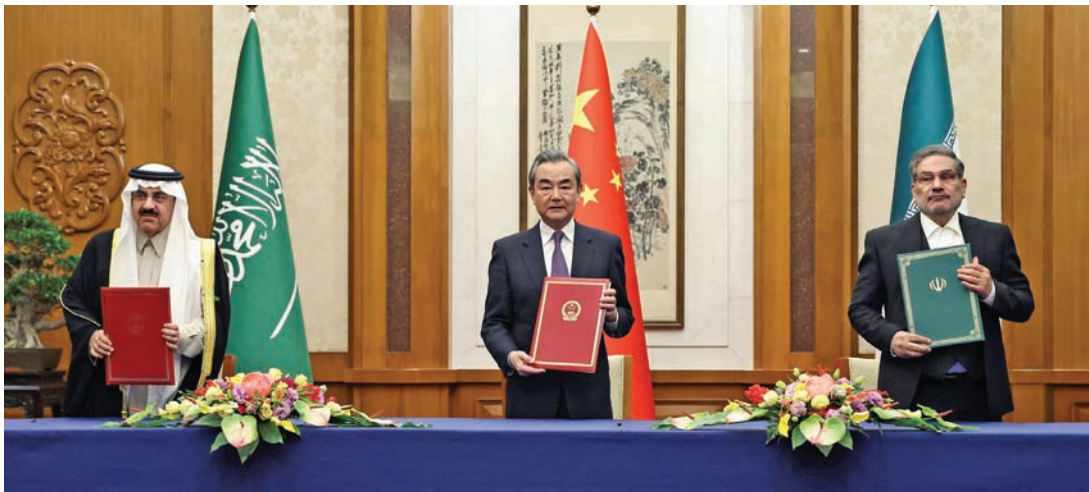
While many observers were skeptical about any imminent thaw in Iran-Saudi relations, top security officials from Iran and Saudi Arabia secretly traveled to the Chinese capital to put the finishing touches on a deal that would end seven years of tensions between the two regional heavyweights.

The deal, brokered by China, was announced all of a sudden on Friday, drawing mixed reactions from countries all over the world.

According to the joint statement put out by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China, “The three countries announce that an agreement has been reached between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, that includes an agreement to resume diplomatic relations between them and re-open their embassies and missions within a period not exceeding two months, and the agreement includes their affirmation of the respect for the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in internal affairs of states.”

The statement added, “They also agreed that the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries shall meet to implement this, arrange for the return of their ambassadors, and discuss means of enhancing bilateral relations.”

Almost all countries of the West Asia and North Africa region wel-



comed the deal. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian received a considerable number of calls from foreign officials congratulating him on the development. Also, the countries of the region issued statements welcoming the Iran-Saudi thaw.

In addition, many groups in the region expressed satisfaction with the deal. Lebanese Hezbollah chief Sayid Hassan Nasrallah described the deal as benefiting the region. Yemen's Ansarullah also said that Tehran and Riyadh need diplomatic relations.

Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey are among the countries that welcomed the restoration of ties between Tehran and Riyadh. This widespread welcoming derives from the fact that the majority of countries and groups of the region benefit from better Iranian-Saudi relations. In addition to the three parties to the deal, all the above countries and groups are considered to be winners.

The deal, however, has its own losers the biggest of which is Israel. This was on full display as soon as the tripartite deal was announced.

Avigdor Liberman, a former Israeli minister, called on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to resign over the Iran-Saudi deal because it was his personal fiasco.

Former Prime Minister Yair Lapid described the deal as a dangerous development that deprives Israel of its regional wall against Iran. “The agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran reflects the complete and dangerous failure of the Israeli government's foreign policy,” Lapid said, according to Israeli media.

Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said the resumption of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia was a “serious and dangerous development for Israel” and a “political victory for Iran.”

“This delivers a fatal blow to efforts to build a regional coalition against Iran,” said Bennett.

He then lamented, “Countries in the world and the region are watching Israel in turmoil over the dysfunctional government that is engaged in systematic self-destruction.”

But Israel wasn't the only loser. The U.S. standing in the West Asia region also received a blow. The tripartite deal was done purely by Asian powers, which marks a significant shift in the geopolitics of the region. Gone are days when the U.S. was the majordomo of the region.

In addition to the U.S. and Israel, there is another loser that is holding its breath to see what comes next: the Iranian opposition. Several Iranian oppositionists have been pinning their hopes on Saudi Arabia and its media empire and petrodollars. They used to think that Saudi Arabia would throw its weight behind them in their quest to bring down the Iranian political establishment. But the Friday deal caught them completely off guard, prompting them to look for new patrons.

Iran calls for global action against Islamophobia

TEHRAN – Amir Saied Iravani, Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, has called on the international community to take action against hatred against Muslims.

Iravani made the remarks during a meeting jointly organized by the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

He celebrated March 15 as the International Day of Combating Islamophobia and thanked the President of the General Assembly and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan (the rotating chairmanship of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) for convening this meeting.

“Today's meeting shows the serious determination of those present to address the issue of Islamophobia, including hatred, discrimination, terrorist attacks and violence against Muslims and their religious principles, beliefs and rituals,” Iravani said, according to IRNA.

He added, “Currently, the world continues to witness the constant aggression of the Zionist occupation regime against Jerusalem and the Muslim people of occupied Palestine. Also, in some European countries, under the pretext of freedom of speech, the Holy Quran is disrespected.”

Iravani noted, “The time has come for the international community, especially international organizations and countries that claim to protect human rights, to fight against spreading hatred against Muslims, who are a significant part of the world's population.

Iran voices concerns over education ban on Afghan women

Iravani has also expressed concerns over the ban imposed on education for Afghan women and

girls in a separate statement to the UN.

In a statement before a UN Security Council Briefing, Iravani said, “Since August 2021, Afghanistan has been grappling with a multitude of challenges. Despite the UN efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, the situation remains dire, with an estimated 28 million people projected to require humanitarian and protection assistance in 2023. Furthermore, the threat of terrorism persists with the presence of Daesh and Al-Qaeda affiliates. In the meantime, recent restrictions and bans imposed on Afghan's women and girls preventing them from accessing education are deeply concerning. However, we must be cautious of the politicization or exploitation of humanitarian aid for political purposes. Such practices would harm the Afghan people who depend on this aid for their survival.”

He added, “It is also crucial that the release of frozen assets belonging to the Afghan people is expedited and not subject to political conditions. This is critical for restoring the Afghan economy and saving lives. To ensure that the Afghan people receive the support they need, humanitarian aid must remain impartial and unconditional. We must prioritize the well-being of the Afghan people above all else.”

Iravani noted, “As a neighboring country of Afghanistan, we are deeply concerned about the potentially disastrous consequences of the ongoing situation in Afghanistan. The presence of Daesh and Al-Qaeda affiliates, as well as drug cultivation and trafficking, poses a significant threat to the security of Afghanistan, its neighboring countries, and the entire region. If not addressed effectively, the situation has the potential to lead to widespread destitution and

dom, and noble traits she enjoyed.”

She further said, “In the Holy Quran, women are honored and respected. Our holy book teaches that men and women were created from a single soul and are equal in the sight of God. It also states that men and women are partners and helpers to each other. This partnership is meant to be one of love, mercy, and compassion. Additionally, several pious women have been mentioned in the Holy Quran, and people from every time and era can look upon them and learn from their exemplary characters – the most significant of whom is Hazrat Maryam.”

The Iranian diplomat continued, “Islam and the Holy Quran place a high value on the contribution that

women make to society and uphold their rights and opportunities. Muslim women have historically made major contributions to Islamic civilization in a variety of fields. But we are witnessing practices and outlandish, outright false anti-women narratives from Islam that are against the Islamic teachings and discriminate against women. For instance, the recent prohibitions and restrictions that Afghan women and girls have been subjected to by de-facto authorities that prevent them from accessing education are regarded as a violation of women's rights and go against the fundamental teachings of Islam that place a high value on the education of both men and women.”

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran futsal in the right way: Shamsaei

From Page 1 ► national futsal team. I never stopped to implement my ideas and strategies during the last year.

“In every tournament that the Iran took part in, I fielded new young players and let them experience big matches. It was my plan from the first day as the head coach because I wanted to have a collection of 40 to 50 young top players to make the future of the national team based on their potential and qualities,” added Shamsaei, who scored 392 goals in international matches as the former Iran futsal player.

Under his leadership as the head coach, Team Melli defeated Saudi Arabia (11-0), Egypt (3-1), and Thailand (5-1) before the final match in the 2023 NSDF Futsal Championship, held in Thailand.

Speaking about the NSDF tournament, Shamsaei said: “Our traditional opponents in Asian futsal, Japan and Thailand, were in the tournament. Egypt, as the runners-up of Africa, also were among our rivals in this tournament.

“Iran played well during the tournament and the performance of our young players was impressive. I gave the opportunity to some young players whose number of international matches has just reached five, six or seven,” said the three-times winner of the AFC Futsal Player of the Year award.

Shamsaei also explained his plans: “I divided my plans into two periods of one and a half years; the first one was related to selecting new young players which I call the short-term plan. The second phase is the preparation for the 2024 FIFA Futsal World Cup, which I call the goal-setting stage,” he concluded.

Sepahan beat Persepolis to move close to IPL title

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team earned a late 1-0 win over 10-man Persepolis here at the Azadi Stadium on Saturday.

Sepahan have moved four points clear at top with seven weeks remaining in Iran Professional League (IPL).

Persepolis Brazilian forward Leandro Pereira was sent off in the 45th minute after receiving his second yellow card.

Sepahan forward Mohammad Karimi scored the winner in the stoppage time.

In Tabriz, Tractor suffered a 1-0 loss against Mes Rafsanjan.

On Sunday, Foolad will host Esteghlal in Ahvaz, struggling Naft Masjed Soleyman play Gol Gohar in Sirjan, Havadar meet Mes Kerman in Tehran and Aluminum face Paykan in Arak.

Iran climb at World Futsal Ranking

TEHRAN – Iran national futsal team moved up one place to sixth in the world futsal ranking released on Friday.

Team Melli are sixth in the table with 1,569 points.

Brazil lead the table with 1,796 points.

Spain (1,772) and Portugal (1,753) sit in the second and third places, respectively.

Russia (1,671) and Argentina (1,650) are fourth and fifth, respectively.

Iran recently claimed the title in an international tournament in Thailand.

Team Melli remain the best Asian team in the table, followed by Japan and Uzbekistan.

Iran, Russia match behind closed doors

TEHRAN – The friendly match between Iran and Russia will be held behind closed doors, Russian local media reported.

The match is slated for March 23 and is set to be held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Russian team Zenit played a friendly match with Sepahan in mid-February in Isfahan.

Russia will also play Iraq on March 27 in the Russian city of Sochi.

Ahmad Kohani takes silver at 2023 Gymnastics World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran's Mehdi Ahmad Kohani won a silver medal in the 2023 Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup on Saturday.

Nikita Simonov from Azerbaijan claimed the gold medal in ring exercises with a score of 14.633 points.

The silver medal went to Ahmad Kohani with 14.500 points and Austrian Vinzenz Hoek gymnast settled for bronze with 14.433 points.

The FIG Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup is being held at the National Gymnastics Arena in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The first World Cup took place in Cottbus, Germany from Feb. 23 to 26 and the second leg took place on March 3 and 4.

Iran victorious over South Korea at 2023 Asian Beach Handball

TEHRAN – Iran defeated South Korea 2-0 (20-12, 24-4) in the 9th Asian Men's Beach Handball Championship on Saturday.

Iran, who have been drawn in Group A along with the Philippines, Qatar, South Korea and Saudi Arabi, had defeated Saudi Arabia 2-1 in their opening match.

Iran are scheduled to play the Philippines on Tuesday. Host Indonesia, Vietnam, Oman, Hong Kong, Kuwait and China are in Group B.

The 9th Asian Men's & Women's Beach Handball Championship started on Friday (March 10) in Bali, Indonesia and will run until March 19.

The winners will qualify for the beach handball competition of the 2nd ANOC World Beach Games, which will be held in Bali, Indonesia, from Aug. 5 to 12, 2023.

The top two teams will also advance to the 11th IHF Men's Beach Handball World Championships, to be held in June/July 2024.

Iraq fail to reach 2023 FIFA U20 World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Iraq 1-0 in the 2023 AFC U20 Asian Cup quarterfinals and failed to book their place at the 2023 FIFA U20 World Cup Indonesia as one of top four teams.

Ali Jasim scored the winner at the stoppage time at the JAR Stadium in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Iraq will meet the winners of Japan and Jordan match in the semifinals at the same stadium on Wednesday. Samad Marfavi's team had previously defeated Qatar 1-0 and Vietnam 3-1 and lost to Australia 3-2 in the group stage.

Mongolia beat Iran at 2023 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Asia

TEHRAN – Mongolia defeated Iran 5-0 on the first day of the 2023 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Asia and Oceania Championship.

Iran will play Uzbekistan on Sunday.

The competition is being held at the Steppe Arena in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from March 11 to 26.

The IIHF Asia and Oceania Championship is a series of international ice hockey tournaments in the continent of Asia.

The purpose of the tournament is to provide competitive opportunities for Asian and Oceania teams that are either in the lower divisions of the IIHF World Championships or did not compete in any IIHF World Championships.

Islam doesn't discriminate against women: diplomat

TEHRAN – A diplomat with the Iranian mission to the United Nations has denounced the Western media for portraying Islam as discriminating against women.

The diplomat, Zahra Ershadi, made the remarks at a UN conference on women in Islam.

“The demonization of Islam is basically done by simplifying the concept of Islam and portraying it, as the religion of discrimination. Throughout history, the western media has been trying to distort Islam by spreading falsehoods about our religion and claiming that women are hugely discriminated against. But this couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, Islam places great importance on the rights and digni-

ty of women, and this has been the case since the very beginning,” she said.

Ershadi said, “From the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), women played an active and significant role in the spread of Islam. They were scholars, teachers, and leaders in their communities. The Prophet himself had a strong and loving relationship with his wife, hazrat Khadijah, who was a successful businesswoman and a major supporter of his mission. The Prophet's love for hazrat Fatima az-Zahra (sa) was mixed with respect and exaltation; and in addition to being motivated by the paternal relationship, this love was granted importance to her for the unique talents, wis-

Honey production up 11% in North Khorasan province



TEHRAN- The production of honey in North Khorasan province, in the northeast of Iran, rose 11 percent in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-February 19, 2023), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, a provincial official announced.

Alireza Sadeq, the director of poultry affairs of the province's Agriculture Department, said that 3,179 tons of honey were produced from the bee colonies of the province in 11 months of this year.

"According to statistics, we have 2,282 apiaries in the province, which is 2.4 percent of the total number of apiaries in the country", the official stated.

As stated by the chairman of the Animal Science Research Institute of Iran (ASRI), Iran ranks third in the world in the number of apiaries.

Mokhtar Mohajer also said that Iran's rank in honey production is changing and moving between fourth and sixth place in the world.

Based on the data released by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Iran is the third-largest producer of honey in the world.

The chairman of the Animal Science Research Institute has said that the amount of honey production in the country should be increased by three to four kilograms per colony.

Mohajer said, "According to the Seventh National Development Plan (2022-2026), the amount of honey production should be increased

by at least three to four kilograms per colony according to the diversity of plants and the area of pastures that we have in the country".

He announced that 112,000 tons of honey, 8,300 kilograms of royal jelly, 406 tons of pollen, 2,536 tons of beeswax, 247 tons of propolis, and 3,917 grams of bee venom are produced annually in the country.

Currently, there are about 11.8 million bee colonies in 109,759 apiaries in the country, he added.

Pointing out that Iran ranks third in the world in the number of apiaries, he said 87,932 people are working in apiaries in the country, and the output of these apiaries is honey and its by-products.

Stating that all these products are not consumed domestically, he said about 10 percent of these products are exported to countries such as Turkey and Arab countries.

Complaining about the low amount of honey production compared to the number of apiaries and colonies, Mohajer said the average production of honey in Iran is much lower than the standard, in a way that about four kilograms of honey is produced in traditional colonies, and an average of 9.6 kilograms of honey is produced in modern colonies.

He stated that the low literacy of the producers is one of the main reasons for the low production in the colonies, adding that the production potential of each bee colony in the country is more than 25 kilograms.

TEDPIX loses 800 points on Saturday



TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 845 points to 1.816 million on Saturday.

As reported, over 14,879 billion securities worth 66.792 trillion rials (about \$155.33 billion) were traded at the TSE.

TEDPIX fell 0.2 percent to close at 1.817 million points in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The index lost 155,778 points (9.22 percent) in the previous Iranian calendar month Bahman (ended on February 19).

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

Head of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has said that the country's stock market has been passing through a challenging time but considering the government's support, the future of the market is going to be bright.

"The capital market has gone through a challenging period and in the past two and a half years, various issues occurred in the market that led to the creation of a heavy psychological atmosphere," Majid Eshqi told the press.

According to the official, various plans have been implemented by the government and SEO in three major axes and extensive efforts have been made to achieve the goals set for the market.

Meanwhile, Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry has said the government plans to continue supporting the stock market in the long run and shareholders can count on the government's strategic support.

"The government, along with its short-term and temporary measures to support the stock market, has a long-term strategic plan to continue supporting the market in the future," the ministry said in a statement.

The government managed to show its serious support for the capital market with its recent support package, the statement read.

"Of course, the 13th government has always supported the capital market and the stability and outlook of the market have always been important for the government. Of course, the capital market and the developments in this market are affected by the instrumental view of the past as well as the real economic developments in the country and the changes of different variables and risks in the political, economic, commercial, and social fields," the ministry stated.

Maritime projects worth nearly \$100m inaugurated in southern Iran

TEHRAN – Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash inaugurated 10 major maritime projects worth 42.951 trillion rials (about \$99.886 million) in southern Hormozgan Province during a visit on Saturday, the portal of the country's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) reported.

The inauguration ceremony of the said projects was also attended by PMO Head Ali-Akbar Safaei, the Governor

of Hormozgan Province Mehdi Dousti, along some provincial officials and MPs.

As reported, of the mentioned projects six were put into operation with a total investment of 19.32 trillion rials (about \$44.93 million), while the executive operation of three projects worth 21.729 trillion rials (about \$50.532 million) was also started.

The inaugurated projects include a marine reference building, a new section

'Iran's annual export to Iraq anticipated to hit record high'

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- Considering Iran's vast export capacity and Iraq's large market for Iranian goods, both sides want to expand the volume of bilateral economic exchanges.

As announced on Friday by a board member of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, the value of Iran's daily exports to Iraq is about \$30 million, half of which is related to oil and gas exports, and the other half is related to goods exports.

Hamid Hosseini said, "Considering the favorable situation of exports to Iraq this [Iranian calendar] year (ends on March 20), it is expected that our export record to this country will be broken and exceeds \$9 billion."

"Although our exports to Iraq experienced some problems during a period of this year, statistics show that Iran's exports to Iraq are currently favorable", he added.

Also, in mid-December, Head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Yahya Ale-Es'haq said



trade challenges between the two countries have been mostly resolved and bilateral trade is expected to reach \$10 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

Iran and Iraq have set a target of \$20 billion in annual trade, and businessmen and authorities of both countries are determined to meet that target, Ale-Es'haq said at the time.

According to the official, Iran and Iraq have had the experience of reaching \$14 billion in annual trade in previous years.

Huge "white gold" discovery draws spotlight on Iran's mining industry



From page 1 ► The White Gold

Lithium, or as the scientists call it the 'white gold', is a critical metal for the continent's ecological transition due to its key role in making batteries for electric vehicles and devices; in other words, lithium is considered one of the most significant elements in the global push for net zero by 2050.

Surging demand for electric vehicles saw lithium prices "skyrocket" by around 550 percent in 2021. The prices rose to as much as \$86,170 a ton in November 2022, but have since come down to about \$52,000 a ton. Experts believe that the value of the lithium-ion battery market is going to grow to \$193.13 billion by 2028, therefore many countries

have made it their strategic aim to secure supply.

Iran to extract lithium by 2025

After the discovery of the reserves, the next step for Iran would be to make the necessary preparations for the extraction and processing of the mineral.

Although the Iranian mining industry is considerably advanced and the country is currently mining over 80 different types of minerals, the Islamic Republic could also use the experiences of other countries, especially its big trade partner China for extracting and processing the new mineral.

China has vast experience in extracting lithium since the country has been mining the product in Latin America for several years.

Last week, Mohammad-Hadi Ahmadi, the deputy head of the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade Department in Hamedan, said the country will be able to extract lithium from two newly-discovered lithium deposits in the next two years.

According to Ahmadi, the deposits cover an area of around 11 square kilometers in Qahavand Plain, located more than 50 kilometers to the east of the provincial capital of Hamedan.

He said the discovery of the deposits had tak-

en nearly four years, adding that the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade is currently studying technological capacities existing in two developed countries as part of efforts to start up the mines through a partnership with private investors.

The ministry's authorities expect more lithium ore deposits could be discovered in Hamedan, a province with vast deposits of clay which is a source of lithium.

Implications for Iran

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile currently have the largest overall lithium reserves in the world and Iran's 8.5-million-ton lithium deposit would make this newly discovered reserves the fourth-largest in the world.

The discovered lithium reserves can become a new source of revenue for the Iranian government which has been following new strategies to distance the economy from oil.

Detailed studies need to be conducted to determine the exact value of the discovered reserves and the feasibility of extraction; however, the potential economic benefits could be of great importance and a boost to the country's economy.

Iran to build 50 passenger ships for Ivory Coast

TEHRAN – Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex (ISOICO) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Ivory Coast for building 50 sea taxis for the country, IRNA reported.

The MOU was signed on the sidelines of the Scientific and Economic Cooperation Conference of Iran and West African Countries (IRANWAC) on Wednesday.

The event was attended by senior officials from both sides including Mohsen Rezaei, the Iranian vice president for economic affairs.

Iran's shipbuilding industry, with more than 50 years of history, has been on a journey toward development since its establishment, and nowadays the Islamic Republic is considered one of the world's major shipbuilders, manufacturing and repairing all kinds of vessels.

Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex (ISOICO),

which is a subsidiary of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), was established in 1973 as the largest shipbuilding complex in West Asia, in an area of 1100 hectares, 37 kilometers west of the southern port of Bandar Abbas.

Scientific and Economic Cooperation Meeting Between Iran and West African Countries (IRANWAC) kicked off in Tehran on Monday and wrapped up on Wednesday.

Addressing the first day of the gathering, Mohsen Rezaei, the Iranian vice president for economic affairs, mentioned the importance of expanding trade between Iran and the mentioned countries, and said, "We can establish large multinational commercial companies in cooperation with each other and increase our share of international trade; What Europeans and Americans do and are proud of."

"My suggestion is to establish a joint bank of Iran and Africa; A bank

that can have bilateral accounts; It means that capital should be allocated by the countries in the opposite country so that the traders of the other parties can do business with the common currencies of the countries without depending on dollars and euros. The joint bank of Iran and Africa can be a good starting point for the development of cooperation", the official further explained.

Also, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said, "The African continent has a lot of potential in the field of trade and economy for our country, which has been neglected in the past years."

Making the remarks on the sidelines of the mentioned event, Alireza Peyman-Pak said, "In the 13th government, special attention was paid to the African region, so that Iran's exports to African countries experienced a growth of 10-15 percent and exceeded 1 billion dollars and reached 2.10 billion dollars."

Referring to the potential of West African countries, the official said: "Most of our trade has been with East and North Africa, and trade with West African countries, which are an important place of mineral resources and high potential, has been neglected."

"One of the obstacles in trade with West African countries was the lack of recognition and communication; so steps are taken to develop trade in today's international economic conference, which is held with the presence of 50 officials and entrepreneurs from 10 West African countries", the TPO head further highlighted.

Addressing the same event, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said that the economies of Iran and the African continent are complementary to each other, and due to their abundant capacities, significant achievements can be achieved in this due.



Transport Minister Menrdad Bazrpash inaugurates Khamir Port in Hormozgan Province in a ceremony on Saturday.

of the third phase of Shahid Rajaei Port's development plan, and two suction machines with a total capacity of 300 tons per hour for loading and unloading of grains at this port.

Khamir multipurpose port was another major project that was inaugurated by the minister. The port is developed with the aim of facilitating trade, enhancing the export of minerals, and boosting employment in the province.

West on edge amid Nord Stream revelations

From page 1 ► But the narrative never quite made sense in the first place as even Western pundits struggled to explain why Russia would destroy its vital multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects, when the Kremlin could have simply closed the pipelines' taps.

Also why would Russia blow up its own pipelines, even if they were not fully operational at the time, they remained an avenue to resume gas exports in the future.

Now more Western news media outlets are citing sources including U.S. officials saying that their intelligence suggests a pro-Ukrainian group sabotaged the pipelines.

Other reports have explained how the nature of such a sophisticated operation makes it a state-backed terrorist attack.

But which country has the most interest in destroying the Russian pipelines that supplied cheap gas to Europe?

Moscow initially accused the United Kingdom of staging the attack but later revised its own intelligence gathering to label the United States was the main perpetrator.

According to the New York Times, the U.S. intelligence review suggests those who carried out the attacks opposed the Russian Federation "but does not specify the members of the group, or who directed or paid for the operation."

"Officials who have reviewed the intelligence said they believed the saboteurs were most likely Ukrainian or Russian nationals, or some combination of the two. U.S. officials said no American or British nationals were involved," the NYT added.

Germany, Sweden and Denmark have already launched probes into the incident; however, Russia wants an international investigation under a neutral UN mechanism.

Last month, Russia gave the UN Security Council a draft resolution which (if adopted) would ask UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to establish an international, independent investigation committee to probe into the attack and who was responsible.

Russia's Deputy UN Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy has said the latest media reports made Russia's move at the United Nations as "very timely," telling Reuters that "by the end of March there definitely will be a vote" on the resolution.

Germany's ARD broadcaster and Zeit newspaper have reported that German authorities were able to identify the boat used for the sabotage operation.

A Poland-based company owned by Ukrainian citizens had



hired a yacht for a group of five men and one woman, which used forged passports, the German media outlets reported. The nationality of the perpetrators is unclear, they reported.

Investigators found traces of explosives on the yacht, which the group took from Rostock, Germany on September 6, according to ARD and Zeit. They also reported that intelligence indicated that a pro-Ukrainian group could be behind the attack.

At a news conference in Stockholm, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declined to comment on the media reports.

Russia's foreign ministry has said that Washington has questions to answer over its role in the undersea explosions.

The media revelations come shortly after revelations made by the award winning and respected American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who exposed the 1969 massacre of Vietnamese civilians by American forces. He also broke the story of American troops cruelly torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib after the U.S. invasion of the country in 2003.

Hersh, citing an American source, said the U.S. military was directly involved in the blasts and that President Joe Biden green-lighted the terror act.

Quoting a source who chose to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the matter but with "direct knowledge of the operational planning", Hersh detailed how "skilled deep-water divers" from the U.S. Navy planted C-4 explosives during a training exercise last June, then detonated the payload remotely three months later.

The latest reports emerging also say the "pro-Ukrainian group" behind the attack used fake passports to conduct the operation, which means they could have been U.S. special navy divers using Ukrainian passports.

"President Joseph Biden saw

the pipelines as a vehicle for [Russian President] Vladimir Putin to weaponize natural gas for his political and territorial ambitions," Hersh wrote.

Moscow says the U.S. and its NATO allies "have something to hide" and are intentionally blocking Russia from their investigation.

The model and course of the vessel, which was reportedly used in preparation for the attack on the Nord Stream, was also named by the German journal Spiegel.

The Andromeda sailing yacht with a home port of Brege on the island of Rugen is reported to have transported explosive devices, the publication said, citing departmental sources.

According to Spiegel, the 15-meter Bavaria Cruiser 50 was chartered by unknown military experts through a Rugen charter firm. A photograph of the yacht was also included in the publication.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his top aides have denied involvement in the operation.

"U.S. officials declined to disclose the nature of the intelligence, how it was obtained or any details of the strength of the evidence. They have said that there were no firm conclusions about it," the NYT reported.

The reports that pro-Ukrainian actors were behind the sabotage will reduce the perceived Russian threat to European oil and gas infrastructure, but may also undermine Western support for Ukraine, especially among Republicans in Congress.

Experts say the U.S.-led NATO military alliance has the most logical potential motive to attack the pipelines. But analysts say any revelation that Ukraine also played a direct or indirect role could disrupt the delicate relationship between Ukraine and Germany, with the German public suffering like others in Europe who have been hit with

extremely high energy prices.

Built by Russia's Gazprom, the Nord Stream gas pipelines connected Russia and Germany. Nord Stream 1 was completed in 2011, and Nord Stream 2 in 2021. Built by Gazprom, it was expected to enter service in 2022.

Early last year, President Biden, after meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the White House, said any Russian move on Ukraine about whether to attack Ukraine would determine the fate of Nord Stream 2. "If Russia invades, that means tanks and troops crossing the border of Ukraine again, then there will no longer be a Nord Stream 2," Biden said. "We will bring an end to it."

When asked exactly how that would be accomplished, Biden cryptically said, "I promise you we'll be able to do it."

There have been similar statements made by senior U.S. officials that if a conflict erupted in Ukraine, Russia's Nord Stream pipelines would no longer be operational.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on both Russian and German firms for their ongoing work at the time to complete Nord Stream 2, drawing strong anger from Berlin. Washington has long wanted to replace cheap Russian gas supplies to Europe with its own liquified natural gas (LNG), which is vastly more expensive.

This week, European officials in Brussels were reportedly taken aback by the latest revelations that Russia was not involved in the bombing.

If an independent UN investigation identifies the real perpetrators, European governments will find it very difficult to explain this to households back home, who have suffered the most from the Ukraine war amid an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis as a result of a Russian gas shortage.

WORLD HEADLINES

Workers, unions gear up for new protests over French pension reform plan

Workers and their unions in France were preparing to take to streets on Saturday in a new round of protests against the government's pension reform plan.

France had a busy week with serious walkouts and nationwide protests on March 7, 8, and 9, with thousands objecting to the proposed plan, which triggered outrage soon after it was announced last year.

Labor unions had called for a nationwide strike on Saturday for the seventh time since January, while the Senate is still debating the reform plan. The debate's deadline is Sunday at midnight.

French intelligence was expecting between 800,000 and 1 million protesters on Saturday, according to local broadcaster BFMTV.

Paris alone was expected to host up to 100,000 protesters, the same source added.

Amid protests, the Senate debated the draft bill and on Wednesday evening voted 201 to 115 in favor of the most controversial point – Article 7 which raises the retirement age from 62 to 64 by 2030.

Trade unions on Tuesday also asked to be "received urgently" by President Emmanuel Macron, but the French leader on Friday openly refused the demand in a letter but said he does not underestimate people's discontent.

China's parliament names Li Qiang as new premier

China has named Li Qiang, a close confidant of President Xi Jinping, as the country's next premier, placing him nominally in charge of the world's second-largest economy, which is now facing some of its worst prospects in years.

Li was nominated by Xi and appointed to the position with no dissenting voices at Saturday morning's session of the National People's Congress, China's ceremonial parliament, in Beijing. He replaces outgoing premier Li Keqiang.

The 63-year-old received votes from nearly all the more than 2,900 delegates who voted. The rubber-stamp confirmation of Li's position came a day after Xi, 69, secured an unrivalled third five-year term as president.

Li came to know Xi during the then-future president's term as head of Li's native Zhejiang, a relatively wealthy southeastern province now known as a technology and manufacturing powerhouse.

US worsening Syria's 'humanitarian disaster': China

The "illegal" US military occupation of Syria has only deepened the country's humanitarian crisis, China has said, slamming American lawmakers after they voted to continue troop deployments.

At a Friday press briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning was asked to comment on a recent vote by the US Congress to prolong military intervention in Syria. Mao responded by urging Washington to "immediately end the troops' illegal occupation and plundering" and repeal crippling sanctions targeting the Syrian economy.

"Since the US began its illegal interference in the Syrian crisis, its military operations in Syria have taken away a large number of innocent civilian lives and caused grave humanitarian disasters," she said, adding that the US has been "criticized multiple times" by the United Nations and other international bodies for "indiscriminate attacks that may amount to a war crime."

Belgian MP calls for sanctions on Israel over war crimes against Palestinians

Belgian MP Simon Moutquin has called for imposing sanctions on the far-right Israeli government for committing war crimes against the Palestinian people.

In a speech before his country's parliament, Moutquin criticized the position of Belgium and the European Union towards what is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories, saying lenient policies towards Israel are tantamount to a license to kill.

He mentioned the recent attacks carried out by the Israeli army and settlers in Jenin, Huwara and Nablus, saying the year 2023 is the bloodiest for the Palestinian people in years.

"All this is happening under the most extreme right-wing government in its [Israel's] history, where the settlers have become ministers, obtaining powers related to the Palestinian lands, and asserting without hesitation that they want death for the Arabs," he continued.

Moutquin added: "The status quo is no longer acceptable. Allowing the formation of such a racist government amount to losing all credibility in the face of the extreme right around the world. Most importantly, failure to act against these war crimes is a license to kill for the Israeli government, its army, and its settlers."



Blast in northern Afghanistan martyred at least 2

From page 1 ► A journalist based in Balkh, Mohammad Fardin Nowrozi, told the Reuters news agency that he and other journalists were injured in the explosion, but did not provide further details. Wounded journalists also included Najeeb Faryad, a reporter for Ariana News television station, who said he felt like something hit him in the back, followed by a deafening sound before he fell to the ground, according to the Associated Press news agency.

Jordanians protest mistreatment of prisoners in Israeli jails

Jordanians have taken to the streets to protest against the mistreatment of Jordanian inmates in Israeli prisons, as well as a controversial death penalty bill endorsed by the Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset.

The protesters gathered in front of the Israeli embassy in the capital, Amman, on Friday, as they held banners calling on the prisoners to stay strong, while condemning the draft bill which asks for death penalty for those carrying out operations against Israel.

"If the repressive measures do not stop, the prisoners will declare a general hunger strike at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan," the brother of a Jordanian prisoner sentenced to five life terms in Israel warned.

The Jordanian prisoners' committee issued a statement, declaring that they plan to protest the mistreatment happening in Israeli jails towards Jordanian prisoners as well as the Knesset-endorsed draft bill for the death penalty.



At the beginning of March, the Knesset gave preliminary approval to the death penalty bill, which would apply to those involved in retaliatory operations and attacks against Israeli military forces and settlers.

If the Israeli regime approves the bill, it will be submitted to the Knesset for consideration in the first reading.

Concerns have mounted in Jordan as there

are many Jordanian inmates held in Israeli prisons who serve long sentences, and are charged with carrying out operations against the regime.

The latest development comes as several demonstrations have rocked the kingdom and calls have risen to cut ties with Tel Aviv.

Jordan signed a so-called peace deal with Israel in 1994, but Jordanians are at odds with their government and oppose any form of normalization of ties with Tel Aviv.

The vast majority of people in Arab countries oppose normalization and support the Palestinian cause.

According to a new survey by the Doha-based Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies' 'Arab Opinion Index 2022' which was carried out last month, 94 per cent of Jordanian are against any recognition of and ties with Israel.

(Source: Press TV)

Bronze Age settlement in southeast Iran undergoes excavation



TEHRAN – A team of Iranian archaeologists has commenced work on Tappeh Pir, an ancient human settlement estimated to date from the Bronze Age.

“Situated in the Sistan region of the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province, Tappeh Pir is one of the 900 local archaeological sites dating from the Bronze Age,” CHTN quoted archaeologist Javad Alaeimoqaddam as saying on Saturday.

So far, a main human settlement and a temporary one have been found in Tappeh Pir after archaeologists dug two trenches measuring six by eight meters, Alaeimoqaddam explained.

The outer surface of Tappeh Pir, which measures 70 by 95 meters, is covered by a layer of pottery fragments, the archaeologist said.

Based on archaeological findings, the site has yielded adobe ruins whose distinctive features are small rooms and surrounding corridors, he explained.

Preliminary studies show that Tappeh Pir settlements date from the second half of the third millennium BC to the beginning of the second millennium BC, and after that, they remained abandoned or used as temporary settlements for nomads and herders, Alaeimoqaddam added.

In addition to the residential structures, the

archaeologists have discovered evidence of industrial activities of the time that included pottery and metal smelting, he stated.

Studies show a significant connection existed between the human settlements in Tappeh Pir and the civilizations of the Jaz Murian region in the south and the Merv-Balkh culture in the Greater Khorasan area, he added.

The archaeological work is financed by the University of Zabol in close collaboration with the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, he stated.

The collective province — Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south — accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran, with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword in the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because it is located in a strategic transit location, particularly Chabahar, which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters. Moreover, it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

National conference discusses mother tongue

From Page 1 ► Kharg Island is a continental island in the Persian Gulf, south of Iran. The island is located 25 km off the coast of Iran and 483 km northwest of the Strait of Hormuz. Administered by the adjacent coastal Bushehr province, Kharg Island provides a seaport for the export of oil.

With over 6,000 years of history and significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid eras, Bushehr is one of Iran's most important historical centers.

Besides its cultural heritage, beautiful beaches and lush palm groves make it an

attractive destination for world travelers.

The historical and architectural monuments of Bushehr include Islamic buildings like mosques and praying centers, mansions, old towers, castles, as well as gardens.

When it comes to cultural attractions, there are many historical mounds in Bushehr including Tall-e Khandaq with Sassanid architectural style, Tall-e Marv located near an Achaemenid Palace, and Qajar era Malek al-Tojar Mansion. Qajar-era Kazeruni Mansion, which has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, is another attraction that world travelers love to see among various ancient sites.

Ancient city launches research base



TEHRAN –The tourism authorities of the ancient city of Masjed Soleiman, in southwestern Khuzestan province, has launched a research base in the historical core of the city, a local official has said.

Established in collaboration with the National Iranian Oil Company, the base aims at facilitating the restoration and preservation of the historical texture of the city, Ayyub Soltani explained on Saturday.

Additionally, the establishment of this

base is intended to provide conditions for the continuation of research, as well as for the protection of the city, the official added.

Masjed Soleiman was the site of the first oil well in Iran and the Middle East.

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

Lying at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering Iraq on the west, Khuzestan was settled about 6000 BC by a people with affinities to the Sumerians, who came from the Zagros Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there contemporaneously with the first cities in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium. Khuzestan, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, came to constitute the heart of the Elamite kingdom, with Susa as its capital.

TEHRAN – Archaeologists and cultural heritage experts have commenced work in Burnt City, a magnificent UNESCO-registered site in southeast Iran.

“A new archaeological examination has begun in Shahr-e Sukhteh aimed to shed new light on previously discovered architectural structures and potteries in workshops number 20 and 35,” the director of the World Heritage site said on Saturday.

The resumption of research activities in these two workshops is aimed at completing previous studies on the one hand, and cast light on cultural developments in human settlements in various periods, Zohreh Shirazi said.

Results of the current study are expected to be published in terms of chronology, architectural structures, and their functions, she explained.

Last year, teams of Iranian, Italian, and Serbian archaeologists discovered ruined settlements and fresh clues about life in Burnt City. In December 2022, archaeologists in Burnt City found a fingerprint left on a clay vessel made by a potter some 5,000

Archaeologists resume work in Burnt City



years ago.

Also known as Shahr-e Sukhteh or Shahr-i Sokhta, Burnt City is associated with four rounds of civilization, all burnt down by catastrophic sets of fire. The site is situated in the Sistan-Baluchestan province, which was

once a junction of Bronze-Age trade routes crossing the Iranian plateau.

According to UNESCO, changes in water sources and climate change led to the eventual abandonment of the city in the early second millennium. The

44 Lorestan villages selected for tourism

TEHRAN – Lorestan tourism directorate has selected 44 local villages as emerging destinations for holidaymakers and nature lovers.

“We have selected 44 villages which hold considerable potential to become tourist destinations,” the provincial tourism chief said on Saturday.

However, the villages should be equipped for tourism beforehand in terms of installing needed infrastructure, Ata Hassanpur said.

“According to the most recent statistics, more than 80% of these villages now have access to gas, and the remaining 20% are in the process of being finished.”

These villages are also being provided with access roads and Internet access for this purpose, the official said.

The Lorestan villages are surrounded by lakes, waterfalls, fertile plains, wetlands, and high mountains covered in trees and other vegetation, so it is important to focus on rural tourism in this area.

As mentioned by travel experts, holidaymakers are becoming more and more

adventurous in recent years, seeking out unique experiences like spending a day in the tranquil countryside, gathering fresh fruit, watching rice grow, fishing by the sea, dining on local cuisine, or even staying with locals.

To put it another way, a lot of urban dwellers favor rural travel to take advantage of a relaxed way of life similar to “the Internet countryside.”

In contrast, traditional modes of transportation are typically booked through travel agencies. As tourists get older, more and more types of travel are welcomed by those looking for off-the-beaten-path destinations.

Having numerous pristine yet diverse natural gifts, Iran has many to offer to nature lovers. For instance, the villages of Kharanaq, Barandaq, and Lark have been nominated for the ‘Best Tourism Villages’ label, which the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is projected to grant to a selection of rural destinations across the globe.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) sees rural tourism as a type of activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-



based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle, culture, angling, and sightseeing. Such tourism also possesses characteristics such as low population density, a landscape dominated by agriculture and forestry, as well as traditional social structure and lifestyle.

Additionally, the expansion of the local economy is the ultimate goal of the rise and development of the rural tourism industry, but in the long run, to make this possible, full protection of the environment is crucial.

Nushabad underground city to reopen doors to public

TEHRAN –After being closed for some time, the underground city of Nushabad in the central district of Aran-Bidgol county, Isfahan province, is scheduled to reopen doors to the public, a local tourism official has said.

There will be one-day tours offered during the Noruz holidays (starting March 21) to allow visitors to explore the city, Javad Sanai explained on Saturday.

Desert tourism enthusiasts could also stay in the city as a stopover destination on their way to nearby deserts, the official added.

The labyrinthine city of Nushabad is comprised of three stories of tunnels, chambers, air ducts, staircases, and canals. It is widely considered a marvel of ancient architecture and engineering.

Despite its impressive scale as the biggest underground city in Iran, the 1,500-year-old city was completely unknown until a decade ago, when a resident of a



village nearby stumbled upon a tunnel while digging a well in his home.

What was discovered was a sprawling underground city set between three to 18 meters deep. The construction of this man-made subterranean city, called Ouee (or Ouyi), dates back to the Sassanid era (224 CE–651).

Inhabitants would dig underground chambers as hideout spots for women, children, and the elderly in frequent attacks by foreign invaders.

Over the years, the individual chambers were amalgamated, and air ducts, water pipes, storage spaces, and toilets were

all built—creating a sustainable underground city in which ancient Persians took refuge in times of war. Each family had a room of sorts, with a tunnel running down the length of these rooms, similar to a hotel hallway.

The city could also be used as a shelter for the desert's summer heat as the remarkable complex of tunnels originally grew up around a freshwater spring, credited with supplying delicious, crystal-clear water. Only part of the tunnel system is open to visitors today, and those parts are often subject to flooding.

The underground structure included several ingenious devices to trap and ambush hostile intruders, such as curving corridors and disguised pits covered with stones. The tunnels, which were put to good use during the Mongol invasion in the 13th century, worked particularly well as an emergency shelter because there were several entrances to the underground chambers, some of which surfaced within the

structures, burial grounds, and numerous significant artifacts unearthed there and their well-preserved state due to the dry desert climate make this site a rich source of information regarding the emergence of complex societies and contacts between them in the third millennium BC.

“In general, the surrounding desert landscape and extraordinary scatter of archaeological material present on the surface of the low hill of Shahr-i Sokhta give a strong sense of authenticity, as does the sight of the complex architecture of the various parts so far excavated. The labyrinthine succession of rooms, corridors, and courtyards gives a genuine impression of these ancient buildings.”

Burnt City was inhabited from its founding around 3200 BC through four major eras until 1800 BC. Previous excavations revealed that the area's inhabitants were masters of weaving and the creation of fine arts, including stone carving, pottery painting, and decorative objects.

Cultural festival celebrates Noruz



including Gilak, Talesh, and Tat, have come together and formed a very rich and diverse culture and customs.

The northern region was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires

that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE. The subsequent Arab conquest of Iran led to the rise of many local dynasties, and Gilan acquired an independent status that continued until 1567.

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

TEHRAN – Iran has called for boosting multilateral cooperation in the region to tackle environmental challenges and ensure food security.

“The impact of climate change has become so obvious and severe that we must react actively, effectively, efficiently, and quickly,” Ali Salajeqeh, the chief of the Department of Environment (DOE), said.

Environmental problems are not limited to political borders, he said, adding that supporting and strengthening regional and multilateral cooperation to overcome common challenges is of vital importance.

He made the remarks at the “Partnership for Food Security under Climate Change” international conference which was held in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Ashgabat on March 9-10.

“We are determined to take more effective measures to protect the environment and maintain the country’s food security, and we know very well that to achieve this goal, we must cooperate with other countries, especially our neighboring countries.

The world needs to make serious decisions at the right time to prevent the occurrence of disasters related to malnutrition and poverty that will affect the achievement of sustainable development goals and slow down the process of achieving them.”

“In order to reach a common and coordinated approach, we suggest that a cooperation mechanism for food security be formed in the context of climate change.”

This mechanism can be established with the cooperation of governmental, non-governmental, scientific, and international organizations with the support of the private sector, Salajeqeh added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the DOE chief said climate change with direct impact on the output



Regional cooperation a key element for food security, Iran says

of crops and an increase in temperature and change in precipitation patterns, intensification of extreme events such as floods, drought, dust, water resources, pests, and diseases, and invasive species has indirectly impacted food security in all its four dimensions including availability, affordability, utilization, and stability.

It has put all vulnerable groups in northern and southern countries at risk on different scales, both in terms of economy and health, he noted.

“This challenge has even hindered the achievement of sustainable development goals, especially poverty alleviation, elimination of hunger and malnutrition, gender equality, and reduction of inequalities.”

“Iran has an arid and semi-arid climate, and due to the estimated increase in its temperature above the global average, Iran is facing

more and more environmental problems caused by climate change.

“We suggest that a cooperation mechanism for food security be formed in the context of climate change.”

Despite the imposition of sanctions, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has put on the agenda improving the supply chain, increasing the fertility of agricultural lands, optimizing management of pastures, and developing greenhouses.”

The national food security bill is in the process of approval in the parliament in order to strengthen food security and remove obstacles to agricultural production, support farmers and crop producers, and define a comprehensive system of supply and demand, he highlighted.

Referring to the implementation of a national plan to plant one billion saplings in cooperation with FAO and centered on the natural resources and watershed management organization to deal with desertification over the course of four years, Salajeqeh said: “The plan is in line with the implementation of the country’s clean air law and the country’s voluntary commitments to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to zero out land destruction.”

“Restoring and expanding forests and urban green spaces by 1.44 million hectares, controlling 170 million tons of dust in the source area, absorbing 150 million tons of greenhouse gases, reducing soil erosion by 25 million tons per year, and producing about 2 billion cubic meters of fresh water are among the goals of the plan.”

All of these will contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change prevention goals, he stressed.

Considering the need to improve the technical knowledge of experts and the general knowledge of all people, especially local communities, as well as the need to prioritize action in the field of adaptation to climate change, keeping in mind the principle of common but distinct responsibilities, as well as the commitment of developed countries to finance and transfer technology to developing countries, we emphasize the key role of international organizations in expanding communication channels, managing and transferring knowledge, as well as introducing successful experiences, Salajeqeh concluded.

UNDP continues supporting women with disabilities in Iran

TEHRAN – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its projects across the country continues to work with national and international partners to address the socio-economic needs of vulnerable groups, especially women with disabilities.

It was in 2003 when UNDP with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) initiated the first phase of “Carbon Sequestration Project” (CSP) in South Khorasan province situated in the east of Iran.

The project aimed to sequester atmospheric carbon in arid and semi-arid areas of Iran and improve the socio-economic status of local communities using a community-based natural resources development approach. CSP was implemented by the Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization (NRWO) together with UNDP.

Some of the project beneficiaries were visually impaired but they all had lights in their hearts that were put out by the COVID-19 pandemic and its drastic impacts on their lives and livelihoods.

With the goal of supporting and economically empowering vulnerable groups including women and people living with disability, the project provided skills training and organic material for making handicrafts and supported connecting the local producers and their environmentally sustainable products to a wider market.

Pari Aslani, a talented woman who is visually impaired comes from a challenging past filled with overcoming adversities because of her disability. She is 42. Living in Chahar Borj village in North Khorasan province, she holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology.

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, Pari lost hope as she saw no future ahead of her.

“When I met Pari, she was hopeless, but I saw the spark in her. I listened to her life story. Just because Pari has a type of disability, it does not mean that she should be deprived of a normal life. I asked her if she was eager to make a change and she accepted,” says Zahra Ghezel, an entrepreneur philanthropist in the field of handicrafts.

Zahra is from the southern parts of Esfarayen city in North Khorasan province which was among the Carbon Sequestration Project (CSP) pilot sites. With particular attention to human capital investments, many training sessions on the environment, vocational skills, and partnerships were held in this area and as a result, many local people specifically women acquired new skills.

Three centralized workshops assisted by CSP were inaugurated in the area which has led to the improvement of women workers’ livelihoods including Pari’s.

Pari learned how to make handicrafts; first with simpler tasks such as making tassels but soon she progressed in her job and could make money during the pandemic by weaving. Today, Pari continues to weave with love. She is supporting her family, especially her father who is suffering from Alzheimer’s.

She took her little sister Monir, who is also visually impaired, to work and taught her how to weave and work in a team as she did not want her to be isolated at home.

“Everything was dark but since the day I met Zahra and got familiar with the project, light has come back to my life. For the first time in my life, I dared to plan for my future with the hope to save money and be financially independent. I was the first woman in my village who went to university and integrated into society,” says Pari.

Pari has prevailed over the challenges that life threw at her. She is now a supervisor at one of the workshops where she first learned how to weave and is working with 15 other women who are either heads of the household or living with a disability. “I want to continue my studies and use my full potential to help women who have the same condition as I do so that people see our potential and see us as capable people and not judge us because of our disability,” Pari says.

“Disability is not a barrier; if society supports me and other individuals living with disability, they will see that we have a lot to offer. Persons with disabilities should be recognized as equal members of society” she added.

WORLD RAMSAR SITES

The reserve is best known for the spotted seal *Phoca vitulina* and attracts large numbers of tourists from the nearby city and elsewhere.

The cycle of the seals’ lives is tied to the icing and melting conditions, as, following the adults’ migratory routes through the Sea of Japan, Yellow Sea, and East China Sea, young seals are born on the ice within the site and remain with a nuclear family until the ice breaks up some three months later in March.

Shipping and transportation are sources of disturbance to the spotted seals within the site, while a port development within the Liaodong Bay is also a potential threat.

Noteworthy flora

In the shallow sea water areas in the wetland coast, many plankton animals are low salinity and eurythermal species.

Phytoplankton mainly consists of diatoms, 51

species of which account for 89% of the total species of phytoplankton in Liaodong Bay.

Besides, there are a few Pyrrophyta, Chlorophyta, Chrysophyta, Cyanophyta and Eugleniphyta. Main species of algae include *Coscinodiscus*, *Melosira*, *Skeletonema*, *Rhizosolenia* and *Chaetoceros*, all of which account for 10% of one year biomass.

Noteworthy fauna

There are 100 species of fishes, 3 species of shrimps, 2 species of crabs and 3 species of cephalopods plus 9 species of marine animals including *Phoca largha*, *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*, *Orcinus orca*, *Pseudorca crassidens*, *Pseudorca crassidens*, *Delphinus delphis*, *Neophocaena phocaenoides*, etc.

Since the nekton is capable of long-distance migration, the seasonal change of the species is quite significant.

Source: Ramsar.org

Science ministry to facilitate admitting foreign students

From page 1 ▶ Referring to the program for teaching the English language to foreign students in Iran, Zolfigol said: “We have discussed the issue with a number of universities.

Currently, D-8 International University provides courses for foreign students in English.”

D-8 International University is an intergovernmental University affiliated with the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation consisting of Iran, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Egypt.

More than 100,000 foreign students from 119 countries are studying in Iranian universities, and 94 universities in the country have permission to admit foreign students.

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

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

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

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

More than 100,000 foreign students from 119 countries are studying in Iranian universities.

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

The education of foreign students in Iran has grown significantly compared to previous years, even last year, it has doubled, he said.

Iran has the ability and capacity to have



more than 250,000 foreign students by 2026, he stated.

Despite U.S. sanctions, the international activities of Iranian scientists have increased year by year, so that more than 35 percent of Iranian articles in Scopus have been multi-national projects, Peyman Salehi, the deputy science minister, has said.

He made the remarks at the COMSTECH (the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) ceremony in July 2022.

Science diplomacy is the use of scientific collaborations among nations to address common problems and build constructive international partnerships.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Afghanistan thanks Iran for free services to refugees during COVID-19

Afghanistan has appreciated Iran for offering health and treatment services to Afghan refugees infected with coronavirus free of charge.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry in a statement on Saturday announced its gratitude and appreciation to Iran for its humanitarian efforts to address the issue of Afghan refugees in the country.

All measures, especially the recent decree by the Iranian president to provide free medical treatment to Afghan refugees in Iranian public hospitals, have assured the Afghan government, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, providing transportation services to transit trucks and providing the necessary health assistance to vulnerable Afghan nationals are among the measures that are highly appreciated.

افغانستان از همکاری ایران برای مداوای مهاجران مبتلا به کرونا قدردانی کرد

وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان از کمک و همکاری جمهوری اسلامی ایران به مهاجران افغانی مبتلا به ویروس کرونا و مداوای رایگان آنها قدردانی کرد.

وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان روز شنبه در اطلاعیه‌ای اعلام کرد: مراتب امتنان و سپاسگزاری خود را از جمهوری اسلامی ایران در رابطه به اقدامات بشردوستانه آن کشور درباره رسیدگی به مهاجرین افغان در آن کشور ابراز می‌دارد.

در این اطلاعیه آمده است: تمام اقدامات به ویژه صدور حکم اخیر رئیس جمهوری ایران برای درمان رایگان مهاجران افغان در بیمارستان های دولتی ایران موجب خاطر جمعی رهبری دولت افغانستان شد.

براساس اطلاعیه وزارت خارجه افغانستان، ایجاد تسهیلات در رفت و آمد کامیون‌های ترانزیتی و فراهم آوری مساعدت های لازم بهداشتی برای مهاجران در مناطق آسیب پذیر آن کشور اقداماتی هستند که از جانب دولت افغانستان به چشم قدردانی نگریسته می‌شوند.



Talented students visit IRGC drone complex

A group of students from schools affiliated with the National Organization for Development of Exceptional Talents paid a visit to the drone complex of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps in the southern Hormozgan province on Saturday. While learning about the missile capabilities of the country, the students became familiar with the latest achievements of the national defense industry regarding high-speed boats and drones.

