

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik due in Iran tomorrow

Peacemaker Meets Peacekeeper

By Faramarz Kuhpayeh

TEHRAN – In a high-profile official visit, Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tarik will arrive in Tehran on Sunday for talks on bilateral issues and regional and international developments.

The Diwan of Oman's Royal Court confirmed the visit, saying in a statement that Sultan Haitham will pay a two-day official visit to Iran at the invitation of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

"The visit stems from the fruitful relations and good neighborliness between the two countries," the statement said, adding, "His Majesty's visit comes within the context of the continuous consultation and coordination between the two leaderships to discuss various developments at the regional and international arenas. The visit will also touch on means of promoting cooperation between Oman and Iran in different spheres to serve their current and future interests and aspirations."

During his visit to Iran, Sultan Haitham will be accompanied by a large delegation including Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Hamad bin Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office; Abdussalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority; Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces; ambassador at large Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Hinai; and Ibrahim bin Ahmed Al Mu'aini, Ambassador of Oman to Iran, according to the statement.

On Friday, Oman flexed its diplomatic muscles again by brokering a landmark swap deal between Iran and Belgium. The foreign ministry of Oman announced that "in compliance with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to fulfill the requests of the Iranian and Belgian governments to assist in resolving the issue of detained citizens in both countries, ► Page 3

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Report



3 years after Floyd's murder, what's the human rights situation for African Americans?

By Ali Karbalaee

TEHRAN – As people mark the brutal public execution of George Floyd, the question of human rights for African Americans remains an issue.

A makeshift memorial has been held in the U.S. city of Minneapolis to commemorate the third anniversary of the police murder of African American national.

People hugged each other, shed tears, laid flowers and placed a sign that read "SAY THEIR NAMES", an increasingly popular slogan used by activists for the black victims of police brutality.

Derek Chauvin, a white officer forced his knee on (a handcuffed) Floyd's neck for nearly ten minutes while two other officers restrained his knees for the same duration of time, as Floyd pleaded for his life until his life ended in the racist arrest. ► Page 5

We will not recognize Taliban, Iran's FM says

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said on Thursday that Iran will not recognize the Taliban and that the Islamic Republic insists on an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

"We will not recognize the current rulers of Afghanistan and insist on the need to establish an inclusive government in Afghanistan," Amir Abdollahian told an annual gathering of Iranian diplomats in the shrine of Imam Khomeini.

He added, "The Taliban is part of the reality of Afghanistan but not all of Afghanistan."

"Afghanistan is an important issue for us. We are displeased that an inclusive government has not been formed in Afghanistan and we have announced this to the current rulers of Afghanistan," the foreign minister explained.

The foreign minister went on to say that Iran has long borders with Afghanistan and "there is no option other than interaction between the two countries."

Amir Abdollahian also said Iran does not like an incident similar to the one that happened in Mazar-i-Sharif in late 1990s to emerge again. ► Page 2

Belgium releases Assadollah Assadi in deal brokered by Oman

TEHRAN – The foreign ministry of Oman announced Friday that Muscat successfully mediated between Iran and Belgium in reaching a deal on swapping prisoners.

"In compliance with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to fulfill the requests of the Iranian and Belgian governments to assist in resolving the issue of detained citizens in both countries, the Omani efforts have resulted in an agreement between the two sides for a mutual exchange deal," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement added, "The individuals who were released

have been transported from Tehran and Brussels to Muscat today, Friday, May 26, 2023, in preparation for their return to their respective countries."

It concluded, "The Sultanate of Oman appreciates the positive high-level spirit that prevailed during the discussions in Muscat between the Iranian and Belgian sides, and their commitment to resolving this humanitarian issue."

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo confirmed the news. He said Iran has released a Belgian prisoner. ► Page 5

Book on Gen. Soleimani's role in dismantling ISIS published in Malaysia

TEHRAN – A book illustrating General Qassem Soleimani's key role in demolishing the ISIS terrorist group has been published in Malay in Malaysia.

"General Qasem Soleimani: The Wayfarer Who Ended ISIS" has been authored by Alfian Hamzah, Imman Abdurahman and Musa Kazim at the Other Press Sdn Bhd, a publisher in Petaling Jaya.

General Qassem Soleimani, who was the chief of IRGC Quds Force, was assassinated during a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

An English edition of the book has also been published by the Other Press Sdn Bhd.

The English edition also carries a foreword by Zuhairi Misrawi, an Indonesian writer who first gained public notice as a young intellectual at Nahdlatul Ulama, and a traditionalist member of the Sunni Islam group in Indonesia. ► Page 8

Iran unveils upgraded precision-guided Khorramshahr-4 missile

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General Mohammadreza Ashtiani, Minister of Defense, at the unveiling ceremony of Khorramshahr-4 ballistic missile, May 25, 2023

Tehran Papers



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

America's warfare to intimidate Iran

Javan analyzed the recent threats against Iran. It wrote: America has recently declared that although Netanyahu has become a weak ► Page 2

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TEHRAN PAPERS

America's warfare to intimidate Iran

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

Javan analyzed the recent threats against Iran. It wrote: America has recently declared that although Netanyahu has become a weak scarecrow in government and is facing various crises, it is looking to design a military attack on Iran with this regime. But it is more like a brag. In the past two decades, Israel has faced repeated military defeats in its wars against Lebanon and Gaza, and even Israeli officials admit that their deterrence does not work any more. America, which used to destroy national systems with remote military threat, no longer has a prestige, and for this reason, it has relied on the management of proxy wars. And in recent years, it has placed perceptual, psychological and hybrid warfare as the main support of politics in the world. All America's efforts against Iran are to magnify the bankrupts abroad with a magnifying glass and to exaggerate people's livelihood difficulties and economic situation inside Iran with a combination of thugs in the media. Apparently, this strategy has not achieved any notable results and in its latest rant, it has added the military threat in the media to the rest of the headlines of security, political and economic chaos, and hopes to deceive the media, which is multiplied by the strategy of some domestic reformers.

Etemad: The plan of the diplomatic system

In a commentary, Etemad wrote: The issue that has now been raised as a keyword by the Supreme Leader is the issue of avoiding begging diplomacy. This means that begging diplomacy makes Iran to give key concessions to foreign countries without receiving mutual concessions from them. The key words and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution's speech are considered to be a very clear roadmap for the diplomats and top foreign policy officials.

Based on this and regarding a historical and geographical reality, the Islamic Republic of Iran should interact with the world community while maintaining its principles and values, but this interaction should not lead to a kind of begging diplomacy. Iran should show the necessary flexibility and at the same time should not be influenced by the blackmail and avarice of the West. The values ??of the revolution and the policies that have been determined by the Islamic Revolution and Imam Khomeini must be respected in any interaction with foreign countries.

Egypt, Iran to exchange ambassadors this year: report

Egypt and Iran are expected to exchange ambassadors within months, part of a process mediated by Oman to normalize relations between the two regional powers, Egyptian officials told The National.

Two officials said that a meeting has been agreed in principle between President Abdel Fattah El Sisi of Egypt and his Iranian counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi.

They said the meeting is likely to take place by the end of the year.

The news comes days after Oman's ruler, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, paid a two-day visit to Egypt where he and El Sisi discussed Cairo's relations with Tehran, according to the officials.

Oman enjoys close relations with Muslim, non-Arab Iran and has frequently assumed mediating roles in regional conflicts.

Iran, for its part, said it wanted better relations with Egypt, the most populous Arab nation. The Egyptian government, however, has been silent on relations with Iran, but regional media has been reporting an impending thaw in relations in recent weeks.

Normalized relationship with Iran, the officials said, ensures Tehran's goodwill in relation to Cairo's efforts to forge closer economic and commercial ties with countries such as Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, where it wields significant influence.

Mid-level diplomats and intelligence officials

Kayhan: The alternative to SWIFT system is coming

In an analysis, Kayhan addressed the effort to create an alternative SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) and said: The Asian Clearing Union, which includes 9 countries, agreed to launch an interbank messaging system to replace SWIFT within the next month. Talking on the sidelines of the 51st meeting of the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) held at the Central Bank, Mohsen Karimi said: "Asian countries, including Arab countries such as Syria, can also apply to join in the Asian Clearing meeting."

About launching internal SWIFT among the members of the Asian Clearing Union, he said: "Since last year, the Islamic Republic of Iran has designed a special messenger to exchange banking messages between the members of the Clearing Union and discussed in the latest meeting. In the meantime, it was investigated by some specialized commissions. The members of this union emphasized the need to replace a dedicated messenger between members and replace it with SWIFT. The alternative messenger to SWIFT is likely to be done among members of the Asian Clearing Union within the next month.

Vatan-e-Emrooz: Indonesia trip marks beginning of second phase of diplomacy

Vatan-e-Emrooz discussed President Raisi's visit to Indonesia. It wrote: Iran's diplomatic system has successfully completed the "the neighbor is first foreign policy" mission and now the second phase of the government's diplomacy has begun. It seems that the second phase of the government's diplomacy focuses on important but neglected areas in Iran's foreign policy during the last few decades. On Tuesday, Raisi went to Indonesia in Southeast Asia at the head of a high-ranking delegation, a very important trip in line with the policy of "look to Asia" in the 13th government and a wisely move in line with following a balanced foreign policy.

Iran and Indonesia are two populous countries among Islamic countries. Deepening relations and cooperation between Tehran and Jakarta can play an essential role to coordinate through Islamic countries in dealing with the challenges and important issues of the Islamic world, including the Palestinian issue and confronting the Zionist regime.



from Iran and Egypt have been holding behind-closed-door consultations on normalizing relations since March. The last round of these talks was held earlier this month in Baghdad, whose government has close ties with Tehran.

Besides bilateral relations, the talks touched on reducing tension in places where Iran wields significant influence, such as Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, by supporting allied Shiite governments or armed groups.

A thaw in relations between Cairo and Tehran would add a new layer to an ongoing regional realignment that is changing the area's political landscape.

Saudi Arabia, for example, has agreed to restore diplomatic relations with Iran that were severed in 2016, thus removing a major source of tension in the Middle East. Egypt and Turkey, at odds for a decade, have also been working to normalize relations.

We will not recognize Taliban, Iran's FM says

From page 1 ► On August 8, 1998, Taliban forces captured Mazar-i-Sharif and killed 11 Iranian diplomats and a journalist.

The sporadic clashes that have happened in border areas during the past months are a "source of concern," the foreign minister pointed out.

"We want to help the process of realizing peace and security in Afghanistan and in return see reciprocal expectations from the current rulers of Afghanistan," he noted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the foreign minister said Iran is "unhappy that girls and women" in Afghanistan have been denied to study school and university and considers such a behavior "in opposition to the teachings of the holy prophet of Islam."

The minister also pointed to Iran's water rights from the Helmand River and said Iran has held talks with officials of Afghanistan in this regard and "we believe that this issue should be investigated in a legal framework based on the 1973 treaty."

Based on the 1973 treaty Iran should annually receive 820 million cubic meters of water from the Helmand River.

Afghanistan has redirected the course of the river and built dams on its path. Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Tehran's special envoy for Afghanistan, has said Iran just receives 4 percent of the water to which it



has a right.

The move has caused the Hamoun wetland in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan province to dry up. The lives of a large percentage of the people in the neighborhood is dependent on the river. It is a source of drinking water and irrigation. The livelihood of fishermen is also dependent on the lake.

Amir Abdollahian said the issue of Iran's water rights will not be resolved through declaration of "political statements."

Officials in Afghanistan have

claimed that there is not enough water to flow into Iran. Iran has refuted the claim, saying satellite images prove otherwise.

MP Hossein Ali Shahryari has said contrary to what Afghanistan claims images by satellites, including the ones by Khayam, show that the Helman water is stored in dams like Kamal Khan so that water would not flow into Iran.

"Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran has considerable capabilities in the field of satellites and Afghanistan cannot cover up the truth through issuing state-

ments," Shahryari, the representative of Zahedan in the parliament, told IRNA in interview published on Friday.

Zahedan is the capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Based on the treaty signed between the two countries in 1973, he said, Afghanistan should acknowledge Iran's share of water and implement it.

"Unfortunately, it is for long years that Afghanistan has ignored this right of the Iranian nation," added Shahryari, who heads the Parliament Health Committee.

Iran unveils upgraded precision-guided missile

TEHRAN – Iran unveiled an upgraded version of the domestically-built Khorramshahr ballistic missile amid Israeli bluster against Iran's nuclear program.

The medium-range precision-guided projectile named Kheibar (Khoramshahr 4) was unveiled in the presence of Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani during the ceremony marking the 41st anniversary of the liberation of the southwestern city of Khorramshahr, Tasnim said.

The missile's extended range, advanced guidance and control system, and improved structural features further solidify Iran's status as a formidable missile power.

Kheibar is one of the most advanced missiles designed by the experts of the Ministry of Defense's Aerospace Industries Organization. It is a liquid-fueled missile with a range of 2,000 kilometers and a warhead weighing 1,500 kilograms with impressive strategic and tactical capabilities.

The Khorramshahr class of missiles is known for its unique guidance and control system during the mid-flight phase.

This feature allows the missile to control and adjust its trajectory outside the Earth's atmosphere, and to deactivate its guidance system upon entering the atmosphere, giving it complete immunity against electronic warfare attacks.

Thanks to this advanced control system, the Kheibar missile's warhead does not require the typical thin-wing arrangement, which in turn allows the missile to pack up a heavier explosive load.

The Kheibar missile also boasts an incredibly short preparation and launch time.

The use of self-igniting (hypergolic) fuel and the absence of the need for fuel injection and horizontal alignment after the verticalization



phase have cut Kheibar's launch time to less than 12 minutes.

The unveiling of the new missile comes amid threats by Israel against Iran. Over the last few weeks, Israeli officials resumed their bluster and threats against Iran, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also vowing to catch Iran off guard.

General Yahya Safavi, an advisor to Ayatollah Khamenei, compared the scope of the liberation operation of Khorramshahr to Israel's geography, saying that Iran conducted an operation whose span is much greater than Israel in its entirety. He said Iran liberated 6,000 square kilometers during the operation for Khorramshahr. "In order for you to understand the greatness of these six thousand

Iran, Iraq eye implementation of security agreement

TEHRAN – The top diplomats of Iran and Iraq held a phone conversation on Thursday in which they underlined the need to implement security agreements signed by both countries.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein also addressed the latest status of relations between Tehran and Baghdad.

Stressing the need to carry out an agreement on security cooperation between Iran and Iraq, the foreign ministers weighed plans for stronger regional col-

laboration, Tasnim reported.

The two senior diplomats emphasized the necessity for the implementation of a security agreement the two neighbors signed in March.

They also stressed the need to promote regional cooperation between the two countries and to increase the capacity of pipelines that transfer natural gas from Iran to Iraq.

Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian also expressed gratitude to Iraq for facilitating the financial and banking transactions relat-

ed to the Hajj pilgrimage that Iranian pilgrims make to Saudi Arabia this year.

He finally called for efforts to strengthen banking cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad.

Earlier this month, Iranian Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib said that Iraq's central government has provided guarantees on the security of Iran's borders with Iraqi Kurdistan.

Speaking at a judicial gathering in Mashhad, Khatib said Iran has recently detained a terrorist group that tried to cross the

square kilometers, I will give you an example. The total occupied territories of Palestine are about 25,000 square kilometers, half of which is desert and is located in the south where there is no village or settlement, and the Israeli nuclear facilities, or Dimona, are located there," the advisor said.

He added that Israel does not have a strategic depth. "Most of the inhabited lands in the Zionist regime are in the northern region, which has an area of about 6000 square kilometers, which is exactly the same as the area of the conquest of Khorramshahr, and 70 to 75 percent of the population, which is about seven million people, are in this area," he noted. "All naval, air, and land facilities and command, the Joint Staff of the Army, the Ministry of War, the largest naval base and the port of Haifa and everything that the Zionist regime has are in these 6000 square kilometers."

"West is opposed to a powerful Iran"

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Friday that the Western countries, particularly France and the United States that armed the Saddam Hussein regime in its invasion of Iran in the 1980s, are opposed to a military powerful Iran.

The remarks by Kanaani followed after France and the U.S. expressed displeasure over the unveiling of the precision-guided ballistic missile by Iran.

"The Western governments, especially the U.S. and France which had an important role in provoking and arming the Baathist Saddam regime in its military invasion and bombardment of cities and defenseless people in Iran and are also among the top exporters of arms to the region, today express concerns about the progress and defensive power of Iran," Kanaani tweeted.

He added, "They are against a powerful Iran."

western borders of Iran. "With the cooperation of the new Iraqi government and the guarantees given, we hope to see security on the western borders and the non-repetition of [insecurity], and we remind and emphasize the responsibility of the Iraqi [Kurdistan] region."

He warned, "If insecurity is created for the Islamic Republic, any action on the borders will be met with a decisive and overwhelming response from the children of this nation in the armed forces and security agencies."

Peacemaker meets Peacekeeper

From Page 1 ▶ the Omani efforts have resulted in an agreement between the two sides for a mutual exchange deal.”

The deal resulted in the release of Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi and Belgian prisoner Olivier Vandecasteele via Oman.

The exchange of prisoners once again highlighted the high level of mutual trust between Tehran and Muscat, which enabled Oman to act as go-between in many regional and international matters.

Oman was the initial birthplace of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It hosted secret talks between Iranian and American officials, years before the JCPOA was signed in Vienna. The revival of this deal could be on the agenda of Sultan Haitham. But while Oman is genuinely ingenious in its effort to bring the JCPOA back to life, the resuscitation of the deal remains unlikely due to the procrastination on the part of the U.S. and Europe.

Also, Oman hosted secret talks between Iran and Saudi



Arabia which also culminated in a Chinese-brokered deal between Tehran and Riyadh in March. In addition, Oman has also been a conduit for talks in Yemen.

Most recently, Oman reportedly embarked on patching up relations between Iran and Egypt. And the Sultan of Oman is expected to continue this mediation in Tehran after visiting

Cairo last week.

Last but not least, Sultan Haitham could also broach the issue of Ukraine, something that is indicative of the diversity of issues he will likely discuss in Tehran.

The scope of Sultan Haitham's agenda is another sign of the deep trust between Tehran and

Muscat. Iranian Ambassador to Oman Ali Najafi highlighted this trust. Commenting on the Omani-brokered swap deal, Najafi wrote on Twitter, “Trust is a valuable asset in relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sultanate of Oman. We value the good wishes and good offices of the Sultanate of Oman.”

Belgium releases Assadollah Assadi in deal brokered by Oman

From Page 1 ▶ Assadi arrived in Tehran on Friday afternoon. He was welcomed by Iran's human rights chief Kazem Gharibabadi and government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said Belgium had released Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi. “Mr. Assadollah Assadi, the innocent diplomat of our country, who was illegally detained in Germany and Belgium for five years in violation of international law, is now on his way back to his homeland and will soon enter our dear Iran. I thank the Sultanate of Oman for its positive efforts in this direction,” Amir Abdollahian tweeted before Assadi's arrival in Tehran.

Belgium released Assadi who had been in prison since 2018. Assadi was detained in Belgium in 2018 over charges of trying to target an Iranian opposition group. He had been sentenced to 20 years in prison.

In June 2018, Belgian officials said that two persons in Belgium received homemade bombs from an Iranian diplomat after



Belgium's police had stopped a vehicle carrying the contraband. He was charged of preparing an assault against the terrorist group Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MKO), which the Iranian government vehemently denies.

In March 2023, a plea for the revocation of

a treaty with Iran that permits the exchange of prisoners between Iran and Belgium was rejected by the Constitutional Court of Belgium. The court said that it had rejected the annulment request made by the MKO.

According to the treaty, Iranians found guilty in Belgium might spend their sentences at home, and vice versa.

A senior government official in Tehran said on Friday that the release of Assadi is a victory for the Iranian nation.

Mohammad Jamshidi, the president's deputy chief of staff for political affairs, said in a post Twitter that the Iranian president had asserted that the first step for “engagement” is the release of the diplomat.

“The freedom of diplomat Assadollah Assadi is a victory for Iranians. As Belgian officials used extreme language in parliament & media, on the phone they spoke of major engagement. Ayatollah Raisi stressed the first step for this is the diplomat's release. The road is now open,” Jamshidi tweeted.

Oman, a lifelong friend

By Javad Mirgaloubayat

TEHRAN- Iran and Oman have interacted with each other throughout history due to their geographical proximity, and it can be said that the geopolitics of these two lands have led to friendship, unity, and cooperation rather than being a challenge between the two countries.

Geopolitics has been and will continue to be more influential than any other issue in international politics, and the relationship between Iran and Oman is no exception to this rule. As long as the geopolitics of these two lands exist, the relationship between Iran and Oman will be accompanied by friendship, cooperation, and positive interaction rather than being a challenge.

Today, in addition to geopolitics, another important factor is the political school of Sultan Qaboos, which has prevented Iran and

Oman from ever facing challenges in the past half-century and led to a completely friendly and cooperative relationship during this time.

This political school has had such an impact on Oman that the new Sultan of Oman also recognizes himself as belonging to this political school and will not act outside it.

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the cousin of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, ascended to the throne with a direct mandate from Sultan Qaboos. This shows Haitham bin Tarik's intellectual kinship with his deceased cousin and is a clear testimony to the continuation of Oman's movement in the political school that has been dominant in this country for the past half-century.

With these explanations, it can be said that as long as the geopolitics of these two lands exist and as long as the political

school of the past half-century in Oman is alive, Iran and Oman will not face any challenges with each other. Fortunately, the Crown Prince of Oman, His Majesty Sayyid Theyazin Bin Haitham Al Said, is also a successor to this school and if God blesses him with a long life, we will see the continuation of this rational policy in Oman.

At the time these lines are written, the political, economic, and social relationship between Iran and Oman is at its highest level throughout history. Trade exchanges between Iran and Oman set a new record in 2022, the visit by political and military officials between the two countries is more than ever before, and the airlines connecting different cities in Iran and Muscat and the presence of more than 20,000 Iranians in Oman are evidence of the deep bond between the Iranian and Omani communities. These connections are increasing

and no signs of a threat to these relationships can be seen in the short or even long term.

Oman has not reduced its relationship with Iran even in the toughest sanctions conditions and has helped Iran in various political and economic cases. This shows that the two factors of geopolitics and the political school dominant in Oman are so powerful that foreign factors cannot disrupt this positive relationship between Iran and Oman.

In such an atmosphere, political, social, and economic elites of both countries should strive to strengthen these connections. Fortunately, the political will between the leaders of the two countries has provided a conducive environment for the presence of the private sector and non-governmental organizations, and the Iranian and Omani communities should appreciate these opportunities.



phase of the airport in Gonabad, said the report by the IRNA which added that investors had agreed to pay for charter flights to and from the airport in the next 10 months to help boost its traffic.

New airport launched in Iran's remote east

TEHRAN- A new airport has been launched in Iran's remote east amid efforts to expand transportation infrastructure in the region.

A Thursday flight carrying Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf and other senior government officials was the first to land in the airport in Gonabad, a city of nearly 50,000 people located some 230 kilometers from the Iranian border with Afghanistan.

The airport has been launched to boost economic activity in the region, according to a report by the official IRNA news agency which said that businesspeople in Gonabad and other cities in the region had to travel some 300 kilometers to reach the nearest airports in Iran's east.

The project started some 30 years ago, said the report, adding that it accelerated in recent years amid Iran's plans to complete a north-south transit corridor that passes through its east.

Gonabad is one of the key cities in Khorasan Razavi, an Iranian province where Iran's second largest city of Mashhad is located.

Business activity in the region is expected to grow with the construction of a key railway from Mashhad to Zahedan near the border with Pakistan that passes via Gonabad. The railway will continue from Zahedan to Iran's only ocean port of Chabahar on the Sea of Oman.

The government has spent some 35 trillion rials (\$75 million) on the construction of a first

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran defeat Turkmenistan at 2023 CAFA U20 Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Turkmenistan 3-0 on Friday at the 2023 CAFA U20 Championship.

Reza Mirzaeian scored a brace as well as a goal from Mehdi Mahdavi.

Iran will play Tajikistan on Sunday.

The Persians started the campaign with a 3-2 loss against Uzbekistan but defeated Afghanistan 4-1 in their second match.

Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) is one of five regional bodies of governance in association football in Asia. It governs association football, futsal, and beach football in Central Asia. CAFA consists of six national association members.

Rapid Bucuresti complete signing of Amir Ghafour

TEHRAN – Romanian volleyball club Rapid Bucuresti completed the signing of Iranian international opposite spiker Amir Ghafour.

Ghafour has joined the team on a one-year contract. The 34-year-old player was a member of Shahdab Yazd, where the Iranian team finished in fourth place in the Asian Club Volleyball Championship.

Rapid Bucuresti have also hired Slovenian setter Dejan Vivic.

Wrestler Habibi celebrates birthday

TEHRAN – Iranian wrestling legendary Emamali Habibi, known as the Tiger of Mazandaran, celebrated his 92nd birthday on Friday.

Habibi is the oldest living Iranian Olympic champion. He represented Iran at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, where he won a surprise gold medal in the 67kg.

Habibi also claimed two gold medals in 1959, 1961 and 1962 World Wrestling Championships.

He took a gold medal in the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo as well.

Habibi is inducted into the International Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2007.

Iran learn fate at AFC U23 Asian Cup 2024 Qualifiers

TEHRAN – The draw for the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 Qualifiers was finalized at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Thursday and Iran learned their rivals.

The hopefuls were divided into 11 groups – 10 groups of four teams each, with the last group containing three. Qatar, meanwhile, will play in the Qualifiers for exposure with its matches classified as friendlies.

To be played from September 4 to 12 this year, Group A of the Qualifiers will have host Jordan, Syria, Oman and Brunei Darussalam vying for the sole automatic ticket to the Finals.

Group B will see 2020 champions Korea Republic (H), Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan and Qatar contesting with Vietnam (H), Singapore, Yemen and Guam the Group C cast.

Japan, the 2016 champion, are the top seeds in Group D with Bahrain (H), Palestine and Pakistan their challengers while 2018 champion Uzbekistan (H), Iran, Hong Kong, China and Afghanistan were drawn in Group E.

Group F will see 2013 winners Iraq, Kuwait (H), Timor-Leste and Macau doing battle with United Arab Emirates, India, the Maldives and hosts China the Group G teams.

Host Thailand lead Group H with Malaysia, Bangladesh and the Philippines also aiming for a place in the Finals while Group I will see Australia, Tajikistan (H), Laos and DPR Korea locking horns.

Defending champions Saudi Arabia (H), Cambodia, Lebanon and Mongolia were drawn in Group J while the three-team Group K will be a tussle between Turkmenistan, Indonesia (H) and Chinese Taipei.

The AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 Finals are scheduled for April 15 to May 3, 2024.

Iran into AWBG Qualification SFs

TEHRAN – Iran defeated a young Thailand side 7-2 in the ANOC World Beach Games Asian Qualifier to advance to the competition's semifinals in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Amir Hossein Akbari scored two goals and Movahed Mohammadpour, Mohammad Ali Mokhtari, Ali Mirshekari, Mohammad Moradi and Mehdi Shirmohammadi scored a goal each.

Apiwich and Tanadon were on target for Thailand.

Iran will face Japan in the semifinals in a clash of the 2023 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup finalists.

Persepolis march into 23/2022 Hazfi Cup final

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated Havadar 3-1 in the 2022/23 Hazfi Cup semifinals on Thursday.

Giorgi Gvelesiani opened the scoring for Persepolis from the penalty spot in the fourth minute in Tehran's Pas Stadium.

Vahid Amiri scored the second goal in the ninth minute.

Havadar midfielder Babak Moradi netted from the penalty spot just after the hour mark to halve the deficit but Issa Alekasir made the scoreboard 3-1 in the 72nd minute.

Persepolis will play Esteghlal, who defeated Nassaji 4-0 in the semifinals, in the final match on Wednesday (May 31).

Esteghlal are the most successful club with seven titles in the competition founded in 1975.

Persepolis have won the title six times.

Shahrdari Gorgan crowned champions of Iranian Basketball Super League

TEHRAN – Shahrdari Gorgan claimed the title of the Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) for the third time in a row on Thursday.

The Gorgan based team won the title after beating Kaleh Mazandaran 81-79 in best of three, in which they won the title 2-0.

Shahrdari had defeated Kaleh 73-58 in their first match on Monday.

Shahrdari Gorgan American point guard Perry Petty played a key role in the match, helping Gorgan win their third successive title.

The Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) is a professional men's basketball league in Iran. It was founded in 1998.

Iran win silver at 2023 WSPS World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran's Masoumeh Khodabakhshi and Mohammadreza Amini claimed a silver at the R11 - Mixed Team 10m Air Rifle Standing SH2 in the 2023 World Shooting Para Sport (WSPS) World Cup on Friday.

The Iranian team lost to Seungwoo Park and Younmi Kim from South Korea in the final match.

The bronze medal went to Andrea Liverani and Pamela Novaglio of Italy after defeating Brazil.

As many as 226 shooters from 41 nations are fighting out for the top places and quotas in Changwon, South Korea.

The competition serves as qualifiers for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Inflation rate down 1.5%



TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on May 21, which marks the end of the second Iranian calendar month Ordibehesht, at 49.1 percent, falling 1.5 percent from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the first month.

The center put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 54.6 percent in the second

month, which means families have paid an average of 54.6 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

Inflation rate stands at 45.8% in past Iranian year

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 20, 2023, which marks the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1401, at 45.8 percent.

The center had put the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 20, 2022 (the end of the Iranian calendar year 1400) at 40.2 percent and that of the Iranian calendar year 1399 at 36.4 percent.

Private sectors of Iran, Serbia explore ways of expanding ties

TEHRAN - In a meeting between the private sector representatives of Iran and Serbia in Tehran on Thursday, the two sides discussed ways of expanding mutual economic ties, the portal of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

Establishing a barter trade mechanism between Iran, Serbia can significantly boost bilateral economic ties.

During the meeting which was attended by acting head of the ICCIMA Department of International Affairs Niloufar Asadi and a delegation of Serbian private sector representatives, the two sides stressed the need for promoting joint investment and production in order to increase the level of trade.

According to Asadi, establishing a barter



trade mechanism between the two sides can also significantly boost economic relations between the two countries.

The officials also explored common areas for cooperation including agriculture, petrochemicals, tourism, and especially health tourism.

The head of the Serbian delegation for his part expressed his country's readiness for welcoming Iranian economic delegations in the future, saying: "In addition to cooperation between the science and technology parks of the two countries, we are looking for trade in agricultural products, especially the import of chemical fertilizers from Iran and the export of corn, soybeans, and other products."

Iran climbs to 8th place among world's top steel producers: WSA



TEHRAN - Iran is ranked eighth among the world's top steel-producing countries in April, rising one place in the list of the world's top steel-makers, according to the World Steel Association.

The latest report released by the World Steel Association (WSA) shows that Iran's crude steel output has increased 5.9 percent in the mentioned month while the global average growth rate stood at - 2.4 percent, IRNA reported.

Based on the WSA data, Iran produced 3.1 million tons of crude steel in the mentioned month.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic produced 9.7 million tons of steel in the first four months of 2023, registering a 0.1 percent growth compared to the same period in the previous year.

WSA report says that the world's 64 steel producers managed to produce 161.4 million tons of the commodity in April, 2.4 percent less than the figure for the previous year's same period.

The steelmakers produced 622.7 million tons of steel in the first four months of

this year, which indicates a 13 percent drop compared to the same period last year.

According to the WSA report, China, India, Japan, the U.S., and Russia were the world's top steel producers respectively.

Iran has maintained its place as the world's 10th biggest steel producer during the mentioned four months, according to the WSA data.

Iranian steel industry constantly developing over past years despite pressures and obstacles.

The Iranian steel industry has been constantly developing over the past years against all the pressures and obstacles created by outside forces like the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus outbreak that has severely affected the performance of the world's top producers.

Back in February, the WSA reported that Iran's crude steel production increased by eight percent in 2022 when the production by the world's top 64 steelmakers declined by 4.2 percent.

Iran was ranked first among the world's top steel producers in terms of production growth in the previous year.

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- The investigation of Iran-Oman trade relations indicates that the two countries are determined and taking serious steps to reach a bilateral trade of \$3 billion.

Given that the value of their bilateral trade was \$1.3 billion in the Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022), which rose to \$1.8 billion in the past Iranian year 1401 (ended on March 20, 2023), it is possible for the two countries to reach the goal of \$3 billion in the shortest possible time.

As announced by the deputy chairman of the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce, the value of Iran's export to Oman has increased by almost 100 percent in the past Iranian year.

Shahla Amouri said that Iran's export to Oman rose to \$1.2 billion in the past year, from \$600 million in the preceding year.

She has also said that trade activities between the two countries will be expanded.

Referring to the reduction of the cost of registering a commercial company in Oman for foreign investors, she said: "This action of the Omani government is a good opportunity for Iranian traders and businessmen to develop our country's foreign trade."

With the follow-ups, the reduction of commercial company registration fees in Oman for foreign investors has been conducted since April 1, she added.

Also, the spokesman of the Iranian House of Industry, Mining, and Trade has announced that the value of Iran's non-oil export to Oman increased by 20 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), as compared to the first month of the past year.

Ruhollah Latifi said that importing non-oil commodities worth \$89.4 million, Oman was Iran's sixth export destination in the said month.

Exporting non-oil commodities worth \$37 million (with one percent growth), Oman was Iran's fifth source of import in the first month of the present year, Latifi

Iran-Oman trade sees significant growth



added.

Tehran, Muscat explore new trade partnerships

Earlier this month, a Joint Iran-Oman Business Forum was held at the place of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in a bid to boost trade exchange between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sultanate of Oman.

The forum aimed at consolidating bilateral business relations, conducting strategic partnerships to augment the volume of investments and business activity, and accessing new economic fields.

Several B2B meetings were held during the forum between Omani and Iranian businesspeople. The meetings targeted striking business and investment deals. As many as 250 Iranian firms took part in the event.

Prior to the forum, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie met with his Omani counterpart to discuss avenues of mutual cooperation between the two countries' private sectors.

In this meeting, while emphasizing the need to remove trade obstacles, Shafeie said: "Attention should be paid to multilateral cooperation and joint investments so that the markets of the two countries can take advantage of each other's business opportunities in any situation."

Iran ready to eliminate dollar in trade with Oman

In a meeting between the

governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and a senior trade delegation from Oman on May 8, the Iranian side expressed complete readiness for eliminating the dollar from the two countries' trade transactions.

Speaking in this meeting, CBI Governor Mohammadreza Farzin said the strategic policy of the Central Bank of Iran is to cut ties with the dollar in foreign exchange and trade.

"We have sound economic and political reasons for this strategy, because, on one hand, the U.S. uses the dollar as a political tool, and on the other hand, other currencies, especially in Asia are getting stronger against the dollar," Farzin explained.

Referring to the complete readiness of the CBI to reduce and eliminate dollar exchanges from the cycle of commercial and economic transactions between Iran and Oman, the official said: "The grounds for conducting economic and commercial transactions based on the national currencies of the two countries are fully prepared."

The CBI governor further mentioned the expansion of trade relations between Iran and Oman in the previous Iranian calendar year and said: "The trade between the two countries grew by 40 percent in the past year and reached \$1.8 billion."

He further emphasized the necessity of using joint credit cards between the monetary and banking networks of Iran and Oman in

Iran ready for free trade with EAEU: IRICA official

TEHRAN - Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Office of International Affairs and Public Relations has said the country is ready to implement a much-negotiated Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Addressing the second Eurasian Economic Forum in Russia on Wednesday, Omid Golzari said: "In 2018, the Islamic Republic of Iran signed a temporary agreement to establish a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union, and after four years of successful experiences in the field of foreign trade with this union, the country is ready for free trade with EAEU members."

As IRIB reported, Golzari expressed hope that the future agreements between Iran and the Eurasian Union in this field will lead to more cooperation in the direction of developing trade exchanges.

Referring to the negotiations between IRICA and the customs authorities of the Eurasian Economic Union regarding the mechanism of electronic exchange of information and educational cooperation between the two sides, he said: "Today, considering the very close cooperation between

the customs of the two sides, we are experiencing very few problems regarding customs affairs."

"We believe that by developing customs cooperation mechanisms similar to those among the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, we will witness the development of trade and transit among the EAEU members as well," he added.

Mentioning a recent visit of the customs officials of the Russian Federation along with the country's Deputy Prime Minister to Tehran, he noted that during this visit a deal was signed between the two sides for the completion of the International North-South Transit Corridor passing through Iran.

"The North-South Corridor will become one of the golden routes for developing transit and saving time and money for traders, especially by connecting other EAEU members with the markets of Russia and the Caucasus region," he stressed.

In the last two and a half years, more than 30 rounds of negotiations have been held between Iran and the representatives of five member countries of the Eurasian Union for finalizing an FTA.



Back in January, the former head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said the long-awaited FTA is going to be put in effect by mid-Iranian calendar year 1402 (late September).

Alireza Peyman-Pak made the remarks after a meeting with Minister in charge of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission Andrey Slepnev in Tehran.

Iran and the EAEU have already signed a preferential trade agreement (PTA) based on which about 862 commodity items are currently subject to preferential tariffs.

The agreement which was signed in 2018, came into effect on October 27, 2019.

Wheat production in Iran to increase 10% this year: report



TEHRAN - The U.S. Department for Agriculture, in its latest report on global cereal production and trade dubbed "Grain: World Markets and Trade", has said Iran's wheat production is expected to increase by 10 percent to reach

14.5 million tons in the current crop year.

According to the report, Iran produced 13.2 million tons of wheat in the last crop year and the production in the current year is expected to experience a 1.3-million-tons increase.

Meanwhile, world wheat production this year will not grow significantly compared to the previous year and will reach 789 million tons in 2023 from 788 million tons in the previous year.

Based on the said report, Iran will be the 12th largest producer of wheat in the world this year.

China will be the largest wheat producer with 140 million tons, while the European Union and India will occupy the second and third place with 139 million tons and 110 million tons of production, respectively.

Russia, Canada, Australia, Pakistan, Argentina, Turkey, Ukraine and England will also be ranked 4th to 11th.

According to the U.S. Department for Agriculture, Iran imported 4.5 million tons of wheat in the last crop year, and this figure is expected to decrease to four million tons this year.

order to facilitate the commercial relations and economic activities of the two countries' businessmen and stated: "The negotiations in this regard have also been carried out with the Central Bank of Oman and Iran is ready to put the use of joint credit cards on the agenda as soon as possible."

Oman welcomes investment in Iran's industry sector

To achieve the sustainable development of the economic relations between the two countries, Iran and Oman have put joint investment on the agenda.

Omani Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, who traveled to Iran on top of a senior business delegation earlier this month, expressed his country's interest in investment in Iran's industry sector.

Yousef made the remarks on the sidelines of a visit to an industrial park near the capital Tehran on May 6, accompanied by the Head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Ali Rasoulain.

During the tour, Rasoulain briefed the delegation about Iran's industrial capabilities and capacities and said: "Considering the fact that 858 industrial parks and zones are active in the country, this area can lay the ground for promoting industrial relations between the two countries."

He stressed the need for connecting the two countries' SMEs as another way of boosting economic relations between the two countries.

Further during the visit, the Omani minister and the accompanying delegation also welcomed the purchase of Iranian goods, including electrical and household appliances, electronic products, tiles and ceramics, medicine, etc.

Now, while the Iranian and Omani governments are determined to boost bilateral trade, the upcoming trip of Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said to Tehran (on Sunday) is also a promising event for more expansion of trade and economic relations between the two countries.

3 years after Floyd’s murder, what’s the human rights situation for African Americans?

From page 1 ► Police say he was arrested for an apparent counterfeit \$20 bill, something that was never proven but more importantly something that should have never ended in a daylight public execution.

The deadly incident was captured on cellphone video by a passerby and as the footage went viral it sparked months of protests across the United States and around the Western world against police discrimination.

Floyd was murdered by U.S. police on May 25, 2020 because of the color of his skin.

The mass nationwide protests in the U.S. triggered promises by lawmakers of changes to institutionalized racism against African Americans by the police and other sectors.

In Washington, a police reform bill named after Floyd and proposed by the Biden administration in the face of rising pressure is all but dead. It failed to pass the previous Congress, before the November 2022 midterm elections when Biden’s Democrats had a majority in Congress, and has yet to be reintroduced in the new Congress. Among the other changes in the bill, it would have taken away the legal immunity police officers enjoy, something that has safeguarding them from civil lawsuits.

Three years later, Black Americans are still waiting for changes.

Just earlier this month another African American man, Jordan Neely, was killed in similar circumstances to that of Floyd’s murder. Neely was travelling on a New York City subway when, this time, a white former U.S. Marine put him in a chokehold that eventually led to his death. As with Floyd, the deadly incident was captured on mobile phone video and caused an instant uproar.

The perpetrator, Daniel Penny, is enjoying the support of the Republican party who have introduced a bill to “recognize” and “honor” him, despite his murder of Neely.

Would the Republican party have introduced such a bill if the victim was white?

Black rights activists have branded Penny as a dangerous vigilante in a city where poor black men can be killed with impunity, and demanded justice. But those demands have fallen on deaf ears



again.

Many have argued that only a fraction of the fatal racist incidents against black Americans cause an uproar because very little videos of the brutal killings are captured on cell phones. Many other black Americans are dying in similar circumstances but no footage is available for the world to see the nature of their deaths.

While Floyd’s death, three years ago, horrified a world confronted by the stark fact of U.S. police brutality against black Americans, it also saw the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement into the mainstream while galvanizing calls for police reform, which now looks like a pipe dream.

And three years later more black Americans have been murdered by the police, some at traffic stops, others on the streets and some in their own homes solely because of the color of their skin.

Last week, another extraordinary case saw police raid the home of a black family in Mississippi after an 11-year-old child called the police himself for help as his mother was confronting a man who showed up at their home and threatened her.

Instead of protecting the child and his mother, police told them to exit their house with their hands raised in the air. One officer then shot the unarmed 11-year-old boy Aderrien Murry in the chest. Reports say Murry was taken to the University of Mississippi Medical Center for treatment and released on Wednesday (May 24).

On Thursday, family and supporters of the child gathered at the family home chanting “No Justice, No Peace”, before a protest at the city hall after news emerged that the officer who fired the

bullet was placed on paid leave. The family is demanding that he be dismissed, arrested and charged with aggravated assault.

The mother of the 11-year-old victim, Nakala Murry, says, “He (the police officer) was like, ‘come out with your hands up’. At that moment is when my son came out. To come out with their hands up but you’re shooting? I don’t understand... I don’t want to die. This is what he (her son) was saying while he was on the ground. I said, ‘you’re not going to die, baby. You’re not going to die. Just keep talking.’”

An unidentified supporter of the family told Reuters “this baby is clearly an 11-year-old child. And my question is, what possible threat could he have posed. He is clearly a baby and you are a trained veteran officer. So what in your training makes you think that this baby posed a threat to you.”

“We are demanding justice. An 11-year-old black boy in the city of Indianola came within an inch of losing his life,” the family’s attorney said. “He had done nothing wrong and everything right.”

The incident is just the latest in a string of police shootings of unarmed African Americans. In April, officers responded to a domestic violence call at the wrong house and killed a 52-year-old man in New Mexico. In 2020, Breonna Taylor was killed during a botched police raid in Louisville, Kentucky.

Many other African Americans across the United States have been killed by the police for running away from the police out of fear of being shot dead simply at a routine traffic stop.

Three years after the murder of Floyd, critics are asking if any

progress has actually been made.

Alex Steinman, a Black business owner, says “black and brown people have always done for themselves what systems won’t. We consistently rely on ourselves and our communities to launch and sustain our businesses, our dreams, and our careers.”

According to Mapping Police Violence, a nonprofit research group that tracks killings by officers, the crisis is getting worse. “Killings by police have not only continued, but they’ve also increased. Police killed 1,176 people in 2022 – the highest number recorded since the organization began a decade ago. Yet leaders at every level of government are failing to rein in the absolute worst abuses by police despite clear evidence that they must do so.”

Nekima Armstrong, a civil rights lawyer and activist, told Yahoo news “I think there was a lot of smoke and mirrors in the aftermath of George Floyd being murdered. A lot of companies have not followed through on their commitment, while others have come through, but low-income Black folks continue to get the low end of the stick. We didn’t see the resources trickle into communities.”

Tens of millions of people, white and black, across the U.S. took part in racial justice protests following Floyd’s murder. Three years later activists say nothing has changed and African Americans, who were brought to the U.S. as slaves to build the country, are still facing grave human rights abuses.

Activists say they will not rest until there is justice for Floyd and all the victims of the deadly police brutality against the African American community.

WORLD HEADLINES

Saudi, US report better adherence to Sudan ceasefire



Saudi Arabia and the U.S. said Friday the warring sides in Sudan’s conflict are adhering better to a week-long ceasefire following days of sporadic fighting.

The truce, brokered by Riyadh and Washington, went into effect Monday, but fighting continued in Khartoum and the western Darfur region. Particularly intense clashes flared up on Wednesday, the two countries said in a joint statement.

The conflict in Sudan erupted in mid-April after months of escalating tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, a powerful paramilitary commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. The conflict has killed at least 863 civilians, including at least 190 children, according to the most recent numbers from the Sudanese Doctors’ Syndicate.

The week-long ceasefire is the seventh attempt at a truce after the others were violated.

Boat carrying 500 asylum seekers disappears in Mediterranean Sea

A boat carrying about 500 asylum seekers, including a newborn baby and pregnant women, has disappeared in the central Mediterranean, according to two humanitarian organisations.

Alarm Phone, a group that picks up calls from refugee vessels in distress, said on Friday that it had lost contact with the boat on Wednesday morning.

At the time, the boat was adrift with no working engine in high seas about 320km (200 miles) north of the Libyan port of Benghazi and more than 400km (250 miles) away from Malta and Italy’s southern island of Sicily.

Italian NGO Emergency said on Thursday that its Life Support ship and the Ocean Viking, another charity vessel, had looked for the missing boat for 24 hours but found no sign of it or any shipwreck.

A spokesperson for Emergency said on Friday that the search was continuing, adding that the people onboard might have been picked up by another boat or may have managed to fix their engine and continue sailing towards Sicily.

S. Africa’s ruling party says Putin ‘welcome’ despite ICC warrant

South Africa’s ruling African National Congress (ANC) is ready to greet Russian President Vladimir Putin in the country at any time, the party’s secretary-general, Fikile Mbalula, has said, according to RT.

The senior party official made the remarks in an interview with BBC HARDtalk’s host Stephen Sackur, who asked him whether he believed the country’s government would actually enforce the arrest warrant against Putin that was issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) earlier this year.

“If it were according to the ANC, we would want President Putin to be here, even tomorrow, to come to our country,” Mbalula stated, noting, however, that “we know that we’re constrained by the ICC in terms of doing that.”

The official somewhat avoided answering the question directly, suggesting it is not actually possible to simply go and arrest the leader of a country.

“Putin is the head of state, do you think that a head of state can just be arrested anywhere?” Mbalula said, adding that the Russian president has actually been “working for peace between Ukraine and Russia.”

He also pressed the reporter over the questionable record of the UK itself and its Western allies, particularly former British PM Tony Blair, as well as the futile search for the “weapons of mass destruction” used as a pretext to invade Iraq.

Armenia, Azerbaijan reveal result of peace talks

Yerevan and Baku are ready to end the 30-year dispute over Nagorno Karabakh, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev announced on Thursday in Moscow.

During the meeting of the Eurasian Economic Council, hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin, the two leaders confirmed that they are prepared to normalize relations on the basis of “mutual recognition of territorial integrity,” in the words of both Aliyev and Pashinyan.

Putin said he was “very pleased” that the two former Soviet republics seem to have come to an agreement, “including on transport communications.” This appeared to be a reference to Azerbaijan’s access to the territory of Nakhichevan, located between Armenia and Türkiye.

Pashinyan agreed that the two countries were “making good progress in settling our relations” on the basis of mutual recognition, but objected to Aliyev’s use of the phrase “Zangerzur corridor,” saying that this could be regarded as a claim on Armenian territory.

US eyes new military base in Iraq’s oil-rich region: sources



According to an Iraqi security source cited by local media outlets, the United States is closely monitoring one of the western regions of Iraq’s Al-Anbar with the intention of building a second military base in the province after the Ain Al-Assad base.

The media suggests that the US has chosen the Al-Jazira area for its military bases due to its large oil and gas fields, as well as other resources. Reports indicate that this area is completely safe and has not witnessed any attacks for a long time.

Informed Iraqi sources have previously revealed that the US occupation forces have no plans to withdraw from Iraq and are attempting to expand the Ayn Al-Assad base by obtaining land around it.

China yet to answer US request for meeting with defense secretary

China is yet to give a formal response to the US request for a meeting between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu at an upcoming international forum in Singapore, a senior US defense official said Thursday.

“Secretary Austin and the Department of Defense initiated a request to meet with General Li, and that request has not been answered one way or another,” Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely Ratner told an event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

The official underlined that “the ball is in their court at this point.”

Who is Sultan Haitham bin Tarik?

The Sultan of Oman is coming to Iran tomorrow.

Following is a summary of the biography of Haitham bin Tarik Sultan of Oman:

The Sultan is the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, his person is inviolable, respect of him is a duty, and his command is obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity and the guardian of the preservation and the protection thereof.

Article 42 of the Basic Law of the State defines the duties of Sultan.

Birth

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, was born in Muscat on the 11th of October 1955 AD.

Education

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said received his elementary education at the Sa’idiyya School in Muscat. His late father, Tariq bin Taymour, was keen that his children receive modern education, so His Majesty Sultan Haitham enrolled in Broumana High School in Lebanon where he received his education in the preparatory stage.

Haitham bin Tarik, did not stay long in Beirut. He left in 1972 heading to the United Kingdom to pursue his secondary and then university studies. He enrolled in one of the most prestigious universities in the world, which is the University of Oxford at Pembroke College in Oxford.

Assumption of power

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, took power in the country on January 11, 2020, succeeding the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taymur, in a smooth transition of power in the Sultanate that was appreciated and admired by the world.

Haitham bin Tarik, confirmed in his first speech after his inauguration as Sultan of the country that he would be distressed by the brilliant steps of the late Sultan who steadfastly and resolutely stepped into the future and to preserve and build upon what he had accomplished.

He also affirmed that he would follow the footsteps of the late Sultan in foreign policy, stressing the principles he had set for the Sultanate’s foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence between nations and peoples, good neighborhood, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and respect for the sovereignty of states.

Positions

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may Allah bless him, held a number of positions during his practical career. It is no coincidence that the late Sultan, appointed Sultan Haitham in the two most important schools that can prepare a man fit for the leadership of Oman. The first was the diplomatic school when he became involved in the work in the Omani Ministry of Foreign Affairs and graduated to the position

of Secretary General of the Ministry.

As for the second school, it was the school of heritage and culture, when he worked as Minister of Heritage and Culture for nearly 18 years, during which he approached the greatness of Omani history, heritage and culture, and knew closely the history of the country.

He, also assumed the chairmanship of several committees, the most important of which was the main committee for the future vision “Oman 2040”.

Spouse of Sultan

• Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah bin Hamad Al Busaidi. She was born in the Governorate of Muscat. She is descending from a highbred family. Her lineage goes back to Imam Ahmed bin Said Al Busaidi, the founder of the Al Busaidi State. • The lady pays special attention to humanitarian social work. She gives high dedication to issues of families, education and environment.

Sultan’s children

His Highness Sayyid Dhi Yazan bin Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the eldest son of the Sultan.
2. His Highness Sayyid Belarab bin Haitham bin Tariq Al Said.
3. Her Highness Sayyida Thuraya bint Haitham bin Tariq Al Said.
4. Her Highness Sayyida Omaima bint Haitham bin Tariq Al Said.

(Source: www.omaninfo.om)

Investment needed to set up gondola lift near Sassanid-era castle, minister says



TEHRAN –Setting up a gondola lift next to the ancient Qa'leh Dokhtar, an ancient castle in the southern province of Fars, needs to attract funds from the private sector, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami has said.

The region has a rare chance to boost its tourism industry and attract investors by having the essential infrastructure in place for a gondola lift system, the minister explained on Thursday.

This offers a unique opportunity to foster economic prosperity and growth of the tourism sector in the region, he added.

The presence of a gondola lift near the castle and its surrounding vicinity is an excellent opportunity for investors looking to contribute to the growth of a tourism destination, he noted.

Such an infrastructure would be an asset in the development of the area, attracting tourists who are keen to explore the region from a bird's eye point of view, he mentioned.

Situated on a mountain slope neighboring the Firuzabad-Kavar road in southeastern

Kerman province, Qal'eh Dokhtar (literally meaning the Maiden Castle) was made by Ardashir I, the founder of the Sasanian Empire (224–651) in 209 CE.

Based on narratives, the monument is named after the ancient Iranian goddess Anahita, to whom the term "Maiden" refers.

The entrance to the castle is through a tall gateway within a large, rectangular tower. Inside, a broad stairway leads up to a rectangular hall, with blind niches on either side of two large buttresses at the east end.

The fortified palace contains many of the recurring features of Sasanian architecture such as long halls, arches, domes, recessed windows, and stairways.

The historical monument along with several ruined royal palaces, strongholds, and fire temples in Bishapur, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan has been registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List as Sasanian-era Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region.

It was also added to the national heritage list in 1936.

Under the Sassanians, Iranian art experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions, such as the palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, one of the most characteristic and striking relics of Sasanian art are rock sculptures carved on abrupt limestone cliffs, for example at the historical sites Bishapur, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Naqsh-e Rabbaj.

17th-century cannonballs handed over to Army Museum in Kerman

TEHRAN – On Thursday, six stone cannonballs, excavated from an ancient fort in Kerman in 2018, were officially handed over to the Army Museum of the southern Iranian province.

The event was attended by the deputy tourism minister Ali Darabi, Kerman's tourism chief Freyduun Fa'ali, and archaeologist Nader Alidad-Soleymani, among several other guests.

"Some five years ago, during an archaeological excavation at Manujan fortress, 12 historical cannonballs dating back to the Safavid era were discovered, of which six are donated to the Kerman Army Museum today by Kerman's General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts," Alidad-Soleymani said.

"Other six cannonballs will be temporarily kept by the tourism directorate till they are handed over to other museums," the archaeologist said.

For the first time, Iranians were introduced to cannons (large-caliber guns classified as a type of artillery) during the Safavid period, and after that, the Safavid kings rapidly used those weapons, the archaeologist explained.

Fa'ali, for his part, attached great importance to the Army Museum as a treasured travel destination.

"The Army Museum is one of the treasured museums in Kerman, which is always at the top of the list of tourists and fans," Fa'ali said.

The museum showcases over 4,000 historical military objects gathered from Tehran, Zahedan, Ahvaz, and Gorgan. Its building was

Tourism, cultural festival held in ancient eastern city



TEHRAN – On the occasion of Cultural Heritage Week (May 18-25), a tourism and cultural festival was held in the historical texture of the ancient city of Deyhuk, in South Khorasan province, eastern Iran on Thursday.

Local games, kite running, horse riding,

and painting contests were parts of the festival, a local tourism official has said.

The festival aimed at introducing the historical texture of the city as a tourist destination as well as bringing awareness to its preservation, Mohammad Arab explained on Friday.

Located in eastern Iran, South Khorasan is home to many historical and natural attractions, such as Birjand Castle, Dragon Cave, Furg Citadel, and Polond Desert.

The province is also known for its famous rugs, as well as its saffron and barberry, which are produced in almost all parts of the province.

TEHRAN –A vast tourist complex in the central province of Yazd was inaugurated on Wednesday in a bid to develop aerial tourism in the region.

A budget of one trillion rials (\$2 million) has been spent on the project, which has created 14 direct job opportunities, CHTN reported on Friday.

It is vital to focus on the general aviation sector and use its potential for developing tourism, said Yazd's general-governor Mehran Fatemi during the opening ceremony.

This tourist complex is an ideal place for anyone interested in the world of aviation as it offers an opportunity to learn about aviation, he added.

Developing air emergency and air taxi services is also crucial for the region and should be enhanced gradually, he noted.

Built by a private investor, the complex covers an area of 12 hectares and has restaurants and coffee shops, as well as educational and recreational flight services.

Recreational flights involve people flying a plane with the pilot, experiencing the scenery and atmosphere of the area while listening to pilot tips along the way. They can fly 10 to 50 miles away from the airport.

Last October IRNA reported that by facilitating the invest-



Yazd boosts aerial tourism

ment process and not raising the price of the airplane and passenger insurance, the government encouraged private investment.

Five companies have invested in such airports to conduct recreational and educational flights in the last one or two years, the report added.

By deploying about 20 two-seater airplanes, these companies made recreational and educational flights possible for passengers and enthusiasts.

By launching and developing this tourism branch, in addition

to earning a great deal of money, stable employment and further prosperity for the tourism industry would be created.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. It seems

Special Isfahan tour arranged for war veterans

TEHRAN – A guided tour has taken a group of war veterans to several historical sites in the touristic city of Isfahan, which suffered from air attacks during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

A highlight of the tour was paying visits to the restored parts of the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan hit by Iraqi bombs in the 1980s, CHTN reported on Thursday.

Over 150 war veterans toured the UNESCO-registered mosque in the tour organized to commemorate the National Cultural Heritage Week, the report said.

A busy place of worship, Jameh Mosque of Isfahan is a top destination for sightseers, history buffs, and researchers. Some say it is a veritable museum of Islamic architecture.

A visit reveals the best that nine centuries of artistic and religious endeavor have produced, from the geometric elegance of the Seljuks to the more lavish refinements of the Safavid era.

Religious worship on this site, which is also known as the Atiq Mosque or the Friday

Mosque of Isfahan, is believed to date back to the Sassanid era. The sizeable mosque is believed to be constructed by the Seljuks in the 11th century over a Zoroastrian temple foundation.

The two large domes on the north and south have survived intact from the Seljuk epoch, but the rest of the mosque was destroyed by fire in the 12th century and rebuilt in the early 12th century. Many other embellishments were added throughout the centuries.

Surrounded by four contrasting iwans, the center of the main courtyard has an ablutions fountain meant to mimic the Kaaba in Mecca. Aspiring pilgrims once used the well to practice the relevant rituals before going on a hajj pilgrimage.

The giant porticos are very ornate with stalactite decorations from the Mongol era, kufic inscriptions customary for the Seljuks, and austere brick pillars.

Moreover, the mosque has an exquisite stucco mihrab with eye-catching Quranic inscriptions and floral motifs. Next to it is the Timurid-era winter hall lit by alabaster sky-



lights.

Teeming with finely carved pillars, delicate mosaics, and perfect stonework, this place of worship covers an area of more than 20,000 square meters and is one of the largest mosques in Iran.

Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in the Safavid era, and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan, which is translated into "half the world"; meaning seeing it is relevant to see half the world.

Isfahan village holds festival dedicated to pink roses



by the locals.

Every year in May and June, hundreds of Golab-Giri festivals take place, where roses reign and fragrant dreams come true. For centuries, the delights of fragrant roses have taken center stage in Kashan and surrounding lands, as honored guests and locals pluck petals with gentle care and joy.

TEHRAN – A 10-day folk festival dedicated to pink roses is currently underway in Mohammadieh village of Isfahan province.

Gol-Ghaltan, an ancient ritual in which newborn babies are soaked in rose petals, is one of the highlights of the festival, which runs through May 28, CHTN reported.

The festival is held on a five-ha farm located in Mohammadieh village of Tiran-Karvan county to commemorate the national week of Cultural Heritage, the report said.

In addition, visitors may experience how rose oil is extracted from picked petals by steam-distilling, which is called Golab-Giri

Iran has a long history of concentrating on flowers and herbs. Many people think that traditionally distilled rose water is of higher quality than rosewater made in factories, likely due to the faster harvesting and distillation processes.

Traditionally, rosewater is made from a flower with a very sweet scent, best known in the country as Mohammadi roses. In the early morning, the flower harvest is almost complete. Rumor has it that delays in harvesting or transporting it to the distillery are causing the quantity and quality of essential oils to decline.

Each pot is filled with 80 liters of water and nearly 30 ki-

with mud-brick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

It is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

Buildings are built of earth. The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs through the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

Partially covered alleyways, together with streets, public squares, and courtyards, contribute to a pleasant urban quality. The city escaped the modernization trends that destroyed many traditional earthen cities.

It survives today with its traditional districts, the qanat system, traditional houses, bazaars, hammams, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and the historic garden of Dolat-Abad. The city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

Zanjan hosts local food festival

TEHRAN – The fourth edition of a local food festival was held in Ijrud county, the northwestern province of Zanjan on Wednesday, a local tourism official has said.

Performing folk music, setting up a handicrafts market, and organizing a photo exhibit were also parts of the festival, Mahmoud Baqeri explained on Friday.

Iranian cuisine, usually dominated by fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

Experts say that food is not merely an organic product with biochemical compositions. However, for members of each com-

munity, food is defined as a cultural element.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is usually set with Sabzi-Khordan, a basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

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



In January 2020, Zanjan was designated a "world city of filigree" by the World Crafts Council after the WCC assessors visited various craft workshops, stores, exhibits, and bazaars of the city in a two-day itinerary in December 2019.

Infertility treatment centers to be set up in all provinces

TEHRAN – Health Minister Bahram Einollahi has said infertility treatment centers will be established in all provinces.

Setting up 103 infertility treatment centers at level 3 has been one of the important programs of the ministry in the field of population, he added, IRNA reported.

“In the issue of population, the Ministry of Health took action to reform the structure and establish the general directorate for population and employ specialized and committed managers in this field.”

Stating that by the [Iranian calendar year] 1430 (March 2051-March 2052), more than 30 percent of the country’s population will be elderly, the minister said: “If we do not find a solution to overcome the population crisis in the next six years, we will face many problems in the future.”

The Ministry of Health has formed a comprehensive network for providing fertility services at three levels all over the country.

For infertility treatment patients go to level-one centers and are referred to levels two and three if they need specialized treatments, deputy health minister Saeed Karimi said.

Previously, there were no level-two centers for infertility treatment services in the country, ISNA quoted Karimi as saying.

“Health minister has announced that 64 level-two infertility treatment centers should be set up in the country by next year. There are currently 16 level-two centers in the country.”

Some 85 percent of infertility cases can be treated in level-two infertility treatment centers, he said, adding that 103 level-three infertility treatment centers are currently active in the country.

About 90 percent of hospitalization costs and 70 percent of outpa-



tient costs for infertility treatment services are covered by insurance, while the services had not been covered by insurance in the past, he concluded.

In Iran, about 10.5 percent of the population was over 60 years old in 2020. In 2050, the population over 60 years is forecast to increase to 33 percent.

Also, about 7 percent of the population was over 65 years old in 2020. In 2030, the population over 65 years is forecast to increase to about 10 percent.

Considering the negative consequences of population decline in the lives of families and the negative effects of aging and population aging in the coming years, necessary measures should be taken to promote the culture and improve people's attitudes towards having children.

President Ebrahim Raisi has urged all responsible bodies and organizations to adopt national policies in line with the goal of population growth.

All the institutions and organizations of the country are obliged to prepare their plans and programs within the framework of the population growth policy and follow up on their implementation seriously, he said, IRIB reported.

He referred to “population” as one of the important and key

points in the 7th national development plan (2021-2026).

The president considered promoting the culture of marriage and reducing divorce and helping to solve the problem of infertility as some of the effective factors in increasing the population, which should be the priority of attention

Some 90% of hospitalization costs for infertility treatment are covered by insurance.

and action of all institutions.

In November last year, Raisi declared the “Law on Family and Youth Support” to the Judiciary for a 7-year implementation.

It was also declared to other ministries including the Health Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Education Ministry, as well as the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs.

The plan stipulates health insurance for infertile couples, providing services and facilities to working women, providing health

and nutrition support packages to mothers and children, educational opportunities for student mothers, providing livelihood support to families, and ongoing medical services to pregnant women.

The national budget bill for the current [Iranian calendar] calendar year, which began on March 21, has proposed 120 trillion rials (nearly \$480 million) to implement child-bearing and family support plans in the country.

Also, as per the Law, children, and family allowance of all different groups of employees in the relevant institutions, the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Intelligence, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, and also faculty members of universities and research institutions, judges, and retirees will increase by 50 to 100 percent.

The Law also describes the conditions for maternity leave. The duration of maternity leave was increased to 9 months with the payment of all salaries and related bonuses, and if the mother requests, up to two months of this leave can be used in the final months of pregnancy, which is 12 months for the birth of twins and multiples.

Couples who have their third child benefit from government incentives such as land, so that in cities with a population of fewer than 500,000 people and more, half of the land is allocated to the mother and another half to the father.

In cities with more than 500,000 populations, the land will be given to families with 3 or more children in new cities or nearby cities.

Over the [Iranian calendar] year 1410 (March 2031-March 2032), the elderly population will reach 13.5 million people, which is 14 percent of the country's population, and Iran will officially be an old country.

Currently, the elderly population is 9.2 million, which constitutes 7.10 percent of the country's population.

Tehran hosts IORA working group of women’s economic empowerment

TEHRAN - The 7th Meeting of the Working Group of the Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWE) of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was held in Tehran on May 22-23.

The WGWE is the main body tasked with improving Women's Economic Empowerment in IORA and was established in August 2018.

Paying attention to the issue of women's economic empowerment as a multifaceted issue in all IORA priority areas with a special focus on the water economy is one of the objectives of the working group.

Increasing awareness and understanding of the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders in economic development in the IORA region and creating an empowering environment where women and girls can reach their full economic potential through increasing social awareness, quality education, and providing economic opportunities, promoting dialogue, sharing good practices, policies, and programs that support women are also among the objectives.

The WGWE is also tasked with boosting links with other working groups with a view to creating a coherent platform for mainstreaming gender in IORA programs and activities; cooperating with international, regional, national, and specialized organizations to research and collect gender-separated data; and strengthening partnerships with regional and international organizations such as United Nations Women, United Nations Development Program, World Trade Center, International Labor Organization, other organizations, and the private sector.

The WGWE maintains a Work Plan of initiatives by Member States to facilitate Women's Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean region. The Work Plan is premised on the Jakarta Concord, IORA Action Plan 2017-21.

It includes activities to mainstream gender considerations in all priority areas of IORA, improve women's participation in IORA events, improve the financial inclusion of women, support and promote the training of women entrepreneurs, conduct research-based initiatives for enhancing women's economic empowerment, and promote the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

The meeting was a part of the IORA Secretariat's activities of networking with the diplomatic missions of Member States and missions from Dialogue Partners accredited to Mauritius in order to share and brief on the latest development in IORA.

IORA Secretariat had a meeting with Diplomatic Missions of IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners on 19 May 2023 at the Secretariat's Conference room.

Women's empowerment in Iran

Over the past year, positive measures have been taken by the government to empower women in both social and economic arenas.

Establishing a guarantee fund for women heads of households, reorganizing the employment situation of women, reducing the divorce rate, launching a comprehensive statistical system for women, and setting up a working group



on women's health and security were among the measures, IRNA reported.

According to official statistics, there are some 3.5 million female heads of households, but unofficial figures put the number at more than six million.

Special programs have been carried out with the aim of creating a safe environment for female entrepreneurs and providing sustainable job opportunities for women heads of households.

Paying attention to the managerial position of women was another important and effective program last year, so 25.2 percent of managerial positions at the high, middle, and executive levels of government institutions were allocated to women.

Setting up 4,200 credit funds for rural women and employing 2,390 women as members of the board of directors of knowledge-based companies were other measures in this regard.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association is an inter-governmental organization that was established on March 7, 1997.

Improving the social security insurance coverage for women heads of households, reducing women's unemployment rate to 13.7 percent, developing sustainable businesses, and implementing a national plan to empower rural and nomadic women were also conducted in the past year.

And last but not least, the national budget bill increased women's share of the budget by 50 percent.

The Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs has released a report on the achievements of women after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in 7 areas of “education”, “health”, “employment and entrepreneurship”, “media”, “sports”, “decision-making”, and “environment, climate, and crises”.

In the field of education, the share of women in university faculty members has increased by 33.3 percent, and in medical sciences universities by 34 percent. Also, the number of female students in the country's universities has increased by 56 percent, according to the report.

Also, illiteracy among women and girls has been nearly eradicated as the literacy rate reached 99.3 percent and the ratio of female to male students has increased by 28 percent.

Over 450 earthquakes occur in a month



TEHRAN - A total of 454 earthquakes have been recorded across the country over the past calendar month that ended on May 21, according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Of the total quakes, 11 had a magnitude of more than 4 on the Richter scale, the largest of which occurred on April 28 with a magnitude of

4.7 in the northeastern city of Qadamgah, ISNA reported.

Statistically, 393 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, 50 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4, and 11 earthquakes with magnitudes between 4 and 5 have occurred in the country.

Among the provinces of the country, Khorasan Razavi with 66 earthquakes, West Azarbaijan, and South Khorasan with 49 and 49 earthquakes, respectively, recorded the highest number of earthquakes in the country.

Meanwhile, six earthquakes were also recorded in Tehran province, the largest of which occurred in Safadasht with a magnitude of 3.8 on the Richter scale.

A total of 7,000 earthquakes have been recorded across the country over the past calendar year, which ended on March 20.

Of the total quakes, 185 were more than 4 on the Richter scale, the largest of which occurred on June 1, 2022, with a magnitude of 6.1 in the

southern province of Hormozgan.

Statistically, at least two earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 5 have occurred monthly in the country.

The northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, and the southeastern province of Kerman, registered the most earthquakes with 838, 813, and 740 earthquakes respectively.

The northcentral provinces of Qazvin, Zanjan, and Alborz recorded the least earthquakes with 21, 9, and 2 earthquakes respectively.

The southern province of Hormozgan, the southeastern province of Kerman, and the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan registered respectively the highest number of earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 4 on the Richter scale.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

ENGLISH IN USE

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System to be set up for monitoring, forecasting agricultural drought

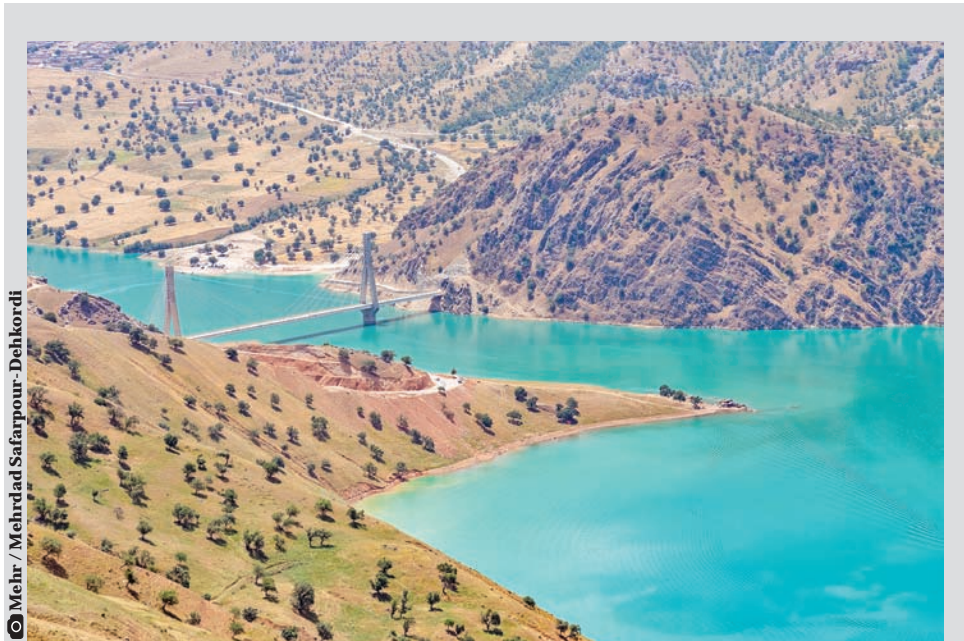
A system will be launched to monitor, forecast and report the agricultural lands being hit by drought, Amir Qaderi, an official with Disaster Management Organization has announced.

Over a meeting of a special working group for addressing drought and risks threatening agricultural sector, a plan for establishing a system for monitoring and forecasting agricultural drought in the country was approved and submitted to the Disaster Management Organization for review, he explained.

“Following the study of other countries’ experiences and existing global methods, the necessity of establishing a domestic system to recognize the lands prone to agricultural drought was emphasized,” he noted.

سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران ایجاد می‌شود

معاون امور بازسازی و بازتوانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور از ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران خبر داد. به گزارش پایگاه اطلاع رسانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور، امیر قادری روز یکشنبه با اعلام این خبر گفت: طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران طی جلسهای با حضور مدیران و کارشناسان سازمان مدیریت بحران و وزارت جهاد کشاورزی بررسی شد. وی ادامه داد: پس از بررسی تجارب داخلی و روش‌های موجود جهانی، ضرورت استقرار نمونه بومی پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی مورد تأکید قرار گرفت.



Charming beauty of nature in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari

A beautiful lake is formed behind the Karun Dam in the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province, creating a picturesque landscape with the Zagros forests in the background.

Iran has a lot to offer nature lovers who appreciate pristine, diverse natural resources.

