

Israeli Bluff

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Report

Hezbollah Chief dismisses Australian designation

TEHRAN - In a speech, the Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah has touched on recent measures taken by several western countries against resistance movements in West Asia saying they have been placed under "some Western country's terrorism lists, this involves resistance movements in Lebanon, Palestine Yemen, Iraq. Sometimes it's their factions, their leaders and sometimes the entire movement itself is placed on their terrorism list. This path will continue, as we said previously, it will continue. With regards to us in Lebanon, this certainly is related to regional developments and the upcoming parliamentary election."

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah says the measures to blacklist resistance movements will increase pressure and threats against anyone who supports the resistance with a word or backs it with any funds or stands in defense of it in the Arab and Islamic world. Nasrallah indicated that Israel is playing a role and said the issue requires another speech in which he will divulge into details. Hezbollah has previously said after it was placed in its entirety on the American "terrorism list" that it will not change its approach or goals towards Israel and its support for the Palestinians cause and the holy sites in occupied Palestine. Nasrallah is on the record as saying the movement will help Palestinians liberate every inch of their land "if they are on a terrorism list" or "if they are not on a terrorism list." Likewise, Hezbollah has made clear it will defend Lebanon's sovereignty no matter what the cost. ► Page 5

Op-ed

ECO, into the future together

By Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi

TEHRAN - In 1964, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey came together and formed the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). It was a visionary initiative as the regional economic groupings were not in fashion. At a time, when the world was bereft of global and regional vision and shared solutions, RCD called for effective multilateralism at the regional level and played its part as a pivotal coordinating Organization. The idea was to convert historical affinity and brotherhood among the three countries into a well-defined multilateral platform. It was envisioned that the primary focus would be on promotion of economy through trade and connectivity as well as further strengthening of the cultural bonds. Over the past four decades, ECO's voice in regional affairs has attained distinct significance.

RCD functioned until the Islamic Revolution ushered in Iran in 1979. After a brief interlude, it was reactivated as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985. Later, in another historic development, after the Central Asian Republics (CARs) became independent states, the membership base of the Organization was expanded and with inclusion of both CARs and Afghanistan it reached 10. The common theme of economic prosperity through building blocks of trade, connectivity, tourism, energy, and cultural cooperation struck a chord with ► Page 5

You may fool governments, but you cannot fool people

TEHRAN — A water-for-energy agreement between Jordan and Israel sparked protests in the Jordanian capital for the past week.

A successful implementation of the agreement would represent one of the largest co-operation projects since the two countries signed a peace deal 27 years ago.

Jordan will receive 200 million cubic meters (7.06 billion cubic feet) of desalinated water from Israel in exchange for 600 megawatts of electricity generated by a UAE-funded solar power plant in Jordan.

During the protest on Friday, November 26,

Jordanians said the agreement goes in the direction of normalizing relations with Israel while it continues to occupy the Palestinian territories. In addition, opponents said Jordan would be forced to depend on its neighbor.

Protesters have urged members of the House of Representatives to uphold their national responsibilities by rejecting the deal in its entirety, citing the project's support for the occupation of Palestine.

In the presence of U.S. Climate Envoy John Kerry, Jordan's water minister, Israel's energy minister, and the UAE's climate change

minister signed the project's "declaration of intent" on November 22.

A Jordanian MP told Al Jazeera that he does not trust Israel's occupation. "The Israeli occupation doesn't usually follow through on agreements it signs," he noted. A group of 16 university students protesting the agreement were arrested by the Jordanian police on November 23, according to Al Jazeera.

By signing the agreement, Jordan will be able to meet its urgent water needs while Israel will expand its renewable energy mix. ► Page 2

Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan ink trilateral MOU on railway co-op

TEHRAN – Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MOU) on railway cooperation, the portal of the Iranian Transport and Urban Development Ministry reported on Saturday.

The MOU, signed on the sidelines of a meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states in Turkmenistan on Friday, is aimed at increasing rail input load from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan and from there to Iran.

As reported, the trilateral MOU was signed following an agreement reached between the Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) Miad Salehi and the head of Turkmenistan's state-owned Railway Agency Azat Atamuradov last month.

Export and transit development, doubling the exchange of rail freight transportation from Sarakhs border, resumption of Artiqli-Lotfabad border crossing operations, and holding joint meetings between the representatives of the two countries' railways were among the subjects covered in the agreement between Iran and Turkmenistan back in October.

According to Salehi, based on the new memorandum, a joint working group will be formed among the three countries to follow up on the set goals and the growth of cargo passing through this transit route.

The deputy minister of transport and urban development added that given the geopolitical importance of Iran, the signing of these memorandums in the field of rail transport and transit can increase the transportation through the north-south corridor and the three countries can use the capacity of this corridor to develop economic and political relations.

Over the past few years, Iran has been following a new strategy for promoting its transit status by developing rail infrastructure.

According to the former RAI Head Saeed Rasouli by completing rail infrastructures Iran is seeking to access new transit markets with over 35 million tons of annual capacity.

Report

Less freshwater inflow into Persian Gulf threatens mangrove forests

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – Mangrove forests grow in parts of the Persian Gulf where freshwater enters the saltwater of the sea and a unique ecosystem is created, but for several years due to reduced freshwater inflow, the unbalance between salinity and freshwater has been a threat to the ecosystem.

Mangrove forests are one of the wonders of nature that every time the water goes down, these trees come out like umbrellas, and again with the rising water they go underwater. Southern Iran is one of the most important habitats of these plant species, covered by 22,000 hectares of these forests, of which about 20,000 hectares are located in Hormozgan province alone. ► Page 7

Admiral says Iran's Navy has mastered advanced technology

TEHRAN — The Iranian Navy commander has said now the Islamic Republic has the capability to provide highly advanced technology in building submarines as well as heavy and light destroyers in different classes.

Admiral Shahram Irani made the remarks in a press conference on Saturday on the eve of Navy Day, which falls on November 28.

"Navy Day, November 28, 1980, marks the bravery and self-sacrifice of the soldiers who, in difficult conditions and unequal war, were

able to completely cut off the strong arm of the enemy and appear on the scene in such a way that the enemy could never have a say in the sea," the commander said in open reference to the Iranian Navy's victories against the Saddam regime's naval forces in the Persian Gulf in the early days of the imposed war.

The top military official noted that the November 28th is the day that the Navy succeeded to cut the economic artery of the enemy with authority and ► Page 2

Amir Abdollahian says Iran is serious about Vienna talks as he elaborates on his 100-day in office

TEHRAN — The Foreign Ministry posted a video on its website according to which Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian elaborated on his 100 days in office as foreign minister.

In the video released on Saturday, Amir Abdollahian referred to various issues, including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal), and expressed hope that all negotiating parties could take fundamental and successful steps forward in the Vienna talks, which start on Monday.

According to IRNA, in the recorded video Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian has stated

that Iran is serious in negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement, emphasizing that the clear view of Iran is that sanctions must be lifted and the "rights and interests of the Iranian people are upheld at the negotiating table."

The text of the FM's remarks is as follows:

The administration took office at a time when the coronavirus was taking the lives of hundreds of our dear citizens every day, and this was the most important concern that the honorable president had and emphasized in the first meeting of the administration and in the parliament when presenting my plans. ► Page 2

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Interview

Woman football player Salimi hits out at Jordan's FA

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Saba Salimi, the Iranian woman football player, believes that the Jordan football federation's doubt over an Iranian players' gender was a matter of dirty game and artificial controversy.

In her interview with Tehran Times, Salimi said: "Goalkeeper of Iran national team Zohreh Koudaei is one of the best players in Iranian women's football. I think Jordanian officials made a big mistake in this regard. They made a kind of artificial controversy for the Iran national team after their loss against Iran. It was a dirty game. All the players are checked over gender identification before each tournament, and such claims are absurd."

Salimi, who currently plays in Turkey's women's super league side, Yabpa, became the first Iranian woman to join a European country when she signed for Azerbaijan's Marxal.

Speaking about her current condition in Turkish football, she explained: "Everything is good, and I'm adapting to my new side. In general, women's football in Turkey has good facilities. They are on the path to professionalism, and in terms of medical facilities, nutrition, sport psychology, and everything needed for a professional player, they are at a high level.

"I believe that Iranian football has more talented girls than many countries such as Turkey, but the sports infrastructure in Iran is not well-prepared for the Iranian players," she added. ► Page 3



Iran runners-up at 2021 Asian Beach Volleyball C'ships

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Australia in the 2021 Asian Sr Beach Volleyball Championships final on Saturday.

Australia's Christopher McHugh/Paul Burnett reigned supreme with remarkable unbeaten record at 2021 Asian Sr Beach Volleyball Championships at Bang Tao Beach in Phuket, Thailand after beating IRI's Bahman Salemi/Abolhassan Khakizadeh 21-16, 21-13 in the men's gold-medal match.

Tokyo 2020 Olympics bronze medalists Qataris Cherif Younousse/Ahmed Tijan seized the bronze after beating Kazakhs Dmitry Yakovlev/Sergey Bogatu 2-0 (21-15, 21-15) in the third-place playoff.



Admiral says Iran's Navy has mastered advanced technology



From page 1 ► change the scene of the war and this boosted the morale among all forces, IRNA reported.

"Navy Day is a very sacred symbol of the forces who, by carrying out a difficult operational hierarchy, reached the point where they carried out the proud operation of Morvarid (Pearl) in several stages, and today we consider it necessary to commemorate these martyrs," the admiral stated.

The top commander also said in those days Iran's Navy carried out operations from the Strait of Hormuz to the north of the Persian Gulf, but today the Navy is carrying out vital, sensitive and important missions in the depths of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea and is able to act in a way that would provide security for the whole region and the world.

On the sanctions on the Iranian defense industry, Admiral Irani stated, "It does not matter to us whether the sanctions are lifted or not. It was important to lift the sanctions when we were at war and we had to do our duty, which was denied to us at that time. Today, lifting or imposing sanctions in another military sphere is of no value to the Iranian people."

The admiral noted that when the enemy focuses on pressure on the Iranian people and bans import of medicine and medical equipment, it means that it is very weak and its capability in the battlefield has reached the lowest possible level and has left the region with disgrace and therefore it has decided to target the ordinary people.

Of course, he said, such intentions from the enemy are nothing new and Iran has experienced it time and again.

The commander also described the Iranian Navy as equipment-oriented, scientific, political,

military and international.

"Accordingly, in the near future, we will have unveilings in various fields appropriate to future needs and threats, and this is our effort to make good use of the country's capacities."

"Keeping the trainings up-to-date and improving the deterrence capability of the country are among the plans and missions of the Navy," the commander underscored, noting that during the recent Zulfiqar-1400 military exercise Iran used new equipment in the operational arena and as the powerful arm of the country.

The massive military exercise, held on November 7-9, involved naval, air force, air defense, and ground force units. It stretched from the eastern sector of the strategic Strait of Hormuz to the northern tip of the Indian Ocean and parts of the Red Sea.

The admiral announced launching an exhibition of new achievements of the Navy as another program of his force on the occasion of Navy Day and stressed that the Navy had an effective presence in the seas and was able to change all the enemies' equations in a way that the capability of the Navy was no longer hidden to anyone.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Navy commander underscored that wherever there is water, the holy flag of Iran could be hoisted depending on the strategy and order that would be given to the Navy.

Irani announced that upgrading defense capability of surface, sub-surface and air equipment of the Navy as one of the main missions.

"When our country can produce all kinds of ships, submarines and various types of advanced defense equipment, then sanctions have no meaning," the commander remarked.

Irani noted the fact that the enemy is sanctioning medical equipment and endangering the people's health and basic necessities needed by the people means that it has used all its power and out of desperation and inability has resorted to sanction the medicine needed by patients.

He then went on to say that today the Navy is proud to conduct a mission that has ensured the security of shipping lines and escorting merchant vessels deep in the oceans and fight against pirates.

"Today, the scene of fighting against pirates and ensuring maritime security and maritime trade lines has passed from piracy to maritime terrorism. The Navy is present everywhere with authority and ensures the security of the shipping lines."



Israel must first see its true size before threatening Iran: nuclear chief

TEHRAN — Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), has said the Zionist regime must first take a look at its geographical size before threatening to take military action against Iran's nuclear facilities.

"The Zionist regime must look in the mirror to its true size before threatening to target Iran's nuclear sites," Eslami said in an interview with the Yemeni TV network Al-Masira aired on Saturday.

Eslami, the new Iran's nuclear chief, reiterated Tehran's long-held position that the Islamic Republic has no intention to build nuclear weapons.

"In its national strategy, Iran has never tried and will never try to acquire a nuclear weapon. It acts in accordance with the standards and framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)," Eslami stated.

Eslami added in all the inspections that have been carried out on the Iranian nuclear sites so far, no deviation has been observed.

On November 27, 20120, Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhriadeh was assassinated in a terrorist attack near the city of Damavand, 45 kilometers northeast of Tehran. Israel was considered the chief culprit behind the assassination carried out by agents working for the Israeli spy agency. He was among four others assassinated in terrorist attacks over the past years.

"The imperialism thinks that by assassinating a nuclear scientist, it can strike at the Islamic Revolution, when it is the other way around, and these actions not only have not weakened our

nuclear program, but also strengthened it and led to the development of our peaceful nuclear activities," he noted.

Iran's nuclear chief also stressed that the approaching talks in Vienna will be about the return of the other parties to their obligations under the JCPOA (the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal) and not about nuclear issues.

While the U.S. abrogated the JCPOA in 2018 and illegally imposed the harshest sanctions in history on Iran and the European parties to the deal did not fulfill their obligations are claiming that Iran is moving towards the path to build nuclear arms.

"The other parties have not adhered to the commitments made in the nuclear deal, and at the same time, they make such claims. This shows the negative atmosphere the media has created against us," he concluded.

In remarks late on Friday, Eslami also refuted claims by the West about cooperation between Iran and the IAEA, saying the recent negotiations during IAEA chief Rafael Grossi's trip to Tehran did not fail but some issues required more time to be finalized.

From page 1 ► I promised the honorable representatives that my first measure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be a special focus on importing vaccines needed by the nation in the country. For this reason, on the first working day at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a joint meeting was held with the presence of my good colleague, Dr. Einollahi, Minister of Health, as well as high-ranking officials from the Central Bank, Red Crescent and various bodies of the country to arrange and facilitate the import of vaccines from abroad.

The directors of the foreign ministry, and our ambassadors in foreign countries made great efforts to import a large volume of vaccines in the first days, while our scientists, and our youth, simultaneously produced domestic vaccines in several Iranian knowledge-based companies, Pasteur Institute, as well as the Barekat Institute and various departments started serious efforts to produce domestic vaccines and have achieved great success in this regard.

Today, I would like to announce with satisfaction that more than one hundred million doses of vaccine have been injected to our dear people in the country and we are in a situation where we are able to export some of our domestic vaccines abroad.

In the framework of economic diplomacy, neighbors-oriented and Asia-oriented diplomacy, we started unified actions in the diplomatic apparatus. For years, there has been talk of the permanent membership and the start of permanent membership for Iran in Shanghai.

The first trip of Iran's honorable President abroad was to Tajikistan and the city of Dushanbe. During that international and regional meeting in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the document on the commencement of Iran's permanent membership in the Shanghai organization was approved, and this was one of the successes achieved in the new administration, and the continuous and round-the-clock follow-up of my colleagues in the foreign ministry along with the emphasis and recommendations of President Raisi and the various consultations that both the president and the diplomatic apparatus made, led to this success.

With the process of permanent membership in the Shanghai organization, we will gradually and step by step witness the success and development of trade and economic cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization region and the Shanghai member states in the next year.

Another program on the agenda of the diplomatic body was the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly, and given that

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the administration had begun its work quickly and the internal situation was considered as a top priority in the first months of the administration, it was decided that I would travel to New York as foreign minister.

In New York, various meetings were held with more than 50 foreign ministers from all over the world, including neighbors, Asia, Europe, Oceania, Africa, Latin America, UN officials, think tanks, and former U.S. officials, media and editors and media executives in the United States.

During the trip to New York, in addition to giving speeches in several international meetings and conferences, we had the opportunity to meet with the

We will activate a section on the website of the foreign ministry in the coming days where our dear people abroad can ask if they have a problem in terms of the compulsory military service.

As the foreign minister of Iran, I offer that dear Iranians can travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran with peace of mind, and can safely use this opportunity whenever they want to return to their country of residence according to the plan.

We will answer you in that system that you can travel to Iran without any problems and we guarantee that you will be answered.

I would like to emphasize here that the number of people

who have dual nationalities and have been tried in Iran for committing a crime and their crime has been proven, is limited. And I would like to explicitly tell you that if anyone else and even if the foreign minister had committed such a crime, he would have faced the same situation. However, many of them were forgiven by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During our travels and consultations with friends and allies of Iran, we were able to find friends from our difficult days, and in the future, I will speak more about it with my dear compatriots.

One of the serious issues and complex developments over the last hundred days in the surrounding countries and our neighbors was the rapid developments in Afghanistan.

We have made extensive political efforts so that the Islamic Republic of Iran won't be affected by the insecurity and instability created in Afghanistan during the transition period, while devising

measures that can control the borders, manage the influx of refugees, and on the other hand have a political solution to the Afghan crisis.

Holding an in-person meeting with foreign ministers of countries neighboring Afghanistan in Tehran was one of the measures considered in this regard.

Another issue that has been seriously considered over the last 100 days in the country's diplomatic apparatus is the JCPOA, the Vienna talks and the interaction and cooperation in line with the rights and interests of the dear nation of Iran. We will start the Vienna talks next week. In recent weeks, my deputy, Dr. Bagheri, has been in European capitals, in Moscow, and in a webinar link with Beijing, as well as traveling to some neighboring countries and the region, making consultations.

I myself had detailed talks with the foreign ministers, all of whom are our partners in the JCPOA-related negotiations. We have made all the necessary arrangements to reach a "good agreement" if the other parties return to their full commitments, and we have explicitly stated our positions and demands in the previous talks and the JCPOA and its subsequent resolution adopted by the UN Security Council.

The clear view of the Islamic Republic of Iran is that the rights and interests of the Iranian people should be guaranteed at the negotiating table and sanctions should be lifted, and we hope that we can take fundamental and successful steps forward in the Vienna talks.

Certainly, the Islamic Republic of Iran will not be handcuffed and there are various options in front of us. We start with talks and negotiation in Vienna. We are serious about negotiating to reach an agreement and we hope that the negotiating parties will be serious in the negotiations.

We told them bluntly that we are a pragmatic and results-oriented administration and that we hope that the Vienna talks would yield results.

Within the framework of balanced foreign policy and active, dynamic and intelligent diplomacy, the development of relations with all countries of the world is on the agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Focusing on economic diplomacy, paying attention to the situation of Iranians abroad, focusing on energy, diplomacy, water diplomacy, public diplomacy in all its aspects and disciplines are among the topics on the agenda of the foreign ministry.

Development of foreign trade and gaining currency for the country are among the issues that the foreign ministry will pay serious attention to in this administration.

You may fool governments, but you cannot fool people

From page 1 ► Jordanians say the deal leaves their country dependent on Israel and does nothing to resolve the country's water problems.

Jordan has vast desert areas that are perfect for solar energy farms and Israel has drastically increased its capacity for water desalination.

According to Jordan's Water Ministry spokesperson Omar Salameh, the project idea was spawned by Jordan's need for permanent water resources, which has been exacerbated by the kingdom's population growth.

Omar Sushan, head of Jordan's Environmental Union, has called the deal "a political project."

He told Al Jazeera, "You cannot justify this project based on climate change; this is a normalization project."

"Our national water network needs to be strengthened, water management must be emphasized to the public, and innovative irrigation methods must be used in Jordan. That is the best option for us. Israel cannot be trusted," Sushan said.

Jordanians oppose the normalization of relations with Israel that resulted from a landmark peace agreement in 1994, which allowed for extensive cooperation in energy, water, and gas.

Since the occupation of Palestine by the Zionists in 1948, millions of Palestinians have fled their homeland to Jordan. Now, over 10 million Palestinians reside in Jordan.

The Jordanian kingdom has tried hard to root the normalization process into the public opinion, yet the Jordanians oppose the Zionist regime to its very core. The Israeli media has been trying to portray Jordan as anti-Semitic, but in fact, they are anti-Zionists.

On May 10, following strikes on the Palestinians by the Israeli forces in Jerusalem, pro-Palestinian activists in Amman demanded an end to Jordan's peace accord with Israel.

A gathering of about 1,500 demonstrators, including members of Islamist parties and leftist activists, sought the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador while waving Palestinian and Jordanian flags.

They marched with banners that read, "No



embassy, no ambassador" and "What was taken by force can only be recovered by force."

Jordan's deal with Israel in 1994 was "not peace, it's submission," they chanted.

"Expel the embassy, expel the ambassador!"

To screams of "death to Israel," several also burned an Israeli flag.

The Israeli theory of "normalization" with the Arab countries may work with the governments, but it is doomed to failure in the hearts and minds of the people of the Arab world.

Israeli bluff

TEHRAN – Iran's chief negotiator arrived in Vienna on Saturday, two days before the official date for resuming the much-awaited Vienna talks. concurrently, Israel doubled down on hostile rhetoric.

Immediately after concluding a regional tour, Ali Bagheri Kani, deputy foreign minister of Iran who will lead the Iranian negotiating team in Vienna, landed in the Austrian capital amid a charged atmosphere characterized by Israeli military threats against Iran.

Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries – Russia, China, France, and the UK plus Germany – will gather in Vienna on Monday to resume talks mostly aimed at removing U.S. sanctions on Iran.

While Iran and other negotiating partners are descending on Vienna with realistic views on the prospect of reaching a sort of agreement, Israeli officials started aiming high and upping the ante. They openly warned the U.S. against returning to the original 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and threatened Iran with destructive strikes.

Israeli former and current officials have joined forces to create a sense of madness in a bid to influence the Vienna talks. To this end, they continue to make unfounded allegations about Iran developing a nuclear weapon in a certain period of time and threaten Iran with a military strike.



Yossi Cohen, former head of the Mossad spy agency, called on the Israeli government to seriously consider the option of an Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.

“Independent strikes on nuclear sites, if Iran takes this path that endangers our existence, should and must be on the table — unequivocally,” Cohen told the Ynet news site, adding, “The bottom line is that we must take away the [nuclear] capabilities from Iran because we will not be able to take away its motivations.”

Ram Ben-Barak, chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and former deputy head of the Mossad, warned against reaching a deal similar to the JCPOA. “This is unacceptable for Israel. We are warning the Americans against this and telling them that we will not put up with it,” Ben-Barak told Army Radio, according to the Times of Israel.

Ben-Barak, like Cohen, also said military strikes are being considered, but “should only be used when there is no choice.”

The Israeli bluster comes at a time when the negotiating partners in Vienna are expected to face a tough time hammering out a deal to clean the mess the former U.S. administration left.

Many believe that the Israeli threats against Iran are intended to force Iran into making more concessions at the talks and that the U.S. is not unhappy with the Israelis. Strikingly, even some Israeli observers seem to not believe the row between Tel Aviv and Washington.

For instance, a prominent Israeli expert told the Saudi-owned Asharq Al Awsat newspaper, that the rift between Washington is not deep. “If there are differences, they are minor and superficial. They are in great and deep coordination,” the Israeli expert said, adding, “I am confident that the

position of each complements the other, as in a musical piece. They hold the same opinion about the Iranian threat, and their position reinforces the other.”

Apart from what observers say, Israel's military capabilities are subject to many determinants that severely limit its options with regard to a military strike against Iran. And even the most hawkish experts in the U.S. believe that an Israeli strike is “doubtful” at best.

“The notion that Israel can come to the rescue with a military strike is also doubtful. Jerusalem has had its share of tough-talking prime ministers, but so far it has relied on sabotage and targeted assassinations to stall Iran's nuclear program,” Ray Takeyh, senior fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, and Reuel Marc Gerecht, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, wrote in a recent opinion piece for the Wall Street Journal.

Israel may count on its newfound Arab friends in the Persian Gulf but it can be said as a foregone conclusion that no one in the region is willing to bear the brunt of Israel's adventurism.

Israel seems to be aware that it's isolated on Iran. And this may be the underlying reason why the Israelis restlessly feed world media with firebrand statements against Iran. At the end of the day, the price of fiery statements is much less than destructive wars.

IRAN IN FOCUS

NOVEMBER 28, 2021

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Woman football player Salimi hits out at Jordan's FA

From Page 1 ▶ “Recently, I have received a good offer from an Omani football team, and there are some negotiations between the two club officials over the possible transfer. Of course, my dream is to play in top European leagues in coming years,” said the 24-year-old Iranian player.

Salimi is an energetic right-winger who contributes to both attack and defense. When asked about the Iran woman national team's recent results, she responded eagerly.

“Fortunately, everything is going well for Iran national team. I'm so glad that Iranian women's football are getting where they deserves, and I hope progress will continue.

“I'm honored to play as an Iranian and Muslim woman player in a foreign league. Playing the game with wearing hijab is never a problem for me, and I'm happy that everyone in my new side and new league respects me a lot in this regard,” Salimi concluded.

Taylor gave me motivation to win gold: Yazdani

TEHRAN – Hassan “The Greatest” Yazdani headed into the Oslo World Championships with revenge on his mind. He lost to career rival David Taylor (USA) in three consecutive matches – including once in August via a last-second takedown in the Tokyo Olympic finals, however he says the American gave him inspiration to win the gold medal.

Yazdani turned the tides in Oslo on a cold October night and exacted revenge on Taylor and claimed his third world title.

United World Wrestling sat down with Yazdani after his epic win to talk about the losses that drove him to become a three-time world champion, what was different about his Iranian team in Oslo and what's motivating him to chase a second Olympic gold medal.

Yazdani controlled the 86kg world finals match from start to finish to notch a solid 6-2 victory over Taylor in the highly anticipated 86kg final at the Oslo World Championships.

Yazdani's victory, coming two months after a heartbreaking loss to Taylor in the final at the Tokyo Olympics, gave him a third world title to go with his 2016 Rio Olympic gold, and capped a remarkable day for Iran in the Jordal Amfi arena.

“I made the people of Iran happy,” Yazdani said. “I need to appreciate Taylor, because he worked as a motivation and inspiration for me to work better and better and become the champion.”

“Iran always supports their wrestlers and fans here were great,” Yazdani said. “And it was because of them and God I won.”

Iran to take part at Armenia's boxing tournament

TEHRAN – Iran boxing team will take part in a tournament in Armenia, head of Iran Boxing Federation, Hossein Thori said.

The Iranian team will participate at the tournament as part of preparation for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

“Iran boxing team will travel to Armenia on December 14 to compete in the tournament. Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia will be competing in the six-day tournament,” Thori said.

Iranian boxers have improved during the past years, Tasnim news agency reported.

Danial Shahbakhsh won the country's first-ever medal in the World Boxing Championships in November.

Gol Gohar on verge of signing Zimbabwean Ovidy Karuru

TEHRAN – Zimbabwean midfielder Ovidy Obvious Karuru has been linked with a move to Iranian top-flight club Gol Gohar.

The 32-year-old midfielder has most recently played in South African team Black Leopards.

Karuru has traveled to Sirjan to participate in Gol Gohar medical test.

Gabonese midfielder Eric Bocoum has already joined Gol Gohar.

Gol Gohar sit sixth in Iran league, three points behind leaders Sepahan.

Iran-Syria cooperation continues at highest level: ambassador

TEHRAN – Iranian Ambassador to Syria Mehdi Sobhani has spoken about the strategic relationship that has brought Iran together with Syria since the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, pointing to the mutual support that the two countries have provided to each other at different stages of the life of this relationship, and the economic war they are fighting with courage against Washington's sanctions.

In an interview with Al Ahed News, Sobhani underlined that the U.S. policy toward Syria has not changed, even if its tactics have changed. With regard to Iranian oil tankers that arrived in Lebanon via Syrian territory, Sobhani pointed out that this confirms the ability of the resistance axis to implement its promises, while proving the inability of the other axis.

“In the science of international relations and schools of thought, there is a prevailing belief that what determines the direction of the foreign policy of each country is its own identity in international relations, and the more convergence between countries in their identities, the stronger they will have a desire to cooperate with each other,” the ambassador told the Lebanese news website.

Sobhani pointed out that the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran brought about a fundamental change in the identity of Iran before the revolution and after the revolution. “It established new values, goals and norms for an identity in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This new identity defined the international national role of the Islamic Republic of Iran and became the basis for its behavior at the international level. This new identity was reflected in the articles of the Iranian constitution, especially with regard to the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, from fighting

injustice and rejecting arrogance to supporting liberation movements and the oppressed,” he said.

The Iranian ambassador noted that these developments took place in Iran at a time when the West Asia region was witnessing a movement of normalization with the Zionist entity [Israel], especially in light of the Camp David Accords, where many countries that once were enemy of this entity turned towards normalization with it.

According to Sobhani, the only country that did not give up confronting the Zionist entity and remained in the front line to confront this entity was Syria led by the late President Hafez al-Assad. “Accordingly, the new identity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the identity on which the Syrian Arab Republic remained, defined the common enemy and common interests between the two countries. The late President Hafez al-Assad and Imam Khomeini can be considered the main founders of these strategic relations between the two countries, through a shared identity, which in turn paved the way for rapprochement during the past decades over forty years. We saw the fruits of these relations in the sensitive historical junctures that the two countries went through, when the Syrian Arab Republic stood by Iran in the days when it was in need of support, as well as when the Islamic Republic of Iran stood by Syria in its fight against terrorism,” Sobhani added.

The Iranian ambassador talked to Al-Ahed News about the second point that helped strengthen these relations and their stability, which was the good intentions of the two countries and their mutual trust. He said thanks to these correct pillars, the relations between the two countries

are witnessing a continuous development, and are strategic in the political, economic, commercial and cultural, scientific, and educational fields.

Sobani pointed out that “the strategic relations between Iran and Syria include all fields, including military cooperation, which represents support for Syria, and reflects a strengthening of relations between the two countries in general.” He further noted that “interaction in international relations has several levels, including cooperation, partnership, alliance and unity, and we are allies, in the sense that we have passed the first stages and the first levels, and since the two countries are allies of each other, we are developing relations between ourselves in proportion to the level of these relations.”

Sobhani reiterated that “the level of our cooperation with Syria has reached the highest level, and there is a military cooperation agreement between the two countries. The agreement covers all areas of cooperation and is applied and implemented as required.”

According to the ambassador, Syria has passed the main stage of the field war against it without changing its strategy. “The enemy's strategy was to defeat the Syrian state, toppling it and dividing the country,” he affirmed.

And this, according to Sobhani, is the strategy of some arrogant countries, not only against Syria, but against a number of other large Islamic countries. “In their quest to divide Syria, they imagined that they would be able to create mini-states affiliated with them in terms of security and unable to direct any threat against them and the Zionist entity. The enemy's strategy has not changed yet, but it has changed its tactics to implement this agreement,” Sobhani noted.

Iran deputy FM meets Turkmenistan officials

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mahdi Safari, who is in Ashgabat to attend the preliminary session of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit, held discussions with Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Foreign Minister Rashid Muradov and the chairman of Turkmenistan's Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Dovran Khudayberdiev.

The meetings took place on Friday.

Safari and Muradov discussed the most important areas of cooperation between Iran and Turkmenistan in the fields of energy, gas and electricity, transportation and transit, export of technical and engineering services, health and treatment, according to the Iranian foreign ministry.

The principled policy of the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to prioritize the development of relations with neighboring

countries, and in this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made great efforts to strengthen economic diplomacy with neighbors, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy said.

The Turkmen foreign minister also stated in the meeting that the two countries must grasp opportunities for bilateral economic cooperation and that the two countries' presidents have stressed the development of bilateral ties.

The Turkmen foreign minister described his recent visit to Tehran and the holding of a joint economic commission as very constructive and positive, and stressed the readiness of the Turkmen side to implement the agreements.

During his meeting with Khudayberdiev, Safari referred to Iran's capabilities in different economic, agricultural and commercial sectors, stressing that

the Islamic Republic is ready to transfer its experiences in different fields. He added that Iran is ready for cooperation with Turkmenistan in technical-engineering, nanotechnology and biotechnology fields.

Safari said Iran's private sector is ready to participate in different projects in Turkmenistan.

Khudayberdiev, for his part, noted that the union is active in the agricultural, industrial and road construction sectors.

He said, “We welcome the cooperation of companies from the two countries. We are aware of the capabilities of Iranian companies in all industrial and economic sectors, and this cooperation strengthens bilateral relations.”

Safari said on Thursday that Iran enjoys transit advantage over neighboring countries, noting that there have been talks about transit

of goods from Central Asia and the Caucasus to southern Iran and vice versa.

For example, Mehdi Safari said, the North-South corridor connects Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the Oman Sea in southern Iran.

Safari also noted, “Iran's transport minister and the ministers of transport of these countries had talks in this regard and made agreements to activate this corridor and these countries can send their goods to other countries through Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman and vice versa.

Referring to a Kyrgyz official's visit to Iran in this regard, he said that the Kyrgyz official and the accompanying delegation went to the Iranian ports and found a place to store their goods, and soon mutual travels by rail and truck will increase by %50.

Oil Ministry to define mega projects to use capacities of domestic equipment builders

TEHRAN – Head of the Iranian Petroleum Industries Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPIEMA) has said the Oil Ministry is going to define new mega projects in which equipment manufactured by the country's oil equipment builders will be used, Shana reported.

Speaking in a press conference on Saturday, Majid Mohammadpour noted that 40 percent of the construction capacity of the members of the IPIEMA is empty, saying: "in order to completely use this domestic production capacity, new megaprojects in the oil industry are to be defined."

Underlining the positives steps taken by the new government administration, Mohammadpour said currently 85 percent of the equipment used in the country's oil, gas and petrochemical industry are provided by domestic manufacturers.

The official noted that currently the knowledge for the production of 10 equipment groups including turbines, compressors, and catalysts have been indigenized and 10 new groups are also going to be added to this list in the near future.

According to Mohammadpour, in addition to supplying domestic needs of the country's oil, gas and petrochemical industries, the equipment and parts manufactured in the country are also exported to other countries like Turkmenistan, Qatar, Venezuela, Iraq and Syria.

Referring to the 25-year Iran-China Compre-



hensive Cooperation Plan, he stressed: "Preparations must be made in the industrial sector. With regard to many equipment, we have been able to build equipment similar to Chinese ones with lower prices, and we can be superior in this agreement."

The indigenization and domestic production of oil and gas industry equipment has been always among the objectives of the Iranian Oil Ministry. However, the issue became further highlighted since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions and Washington's determination for cutting off the Islamic Republic's ties with the world advances in knowledge and technology, especially in the oil and gas sector.

In the past few years, the ministry has been seriously supporting knowledge-based companies and startups, and several events, exhibitions, and panels have been held in this regard to encourage the mentioned companies' contribution to the country's oil and gas industry.

Tehran hosting intl. elevators, escalators exhibition



TEHRAN – The 10th International Exhibition of Elevators, Escalators, Conveyors, Components and Accessories kicked off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Friday, IRNA reported.

Over 118 domestic and foreign companies are

showcasing their latest products and achievements in this four-day exhibition.

The exhibition covers a variety of fields including elevators, escalators, lifts and conveyors, cranes and chain hoists, jacks, forklifts, smart systems, and modern technologies in the industries related to lifts and conveyors.

Representatives of prestigious elevator and escalators manufacturing companies from Germany, Italy, China, Turkey and Switzerland are participating in this edition of the exhibition.

The inaugural ceremony of the exhibition was attended by Deputy Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare Mehdi Maskani, Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) Bahman Abdollahi, and some senior officials from the ministries of Cooperatives and Industry.

TCCIMA hosts meeting with TPO head to explore export issues

TEHRAN – Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) hosted a meeting with the head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) on Saturday to discuss the issues faced by the country's exporters.

The meeting was attended by TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, the TPO Head Alireza Peyman Pak and a handful of the country's exporters and businessmen, IRIB reported.

Speaking in this gathering, Khansari underlined the significance of non-oil exports in the country's current economic condition, saying: "Export is the only way to save Iran's economy, and if we can solve the export problems, many of the country's problems will be resolved."

"We are facing the most difficult economic conditions of the country after the Islamic Revolution, which we can overcome by



TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (2nd R) and TPO Head Alireza Peyman Pak (C)

paying attention to exports, and one of the major players in the field of exports is the Trade Promotion Organization, which we hope will continue its supportive role in this field," Khansari said.

He mentioned some of the problems that the country's exporters have been facing over the past few years, and noted that

the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s approach toward exports and exporters (mentioning the obligations created for exporters to return their foreign currency revenues to the country) created numerous challenges for them.

Elsewhere in the meeting, Peyman Pak for his part mentioned some of the Industry, Mining and

Trade Ministry's plans for supporting non-oil exports, saying: "The main plan of the Industry Ministry is to create an export toll management fund; and the generated revenues from this fund should be spent on improving the export infrastructure."

"Currently, all issues and problems are clear, but operational solutions must also be considered and defined, in both micro and macro scales; Of course, solving macro problems is hard; we have to go back and even change some rules," the official said.

He further mentioned some of the measure taken by the Industry Ministry for resolving the problems of the exporters and said: "work is underway on resolving issues related to bilateral tariffs and the creation of financial and banking channels, and consultation meetings have been held with the central bank in this regard."

42m tons of goods loaded, unloaded at ports in 3 months

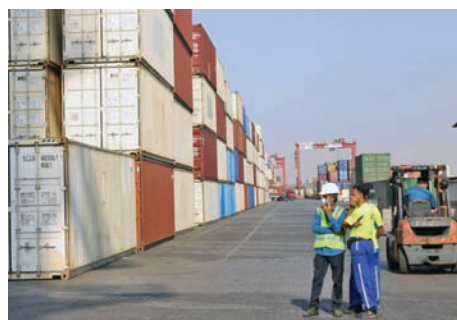
TEHRAN – Some 42 million tons of commodities have been loaded and unloaded at Iranian ports in the three-month period since the new government administration took office in August, IRNA reported.

According to a report by the Transport and Urban Development Ministry, 28 million tons of the mentioned commodities were non-oil goods and the rest were oil-related products.

Also, 507,000 TEUs of container cargoes were unloaded and loaded at the country's commercial ports during the mentioned three months, while, 11 million tons of non-oil exports, transiting over 62.1 million tons of non-oil goods, and the transshipment of 990,000 tons of non-oil commodities were also carried out by the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) as one of the organizations under the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development during this period.

Meanwhile, as previously reported, loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 10.7 percent during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), as compared to the same period in the previous year.

According to PMO's Ports Affairs Director Ravanbakhsh Behzadian, loading and unloading of goods at the country's commercial ports reached 82.24 million tons in the



mentioned period, while the figure stood at 74.31 million tons in the past year's same time span.

During the said seven months, unloading and loading operations in the container sector reached 11.09 million tons, for dry bulk the figure stood at 26.56 million tons, in liquid bulk the figure was 2.56 million tons, while for general cargo (general and miscellaneous goods) it was 11.46 million tons and for the petroleum products loading and unloading volume amounted to 30.57 million tons, Behzadian said.

He noted that the loading and unloading operations in the dry bulk sector grew by 14.5 percent in the mentioned period compared to the last year's same time span, while in the liquid bulk sector the figure increased by 27.5 percent, in the general cargo sector the growth was 8.8 Percent and the

petroleum sector also experienced a growth of 17.1 percent compared to the same period last year.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition, to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that PMO has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in a course of five years.

According to the Ports and Maritime Organization, the capacity of the country's ports has increased from 180 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 250 million tons in the previous calendar year.

The total capacity of the country's ports is expected to reach 280 million tons by the end of the current fiscal year (late March 2022).

TEDPIX drops 27,400 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 27,441 points to 1.366 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

As reported, over 4.904 billion securities worth 38.839 trillion rials (about \$924.7 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index lost 21,135 points, and the second market's index dropped 52,035 points.

TEDPIX lost 16,000 points (1.1 percent) to 1.394 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Isfahan Refining Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Social Security Investment Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

In a meeting with the representatives of over 30 major companies active in the capital market, on November 1, to exchange ideas for resolving issues and developing the economy, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said his ministry plans to make the economy more predictable and eliminate pricing systems that are harmful to the capital market and the stock



exchange industry.

The official noted that the government will follow new strategies to compensate for the budget deficit by making government assets more productive and also by selling surplus properties.

"The task of the Economy Ministry and the Securities and Exchange Organization is to develop tools and institutions in order to create a transparent, efficient, and predictable market," Khandouzi stated.

Meanwhile on November 22, The SEO head said facilitation of the activities of stock market institutions like brokers will lead to the development of the capital market.

"Facilitating the establishment of brokerage firms and the ease of licensing issuance

for financial institutions, as well as the strict supervision of the SEO over the activities of such financial institutions, are the basis for the development of the capital market," Majid Eshqi stated.

Noting that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has put the support for the capital market on the agenda, Eshqi added: "In order to support the capital market, Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi has put issues such as the development of institutions, the removal of monopolies, the use of new tools, and the strengthening of the primary market on the agenda of this ministry."

"Elimination of monopolies and facilitating the issuance of licenses for establishment of financial institutions is one

of the most important missions of the Securities and Exchange Organization, however this goal has made the SEO more precise in performing its supervisory duties to prevent any possible problems for shareholders," the official explained.

Referring to the concerns of some capital market experts and shareholders about the increase in the number of financial institutions without paying attention to quality improvement, he stressed: "The capital market has the capacity for a large number of financial institutions to be active in, and it is not that the smaller the number of institutions, the easier the monitoring of their performance would be."

"Although the establishment licensing process has been facilitated, strict measures have been taken into account for reviewing the guidelines and standards, and the SEO's supervision will become more stringent once the institutions become operational," Eshqi noted.

As the market expands quantitatively, new ideas and tools enter the market which requires stronger supervision to prevent new risks. In this regard, the SEO will deal with violators very strongly, the official stressed.

IME's monthly worth of trades up 18%

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar month (ended on November 21), 8.961 million tons of commodities worth \$2.357 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), indicating 18 percent rise in the value and 24 percent growth in the weight of trades as compared to its preceding month.

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 7.387 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$1.42 billion.

Items traded on this floor included 5.176 million tons of cement, 1.452 million tons of steel, 521,000 tons of iron ore, 172,000 tons of sponge iron (DRI), 31,445 tons of aluminum, 30,535 of zinc, 29,100 tons of copper, 560 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 200 tons of metallurgical coke, 81 tons of precious metals concentrate and 63 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the exchange saw trade of more than 1.53 million tons of commodities worth almost \$907 million on its oil and petrochemical trading floor.



The IME's customers purchased on this floor 447,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 441,510 tons of bitumen, 324,851 tons of polymeric products, 150,081 tons of chemicals, 135,000 tons of lube cut, 15,682 tons of oil, 13,850 tons of sulfur, 546 tons of insulation and 50 tons of argon.

It's worth noting that the IME's agricultural trading floor played host to trading one ton of saffron in this month.

Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 42,795 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities.

The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) rose 108

percent compared to the preceding year.

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of commodities were traded at the mentioned market.

In the past year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Hezbollah Chief dismisses Australian designation

From page 1 ▶ On Wednesday, the Australian government listed Hezbollah as a “terrorist organization”, extending an existing ban on the movement’s armed wing to cover the entire organization including its political faction. The move has been criticized as Hezbollah plays a role part in Lebanese politics; it has members in parliament and helps with the government formation. The movement has also played a major role in liberating Lebanon from Israeli occupation while being praised for helping in the fight against terrorism in West Asia.

Following the move by Canberra, in a statement, Hezbollah condemned Australia’s decision, describing it as “a blind bias” in the service of Israeli interests. Before that, the UK government was censured for classifying the entire Hamas movement as a “terrorist group” despite it being democratically elected to power and its social welfare services to Palestinians living in the besieged Gaza Strip. Rights groups have denounced Israel for its land, air and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip which has been described as the world’s largest open-air prison.

Over the past weeks, the U.S. has also sanctioned several individuals from the Ansarullah movement; part of Yemen’s Government of Nation Salvation.

Analysts argue that Israeli lobby groups are in the pockets of many western politicians which in essence means Israeli lobbying is working on behalf of British, American or Australian foreign policy. In the case of the UK, the decision against Hamas was made and announced by the Home Secretary, Priti Patel. The same Priti Patel that was forced to resign from former British Prime minister Theresa May’s government four years ago from her ministerial role as international development secretary because of unofficial meetings with Israeli ministers, businesspeople and a senior Israeli lobbyist. At the time, the forced resignation dominated the headlines as revelations emerged of secret meetings with Israeli officials. She had spoken to the former Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu with no officials present, in a meeting that the British Prime Minister or government reportedly was not aware of. Twelve other meetings were also held with more Israeli officials in the presence of an experienced Conservative party Israeli lobbyist.



Patel later admitted that during the 13-day visit to Israel, she had wanted to give British money to the Israeli regime forces in the occupied Golan Heights; at a time when the Syrian army was trying to liberate a neighboring region from terrorist groups. Later, Israeli media cited two anonymous sources as saying that Patel had actually revealed the meetings with the Israelis in advance to the British Prime Minister but she was told not to declare them in public as they would embarrass the UK Foreign Office.

This would perhaps explain why she was forced to resign instead of being fired.

Sayyed Nasrallah linked the recent designation by Australia by urging all Lebanese to continue living up to their responsibilities to safeguard their country’s independence from enemy forces. Nasrallah noted that if the country’s independence was not complete it must be transformed to full independence. He says maintaining the “country’s independence, sovereignty and freedom at a [legitimate] level for the country, the state and the people is a battle that must go on.”

The Hezbollah Chief pointed out that Lebanon might have sovereignty but what’s more important is “preserving this sovereignty, and keeping this [sovereignty], you need an ongoing battle. The same is applicable to freedom and the same is

applicable to independence.”

An entire generation, he said, fought the biggest battle for independence since 1982 “when Israel occupied large swathes of Lebanese territory, around half of Lebanon, but what was more dangerous, [Israel] occupied the capital Beirut and the enemy’s tanks reached Baabda Palace (the Presidential Palace), and we still have, until now, the photos and videos of Israeli military officers inside the Presidential office.”

He went on to say “this was the most dangerous time our generation lived through, an era that the enemy was being supported by the West and especially the United States...and it was said during that time that Lebanon was a part of Israel.”

Sayyed Nasrallah says a “large fraction of the Lebanese people resisted, put their faith in [Hezbollah] and the different aspects of the resistance, supported this resistance, especially the armed resistance through parties, movements and factions in more than one region and under more than one slogan; from the significant victory in 1985” when the enemy’s forces withdrew from the Capitol as well as many villages and towns that had been liberated until the great victory that was achieved in 2000” when the Israeli military was forced to flee southern Lebanon.

That, he said, was “a huge victory for Lebanon’s independence, sovereignty and freedom.” A victory that “withdrew Lebanon from plans” to include the country as part of Israel. However, Nasrallah says this battle is ongoing so long as Israel occupies a part of the Sheba’a Farms and parts of two other towns in the country’s south; it means Lebanon does not enjoy full sovereignty. He added that so long as Lebanon is prevented from fully accessing its natural gas and oil “that means we are facing a lack of total sovereignty”, he said, “when we witness every day the blatant American meddling in [our] judiciary, politics, the military, security institutions and the political life [among the Lebanese] and the upcoming parliamentary election; this is also a derogation of our independence, sovereignty and freedom.”

He noted that everyone wants full independence, sovereignty and freedom, but raised the question over “what measurements are used” to judge whether the current situation is one of sovereignty or hegemony, freedom or bondage. “Unfortunately, even in Lebanon, there’s different points of view” regarding this matter. As long Lebanon is under ongoing Israeli threats “over the past two days, we heard new threats” he said, “then we are still in a battle for full independence, sovereignty and freedom, and just like we were victorious before, we will continue this battle with steadfastness and patience and reliance on God to achieve another victory; the day will come when we achieve full, real sovereignty that will leave no room for questions among any freedom seeking Lebanese people.”

Palestinians condemn Morocco-Israel security cooperation agreement

TEHRAN - The Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) today condemned the recently signed agreement between Israel and Morocco that lays the foundation for security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and future arms sales.

Palestinians have strongly condemned an agreement that lays the foundation for security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and future arms sales between Israel and Morocco, with neighboring Algeria blasting the deal and calling Rabat’s threats “unprecedented and disgraceful.”

“The agreement between Morocco and Israel will jeopardize regional security, and will give the occupying regime the opportunity to escalate their attacks against the Palestinian nation, and to infringe upon the security of African people,” Sami Abu Zuhri, a spokesman for Hamas resistance movement, wrote in a post published on his Twitter page on Friday.

He called on Moroccan authorities to reverse the dangerous move.

Morocco and Israel signed the “security cooperation agreement” on Wednesday during a ceremony attended by Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz and Moroccan Defense Minister Abdelatif Loudiyi in Rabat.

Hamas condemned Gantz’s Morocco trip, saying in a statement that, “Normalizing ties with the occupation is a stab in the back of the Palestinian people that encourages it to go ahead with crimes and violations against Palestinians.”

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee also denounced formalization of security cooperation between the North African state and the Tel Aviv regime.

“We hoped that the Kingdom of Morocco, which chairs the al-Quds Committee, would not take this dangerous step in light of the racist measures practiced by Israel against Palestinian people, its disregard of all peace agreements, its rejection of negotiations and the [so-called] two-state solution, and its imposition of a fait accompli policy,” it said in a statement.

The statement highlighted that Israel’s “continued illegal settlement expansion policy, forced displacement of occupied al-Quds residents, gradual annexation of Palestinian lands, and prejudice against the Arab and Islamic identity of al-Quds and its sanctities” were reasons why Morocco should not have signed the agreement.

“This agreement constitutes a departure from what has been stipulated in the Arab League summits, the Arab consensus, and the Arab Peace Initiative,” the PLO Executive Committee pointed out, adding that the agreement is “harmful to the security and interests of Arab nations.”

It also urged Morocco to cancel the agreement, emphasizing that any departure by an Arab country from the Arab Peace Initiative is unacceptable and offers a reward to the Israeli regime.

The so-called Arab Peace Initiative, which was proposed by Saudi Arabia, calls on Israel to agree to a Palestinian state along the 1967 lines and a “just” solution to the Palestinian refugee issue.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune deplored security cooperation between Morocco and Israel, and termed Rabat’s threats against his country as unprecedented and disgraceful.

“Morocco’s threats against Algeria are an absolute disgrace, as there has not been such a thing since 1948,” Russia’s RT Arabic television news network quoted Tebboune as telling reporters in Algiers on Friday evening.

He added, “We will retaliate against anyone who dares to attack us. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

A top Algerian official said on Thursday that Gantz’s visit to Morocco had “targeted” his country.

“The enemies are mobilizing more and more to undermine Algeria,” Senate president Salah Goudjil said in a statement.

Israel and Morocco agreed on December 10, 2020 to normalize relations in a deal brokered with the help of Trump’s administration, making the North African country the fourth Arab state last year to strike a normalization deal with the regime. The others were the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan.

Former US president Donald Trump sealed the agreement in a phone call with Morocco’s King Mohammed VI. As part of the agreement, the US president agreed to recognize Morocco’s sovereignty over the Western Sahara region, which has been at the center of a dispute with neighboring Algeria.

Algeria cut diplomatic ties with Morocco in August, citing “hostile actions.”

The Algerian Foreign Ministry later rejected Trump’s stance, saying the US decision “has no legal effect because it contradicts UN resolutions, especially UN Security Council resolutions on Western Sahara.”

The Algeria-backed and pro-independence Polisario Front has also rejected “in the strongest terms” Trump’s stance on the disputed Western Sahara Desert region, stating that the former US president attempted to give to Morocco “that which does not belong to it.”

The agreement with Israel also drew condemnation from the Palestinians.

ECO, into the future together

From page 1 ▶ all the members who were self-motivated to preserve their independence and also promote economic progress and prosperity.

The region that constitutes the present-day Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is unique in many ways. The people of the region are historically known to share common bonds of faith, culture, and connectivity through land and sea. Traders in this region used to travel far and wide through various trade routes. For instance, the Silk Road was a network of various trade routes that connected the East and West, since the 2nd century BC. It was central to the economic, cultural, political, and religious interactions between these regions and the peoples.

During contemporary times, the term Silk Road is in currency to refer to certain land and sea routes that connect East Asia and Southeast Asia with South Asia, Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Near East, East Africa & Southern Europe. Commercial activity has been shifted from the major trade routes of the past to newer routes among modern nation-states. Initially, this trade activity used to be carried out without traditional protection of trade and under international free-trade agreements, which allowed commercial goods to cross borders with relaxed restrictions. However, as the time is passing, innovative transportation and ideas are taking hold of modern-day connectivity and thereby trade.

All these issues will be deliberated upon during the ECO’s 15th Summit being held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 28 November 2021 under a meaningful theme: “Into the Future Together.” The Summit is likely to be attended at the level of Heads of State/Government, coming to Ashgabat amid important developments in the world in general and the region in particular.

Over the years, ECO has undertaken major initiatives in the field of connectivity, trade, energy, tourism, and cultural, social and scientific development. It has also established its regional institutions and specialized agencies. The purpose is to enhance visibility and outreach to the peoples of the region and to reactivate the same old trading activity that used to define the region. Some of such initiatives include: (I) building trade corridors for eliminating restrictions and obstacles in the way of promoting intra-regional trade; (II) establishing a ECO visa regime to promote tourism and people-to-people contacts; (III) promoting scientific, cultural and educational cooperation; and (iv) establishing regional financial institutions such as ECO Trade Bank and ECO Clearing Union to finance regional projects etc. In addition, ECO has also developed a dedicated program for extending development assistance to Afghanistan. Various developmental and assistance initiatives have been undertaken so far under this program.

The Covid pandemic that enveloped the entire world disrupted the regular interaction, trade and transportation.

There was hardly any aspect of life that was not affected. Trade and tourism were among the worst hit sectors. The ECO region was no exception.

Under these conditions, ECO modified its operations. Virtual and hybrid modes of interaction was adopted to continue with the calendar of activities and to ensure that most of the annual work plan was executed as planned.

ECO Covid Guidelines were developed to ensure that the intra-regional trade remains unhindered or at best is affected to the minimum.

In order to ensure regular representation at the Secretariat, another important decision was taken to develop a roster for regular transfer of Chairmanship every year among the Member States in alphabetical order. This regular transfer of Chairmanship was not the practice in the past.

Further, during the 14th Summit, another decision was taken to carry out a mid-term review of the Vision 2025 – a key document that set the agenda of the Organization to be achieved by 2025. The Vision document was adopted in Islamabad in 2017. The purpose was to evalu-

ate the progress made so far and to make additional recommendations to ensure that most of the objectives laid out in the Vision document are either achieved or significant progress is registered toward their realization. The review report produced under the Chair – Turkmenistan, and Co-Chairs – Iran and Pakistan, will be presented to the Summit.

The major breakthrough achieved in the field of transport during the current year was operationalization of Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Road Corridor. On 7 October 2021, two cargoes were dispatched from Karachi, Pakistan to Turkey and Azerbaijan each under the TIR Convention. They conducted successful operation with efficient cooperation of the relevant authorities of Iran and Turkey.

The ECO-ITI project was first initiated in 2011 and after consistent follow up and support by the Member States – Pakistan, Iran and Turkey – as well as the ECO Secretariat, was finally operationalized to serve the cause of regional connectivity and economic integration. Its transit operations can be further improved by digitalization of the corridor to simplify the adminis-

Over the years, ECO has undertaken major initiatives in the field of connectivity, trade, energy, tourism, and cultural, social and scientific development.

implementation of ECO Energy Strategy; Visa facilitation for promotion of tourism including medical tourism; Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investments etc. These initiatives require active follow up and implementation which is what ECO is precisely focusing on.

ECO is emerging as a significant regional organization that forges intra-regional economic and cultural linkages. The major strength of the Organization is its focus on economic and connectivity issues. It is endeavoring to adapt to the needs of the Member States with a view to create enabling environment for promotion of trade and improving economic conditions.

The forthcoming event will be another watershed in the history of ECO. For the year 2022, the next Chairman in line is Uzbekistan. It would be a great step if the ECO Member States would decide to extend possible financial support to Afghanistan to proactively preclude the looming humanitarian and economic crises. Moreover, the mid-term review of Vision 2025 is likely to generate new enthusiasm among the Member States for achievement of objectives.

Overall, it will be an important high-level interaction of the leaders of the ECO region and the theme of the Summit truly reflects the collective aspiration of all i.e., “Into the Future Together.”

Mr. Rahim Hayat Qureshi is Pakistan’s Ambassador in Tehran.



Eight war memorials, elements, properties approved as national heritage



TEHRAN – A selection of eight memorials, elements, and properties involving the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is marked as “Sacred Defense” in the Islamic Republic, has recently been added to the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism on Saturday officially declared the inscriptions to the governor-general of Khuzestan province, CHTN reported.

Located (or being kept) in the southwestern province, which lies at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering Iraq on the west, the new entries include a water tank, an embankment, a military structure, an underground hospital, a school, and some memorials and elements which are available in a mosque and garrison.

In an attempt to annex the oil-rich Khuzestan, Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered the attack nearly 19 months after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, setting the stage for an eight year-war. The

Iraqi forces in 1980 invaded and occupied the western parts of Khuzestan, including the city of Khorramshahr, and bombed the oil refineries at Abadan. But Iran's resistance quickly stiffened, and the Iranians had recaptured the region by 1982. The war drew to a close in August 1988 and the United Nations declared Saddam as the initiator of the conflict.

For those interested to visit an epitome of frontlines elsewhere from the former battlefields, Tehran embraces several destinations; the Sacred Defense Museum, Tehran Peace Museum, and Behesht-e Zahra—a graveyard where many of the martyrs are buried. The epic-scale Sacred Defense Museum does bargain something different in modern Iranian history where you can delve into wreckages of rockets, tanks, rifles, vessels, mortars, radars, air defense systems, grounded jets, military supplies, and artillery pieces amongst others.

The Sacred Defense Museum is equipped with a state-of-the-art visual system including projections and video walls, while audio recordings relevant to each period contribute to its charm. The complex has vast garden areas, water features, and children's play areas. Outside, a patchwork of domestically-manufactured armaments such as rockets, tanks, and artillery pieces is on show. Currently, some 15 museums related to the Sacred Defense are active across the country.

Tourist complexes under construction in Ardabil

TEHRAN – Three tourist complexes are currently under construction across the north-western province of Ardabil, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

An investment value of 1.7 trillion rials (about \$41 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been channeled into the projects, Nader Fallahi said on Saturday.

The projects, which are being carried out in collaboration with the private sector, are estimated to generate 220 job opportunities upon their completion, he explained.

In April, tourism authorities of the province

announced that they have developed extensive plans to draw more tourists during the winter season to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country.

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

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

Visa waiver for land travelers demanded by Iraqi tour operators

TEHRAN – Several Iraqi travel insiders and tour operators have requested Iran to waive visa requirements for Iraqi nationals who want to enter the Islamic Republic via land borders.

Earlier this year the two neighbors agreed to abolish visa requirements for air travelers. However, a group of visiting Iraqi activists on Friday called on Iran to cancel visas for land travelers, ISNA reported on Friday.

Representatives of Iraqi travel companies and agencies and their Iranian counterparts discussed ways to expand bilateral ties during a meeting held in Mashhad, the report said.

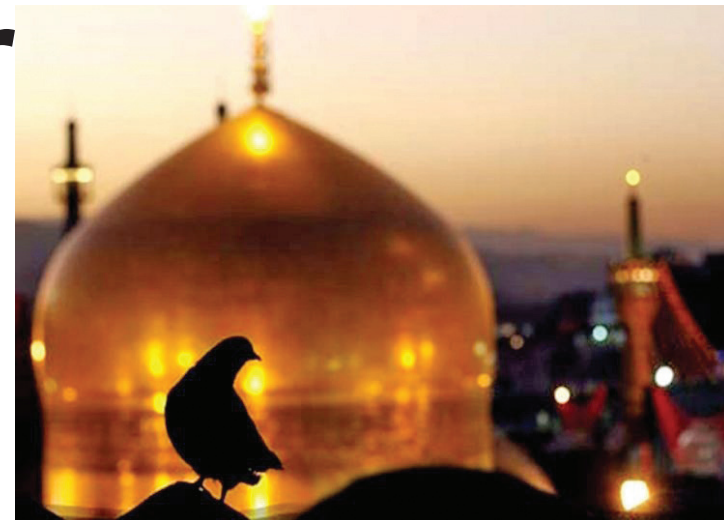
Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city which embraces

the shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.

Before the coronavirus puts almost everything on lockdown, Mashhad, played host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the holy shrine.

According to official statistics, some 37 million Iranian pilgrims and travelers visited the shrine city of Mashhad during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 21, 2019– March 10, 2020). Of whom some eight million came by road, six million by rail, 3.8 million by air, and 18 million by private cars.

For the time being, some travel experts believe the restoration of tourism flow is of high importance



for the Islamic Republic. Iranian Tour Operators Director Ebrahim Pourfaraj said earlier this month that the restoration of tourism flow to the country is very important for Iranian tour operators and travel insiders.

“At the moment, we are not thinking about revenues, but we are looking for the beginning of the tourist flow to the country and renew our links [with international fellows],” Pourfaraj said. His comments came after months of steep recession triggered by massive coronavirus restrictions which led many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators towards bankruptcy, unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level.

As mentioned by Pourfaraj, Iran

has made its best to maintain contact with global tourism markets and companies that worked with Iran in the past, especially since virtual communication and meetings have thrived.

“Following the resumption of the tourist visa, visitors from Russia and France have traveled to Iran and we are currently expecting a smaller number of tourists in Iran due to the current situation in the world,” he explained.

Iran is potentially a booming destination for travelers seeking cultural attractions, breathtaking sceneries, and numerous UNESCO-registered sites. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Qeshm registers one million sea trips in two months

TEHRAN – More than one million maritime trips from and to the island of Qeshm in the Persian Gulf have been recorded in the past two months, a local official has announced.

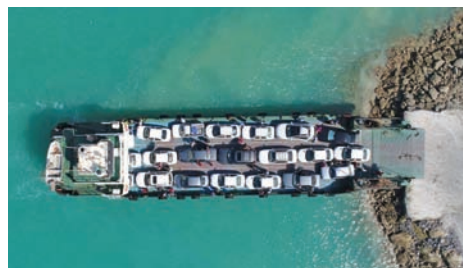
Passengers and tourists do not have to adhere to any restrictions on trips to Qeshm Island because the island is free of coronavirus, IRNA quoted Ali Ashtari as saying on Saturday.

Some 19 docks are currently available for passenger, commercial, and tourist traffic on the island, the official added.

Back in April Mehr reported that maritime trips ramped up over the Iranian New Year (Noruz) holidays in March as some 1.4 million maritime excursions were made over the two weeks.

The data excludes port cities and regions named as high-risk zones related to the coronavirus pandemic; for instance, sea travels and excursions were restricted or even prohibited in Khuzestan and Bushehr provinces.

The Islamic Republic has launched projects to take advantage of southern coasts to make



the best use of its maritime tourism potential using developing hospitality infrastructures, diversifying sea routes, and drawing private sector investors. According to official data, some 45 offshore terminals are operating on the northern and southern coasts of the country.

Experts say that the boom in maritime tourism can pave the way for Iran to meet its ambitious target of attracting 20 million annual tourists by 2025 as it also keeps an eye on tourism developments in the Caspian Sea in the north.

With widening facilities in the free zones

of Chabahar, Kish, and Qeshm – each home to tens of tourist destinations – they would be able to draw sightseers all year round, not just during the wintertime.

Qeshm Island is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. It also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves, and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a haven for nature-lovers.

Many travelers to Qeshm believe that the Stars Valley or Valley of Stars is a “must see”. It is home to bizarre-shaped gorges, tall pillars, canyon-like paths, hollowed-out spaces as well as the smooth and round stones, which have been formed by the wind and rain eroding the soil, rocks, and stones. Locals believe that a star once fell on this area thereby creating the rocky shapes that make it seem as if from another planet.

Bojnurd people celebrate cuisine in gastronomy festival

TEHRAN – On Friday, tens of Bojnurd citizens celebrated local cuisine in an outdoor gastronomy festival.

The festival was dedicated to preparing and enjoying Ash Reshteh, a popular thick soup whose main ingredients include Persian greens, beans, and noodles.

Many families exchanged their soups with one another, showed off skills, and served attendees to the festival.

“In addition to celebrating local cuisine, the festival was held yesterday to promote excitement and social excitement among people,” CHTN quoted North Khorasan province's deputy tourism chief, Abolfazl Esmaeli, as saying on Saturday.

The flavor of this beautifully spiced vegetable soup is mainly characterized by two unique ingredients: the first one is Reshteh, or flat noodles, which are starchier and saltier than their Italian counterparts, and as they cook, the starch they release thickens the soup. And the second is kashk, a form of dried, drained yo-

gurt or whey, which is saltier and sourer than Greek yogurt or sour cream. More like feta than yogurt, kashk gives ash its distinct, satisfying flavor.

Iran is the paradise of foodies. Every province and even every city of Iran has its own specific delectable dishes. So, one can enjoy a wide range of foods here in Iran; and the Khorasan region is one of the most popular places among foodies.

The cornerstone of every Persian meal is rice or Polo. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures. In every meal, even on every plate, you'll find both sweet and sour, soft and crunchy, cooked and raw, hot and cold.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is set with sabzi-khordan, a basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful, often tucked into a piece of fresh flatbread with a bite of feta, cucumber, or walnuts.

Iran nomadic people, lifestyle under spotlight in Paris show

TEHRAN – A photo exhibit showcasing the costumes and traditions of different Iranian ethnic groups is currently underway in Paris, IRIB reported on Saturday.

Entitled “People of Iran”, the exhibit displays a selection of 27 photos by 18 Iranian artists, the report added.

The exhibit aims at introducing Iranian ethnic groups to the international community to boost ethnic tourism in the country.

Organized by Iran's cultural office in the French capital, the two-week exhibit will be running through December 3.

Tribe tourism, also known as the-tourism or ethnic tourism, lays the ground for you to feel indigenous people by living with a



nomad or rural family or enjoying an independent stay.

For both domestic and foreign travelers, tribal tourism is all about opening eyes to new places, traditions, cuisines, beliefs, and ways of life.

Many tourists from all over the world tend to observe the lifestyle of these hardworking people and spend a few days watching activities such as milking,

yogurt making, buttering, oiling, woolen, carpeting, and much more. Many Iranian and foreign tourists are interested in sleeping in nomadic black tents.

The varied natural setting of the country never disappoints visitors when it comes to tribal tourism as the culturally-diverse country is home to many regional people including ones with Turk and Arab elements in addition

to the Kurds, Baloch, Bakhtyari, Lurs, and other smaller minorities such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and others.

Language, music, indigenous cuisine, clothing, songs, anecdotes, crafts, live performances, and local rituals such as celebrations and wedding ceremonies have always spurred many to experience life among the tribes.

Over the past couple of years, the trend has gained a lot of support and attention in the country by both the government and the private sectors, as well as sightseers and local communities. Each month, several tribal festivals are held across the country. Moreover, tens of collective tours bring visitors to experience life among the tribespeople.

cars, some of which had been transferred from Tehran to Mashhad, the official added.

The three-day conference was conducted to introduce the province's tourism potentials and attractions to the Iraqi travel insiders as well as deepen the ties between the two countries in tourism.

Earlier this week, the deputy tourism minister Ali-Reza Shalbafian announced that Iran is getting prepared to welcome more Iraqi sightseers, pilgrims, and med-

ical travelers.

“The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts seeks to introduce Iraqi travelers to further lesser-known destinations and help increase their stay duration,” he noted.

Tehran and Baghdad in September agreed to ease tough visa restrictions as a step forward in broadening bilateral relations.

The announcement came after Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi met

Classic, vintage cars stage rally in Mashhad

TEHRAN – On Friday, tens of classic and vintage cars staged a rally in Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, which hosted a conference of Iranian and Iraqi tourism activists, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

Over 250 historical and vintage vehicles including ones made by Mercedes Benz, BMW, and American companies took part in the rally during the final day of the conference, Yousef Bidkhori announced on Saturday.

Attendees of the conference visited the



in Tehran, discussing various issues including visa waiver, a joint railway project, and increasing the level of trade.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, Iraqi constituted Iran's largest source of tourists. In return, hundreds of thousands of Iranian pilgrims head for the holy Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala each year to attend the Arbreen pilgrimage, aka the Arbreen trek, to mark an end to the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Iran takes measures to block Omicron strain

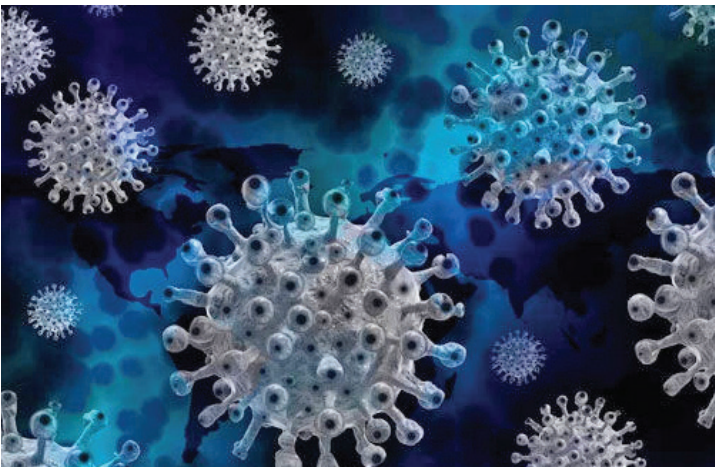
TEHRAN – The Iranian Health Ministry has adopted new regulations to prevent the new variant of coronavirus, called B.1.1.529, or Omicron, from entering the country.

Omicron was designated as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday night due to its “concerning” mutations and because “preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant”.

First identified in South Africa on November 24, the mutant has also been found in Botswana, Belgium, and Hong Kong.

A number of countries around the world have now decided to ban or restrict travel to and from southern Africa.

Evidence shows that there should be more severe side effects, which is why we have taken special measures, Mohammad Mehdi Gooya, head of the diseases management center of the Ministry of



Health, said, ISNA reported.

He further called on the people planning to travel to South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Eswatini to delay their travel, adding that we provide all information at the airport and all land, air, and sea borders, meaning they will not leave the country without knowledge.

There are no direct flights from Iran to South Africa and travel-

ers are not allowed to enter Iran, Gooya stated, noting, Iranians who want to travel must also be quarantined at the border to have two negative PCR tests.

A person may even stay in border quarantine for up to 14 days, he concluded.

In addition to a mandatory negative PCR test certificate, international travelers visiting Iran should buy coronavirus insurance,

a tourism official announced on Thursday.

“Foreign tourists must buy coronavirus insurance from authorized companies when entering the country, and if they suffer from the pandemic in Iran, they will be provided with a place and treatment for 14 days,” Esmail Barat said, IRNA reported.

In addition to providing proof of vaccination or a negative PCR, inbound passengers must have coronavirus insurance, which differs from the routine insurance coverage purchased by all tourists before the coronavirus era, the official explained.

Omicron was designated as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization.

Extinction of megafauna such as mammoths ‘triggered global rise in wildfires’

While enormous wildfires affecting the world’s grasslands may feel very much a recent phenomenon fuelled by the human-driven climate crisis, new research suggests we have been here before, although for a very different reason.

A study has found that as they went extinct, the loss of ancient grazing megafauna such as the woolly mammoth, the giant bison and ancient horses, may have played a significant role in increasing the level of fires.

Over a period from 50,000 to 6,000 years ago, many of the planet’s largest land animals went extinct – many of which were huge grazing species that had significant impacts on the environments through which they moved in search of food, the Independent reported.

The study, led by academics at Yale University, indicates the loss of these grazing species “triggered a dramatic increase in fire activity in the world’s grasslands”.

In order to understand the level of losses of grazing species across the world, the scientists compiled lists of extinct large mammals and their approximate dates of extinctions across four continents.

The data showed that South America lost the most grazers, with 83 per cent of all species wiped out in this pre-historic period, followed by North America (68%). These losses were significantly higher than in Australia (44%) and Africa (22%).

Using this data, they compared the losses of species with records of fire activity as revealed in lake sediments.

Using charcoal records from 410 global sites, which provided a historical record of regional fire activity across continents, they found that fire activity increased after the “megagrazers” extinctions.

They found that on the continents which had lost the most megagrazers – South America, then North America – there were subsequently larger increases in fire extent.

Meanwhile in Australia and Africa, the continents that saw lower rates of extinction, they



recorded little change in grassland fire activity.

The loss of the megagrazers had broad implications for how ecosystems functioned, the researchers said.

“These extinctions led to a cascade of consequences,” said Allison Karp, a postdoctoral associate in Yale’s Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, one of the authors of the paper.

“Studying these effects helps us understand how herbivores shape global ecology today.”

The team said such widespread megaherbivore extinctions had impacts ranging from predator collapse to loss of fruit-bearing trees that once depended on herbivores for dispersal.

It was while studying these impacts that Dr Karp and senior author Carla Staver, associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology in Yale’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences, also wondered if there was also an increase in fire activity, which they hypothesised could occur due to a buildup of dry grass, leaves, or wood caused by the loss of giant herbivores.

They found that, in grasslands, grass-fueled fires increased.

However, Karp and Staver noted that many ancient browser species – such as mastodons, diprotodons, and giant sloths, which foraged on shrubs and trees in wooded areas – also went extinct during the same period but that their losses had less impact on fires in wooded areas.

Grassland ecosystems across the world were transformed after the loss of grazing-tolerant grasses due to the loss of herbivores and increase in fires, the researchers said.

Earthquake drill to be held nationwide

TEHRAN – The 23rd earthquake drill, aiming at preparing for unexpected natural disasters and practicing personal protective actions, will be performed at schools across the country on Monday, IRNA reported.

If the seismic action is a prolonged shaking and rolling event, it is prudent to immediately take protective measures, so the event is held annually during the past 22 years to reduce the damages happen once the earthquake strikes, IRNA reported.

The event is organized with the participation of the Ministry of Science, the Ministry of Education, Crisis Management Organization, the Red Crescent Society, the national media.

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus, the event will be held partially online, followed by the closure of schools; with the slogan “Earthquake preparedness in pandemic conditions.”

Two types of instructions have been compiled, one is for cities that are less infected with the virus and students can attend schools, and the other guideline is for the students and their

families that are living in the cities at risk and students cannot attend schools.

Over 700 quakes in a month

A total of 786 earthquakes have been recorded across the country over the past calendar month Aban (October 23-November 21), according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Twenty-one earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country by the National Seismological Center, the largest of which occurred on November 14, with a magnitude of 6.3 near Fin in southern Hormozgan province.

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.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes of the world occur in Iran but more than 6% of the vic-



tims of the world earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes. This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Mehdi Zare, a professor of engineering seismology.

Tehran is also one of the most hazardous metropolises in the world in terms of the risk of different natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, subsidence, drought, landslide, fire following an earthquake, etc.

Less freshwater inflow into Persian Gulf threatens mangrove forests

From page 1 ► In fact, mangrove forests grow where the freshwater of the river enters the salt-water of the sea, which creates a unique ecosystem, however, dam construction and agricultural development reduced the inflow of freshwater leading to the destruction of the mangroves.

Experts believe that, of course, the drought and the lack of rainfall in the last two decades have paced up the depletion, and all these issues together endangered the lives of these valuable trees.

Earlier in October, Qasem Taqizadeh, deputy minister of energy for water and wastewater said that Iran’s renewable water resources have decreased from 130 billion cubic meters to about 102 billion cubic meters in less than 30 years, showing a 22 percent decline.

If the current trend continues, the country will lose five billion cubic meters of renewable water resources annually, which means that the water resources will be halved by the next 10 years, he added.

Over the past water year (September 2020-September 2021), the country was 37 percent short of rain compared to the long average in the last 52 years; and water in the reservoirs

of 199 national dams has reached a minimum, decreased by about 30 percent.

These statistics show that the country’s water resources are not in good condition and need support. Researchers believe that the spread of drought is slow, but its effects may last for years.

Mangrove forests are able to store about 6 to 8 tons of carbon per hectare of soil per year.

Protecting beaches from floods and tsunamis, preventing coastal erosion, supporting the nutrient cycle in water, suitable habitat for plants and animals, producing oxygen due to photosynthesis, providing resin and tannin raw materials, a food source for fish and shrimp, the use of the genes of these trees in biotechnology as genetic resources, medicinal properties, beauty, and natural landscape and tourist attraction are some of the benefits of mangrove forests.

These trees are even of spiritual value and sa-

cred to local communities in some countries, but the question is how successful we have been in protecting them. The statistics show that not only were we not successful, but we have also tried hard to destroy the unique habitat.

Due to the importance of these trees, in 1972, mangrove-covered lands were nationally managed as a protected area.

Southern Iran is one of the most important habitats of these plant species, covered by 22,000 hectares of these forests.

In 1976, it was accepted and registered as a biosphere reserve. In 1977, the pristine areas of mangrove forests, flower gardens, and streams in the Strait of Khuran were registered as an important wetland of international value (Ramsar site).

The RAMSAR Convention, an international treaty, was adopted in 1971. Ramsar Wetlands are sites inscribed on the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) under the Convention on Wetlands.

Experts believe that the acidification of sea-



water is harmful to marine ecosystems. Because organisms with calcareous skeletons lose their calcareous skeletons in acidic water, they also lose the ability to build skeletons, such as coral reefs and bivalves, but a good feature of mangrove forests is that a series of natural reactions that occur in the soil can naturally increase the percentage of alkalinity in the surrounding water and reduce acidity.

As the seas and oceans become more acidic,

the protection of this marine forest ecosystem has received much attention from the world, but the problem is that these forests may be able to moderate the effect of acidification, but up to an extent, so that, a definite solution is required.

Wetlands are important

Wetlands are ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently. They store water and ensure its quality, providing resilience against drought. They play a central role in sustainable development by supplying all our freshwater.

Wetlands play a major role in protecting the land against floods and the impacts of storms. They provide food and diverse habitats which support genetic, species, and ecosystem biodiversity. Wetlands play a key role in the life cycles of many species and in annual migration patterns.

Unfortunately, wetlands are being degraded and lost due to pollution, overexploitation, climate change, and human population growth.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

E-motorbikes come to curb air pollution in metropolises

The first phase of electric motorcycles development project will be implemented aiming at reducing air pollution in Tehran and other metropolises, IRNA news agency reported.

Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said on Tuesday that electric motorcycles will be promoted in big cities in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

Through the first phase of the project, electric motorcycles will replace the regular ones used by the Ministry of Energy and state-run companies, he explained. Ardakanian went on to say that, in addition to electric motorcycles being manufactured and marketed from now on, existing motorcycles will also change to use electricity sources.

آغاز طرح برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با هدف کاهش آلودگی هوا

مرحله نخست طرح برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با هدف کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران و دیگر کلانشهرها آغاز می شود.

به گزارش ایرنا، رضا اردکانیان وزیر نیرو روز سه شنبه گفت برقی کردن موتورسیکلت ها با همکاری وزارت صنعت، معدن و تجارت انجام خواهد شد.

وی افزود: هدف این طرح در گام نخست، برقی کردن موتورسیکلت های مورد استفاده وزارت نیرو و شرکت های دولتی است.

اردکانیان اضافه کرد بر این اساس علاوه بر اینکه از این پس موتورسیکلت برقی تولید و وارد بازار می شود، موتورسیکلت های موجود نیز برای مالکان آنها برقی می شوند.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON NOVEMBER 27

New cases	3,045
New deaths	87
Total cases	6,105,101
Total deaths	129,549
New hospitalized patients	583
Patients in critical condition	3,356
Total recovered patients	5,853,066
Diagnostic tests conducted	38,439,240
Doses of vaccine injected	104,609,358

