

TEHRAN TIMES

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Setting Deadlines Won't Work

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Interview **T**

Israel: Worse than South African Apartheid

TEHRAN – Tisetso Magama, an activist and a former member of South African parliament, says that the emergence of a UAE, Saudi-led axis, has spread within North Africa.

“These countries in particular are playing a negative role in the normalization of relations with Israel.” Said the senior board member and spokesperson of “Africa for Palestine.”

“South Africans have very strong relations with different Palestinian liberation movements since the 1970s, to help bring about an end to the occupation.” He added.

Following is the text of the interview about normalization of relations with the Israeli regime:

Firstly, as a South African, how do you relate to the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation and apartheid?

A: There are many similarities between the south African struggle and the Palestinians struggle first. The struggle against the set of colonial regimes, in our case, it became what was then termed in an apartheid state. In the case of Israel is also the same with any analogy. But we clearly identify very much with the experiences of the Palestinian people, and that is said like colonial and the apartheid regime. In many ways worse than what we experienced in South Africa.

Secondly, we as South Africans have very strong relations with different Palestinian liberation movements since the 1970s, to help bring about an end to the occupation. The struggle of the Palestinian people is our own struggle in many ways. South African regime (then apartheid regime) and the Israeli apartheid regime have been working, handling club for many years. You know, these are declassified information that they have cooperated with South African ▶ Page 5



Taremi becomes most-nominated AFC International Player of Week

TEHRAN – Iranian striker Mehdi Taremi has become the most-nominated AFC International Player of the Week.

Over the last 12 months, the-AFC.com has published a total of 35 AFC International Player of the Week polls, with the top 10 Asian performers plying their trade outside the continent over the previous seven days highlighted, and fans from around the world casting their weekly votes.

In total, 115 players from 17 AFC nations were featured at least once in the weekly list, shining on a light of Asian footballers – male and female – based everywhere from Europe's biggest leagues to competitions in Africa and North America.

As 2021 draws to a close, the-afc.com has crunched the numbers in order to highlight the players who were among Asia's weekly top 10 more often than anyone else, and whose exemplary consistency deserves recognition.

The player who appeared the most consistently in the polls this year was FC Porto's Iranian forward Taremi, who was among Asia's top 10 performers a staggering 20 times throughout the year.

Taremi began 2021 in blistering touch, scoring six times in January, and earning nominations for seven weeks in ▶ Page 3

Secrets of the occupied Golan



TEHRAN – News of Israeli plans to double the number of settlers squatting on Syria's occupied Golan Heights has been met with strong condemnation.

Damascus says the territory, which Israel annexed in 1981 having militarily capturing the area in 1967 is both “Dangerous” and “Unprecedented”

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announced a multimillion-dollar plan to increase the number of settler units by nearly 7,300. There are already about 25 thousand Israeli ▶ Page 5

Over \$383m paid to SMEs, semi-finished projects in 8 months

TEHRAN – Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade's data show that 113,922 trillion rials (about \$383.57 million) has been paid to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and semi-finished industrial projects with an over 60 percent physical progress during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21).

The mentioned facilities, which are provided

for renewing machinery, equipping production units, or completing semi-finished projects, have been paid in the form of bank loans to 3,039 projects and production units in 31 provinces, IRNA reported.

The program for offering bank facilities to the SMEs and semi-finished projects was kicked off in February 2019 by the Industry Ministry in collaboration with the Central

Bank of Iran (CBI), and since then over 12,124 production units and SMEs have registered for receiving the mentioned loans.

Based on the said program, 201,299 trillion rials of facilities (about \$745.5 million) were paid to SMEs and semi-finished projects to support domestic production and maintain or create job opportunities in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) ▶ Page 4

Iran ready to send specialized labor force to Serbia

TEHRAN – The Iranian deputy labor minister for international affairs, Hamed Forouzan, in a meeting with Serbian Ambassador to Iran, Dragan Todorovic, announced readiness to send skilled workforce to Serbia.

During the meeting on Monday, the two officials discussed further cooperation in different fields, IRNA reported.

A memorandum of understanding on employment, technology, and professions has been drafted, and another memorandum on social security is being prepared, which we hope will be signed soon, Forouzan stated.

The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate relations between the economic and trade complexes of Iran and Serbia, he highlighted.

Todorovic, also for his part said that the purpose of this joint meeting is to assess the current situation for the expansion of trade cooperation in various fields such as agriculture and tourism. ▶ Page 7



Women players donate dolls

TEHRAN – Iranian women football players shared their joy with the children in need. They brought their toys to the training camp underway in Tehran and donated them to the children.

Iran's women's football team are preparing for the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup in India, which starts on January 20. Iran are in Group A along with India, China and Chinese Taipei.

Grave hunters: cemetery tourism in Iran

TEHRAN – Having nearly all kinds of historical tombs, museums such as tomb towers, and rack-hewn tombs, Iran is heaven for cemetery enthusiasts and grave hunters; individuals who have passion for and enjoyment of cemeteries, epitaphs, gravestone rubbing, photography, art, and history of famous deaths.

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing phenomena that always makes new changes to have unforgettable experiences, create new travel motivators, and reach new markets. Such a trend results in new tourist spots which were unthinkable only a few years ago!

In cemetery tourism, contrary to popular belief, it is you who will be the protagonist of a hot

dialogue of past and present during visits to centuries-old tombs or cemeteries instead of listening to a curator of an exhibition!

It might seem odd but cemeteries as bridges between the present and the past, and the living and the dead, have been drawing their own fans both in groups or individuals each having specific interests. ▶ Page 6

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Israel declines at highest ever pace: IRGC spokesman

TEHRAN – Spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) General Ramezan Sharif has said that the pace of Israel's decline has reached its highest ever pace, noting that Iran is approaching the final summit.

Speaking at a commemoration ceremony on Tuesday, General Sharif pointed out that “we are close to conquering the final summit and that we should not heed the enemy's words.”

The process of downfall of the Zionist regime has reached its most intense part over the past 70 years, General Ramezan Sharif said, according to Tasnim.

He said the global arrogance and the Zionists have become so frightened of the power of resistance axis that they assassinated senior Iranian commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani.

The spokesman also noted that the blood of martyrs and the resistance of people have frustrated the Zionists and the enemies of Islam.

In remarks in May 2020, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei highlighted the intense hatred among many world people for the US because of its support for terrorism, saying the Americans will have to face eviction from Iraq and Syria.

Iran has underlined that it will never forget the US assassination of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani and his comrades in Iraq and “will definitely deal the reciprocal blow to Americans.”

In January 2020, a US drone strike near Baghdad International Airport assassinated General Soleimani, former commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps. The attack — that also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) anti-terror group, along with several others— came while General Soleimani was on an official visit to the Iraqi capital. ▶ Page 3

Photo exhibition explores General Soleimani's national popularity

TEHRAN – An exhibition opened on Monday in Tehran showcasing a collection of photos reflecting on aspects of General Qassem Soleimani's national popularity.

Entitled “Sarve Ravan”, the exhibition has been organized at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Soleimani who was killed in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

Based on a call for photos published by the Iranian Photographers Center (IPC) of the Art Bureau, the exhibit was scheduled to be organized in the first martyrdom anniversary of Soleimani, however, it was canceled due to the pandemic, IPC director Ehsan Baqeri said in a press release published on Tuesday.

Over 1,000 photos were submitted to the center, about 130 out of which were selected for the exhibition that will be running until January 19, 2022.

The photos have been showcased in three categories, Professionals, Mobile Photos by People, and Photos by Young Adults. ▶ Page 8

Two main enclosed water bodies shrinking

TEHRAN – Gorgan Bay and Lake Urmia, the two main enclosed water bodies in the country, are declining to the extent that they will possibly dry up, Ali Soltanpour, director of hydrography and tidal affairs of the National Cartographic Center, has said.

Referring to the level of enclosed waters such as Lake Urmia and the Caspian Sea, he stated that in open waters, periodic changes (decrease and increase of water volume) are low and about 2 mm, which is due to rising water that is caused by global warming and the melting of ice.

But lakes that are not connected to open waters are affected by local climate change; therefore, if the rainfall in their catchment area decreases and drought and uncontrolled water withdrawal increases, the lake will dry up, the main example of which is Lake Urmia and Gorgan Bay.

The level of the lake has increased significantly in the early 1990s so that in 1995, it reached 1278.5 meters and many urban and coastal infrastructures were threatened.

After this time, the water level of Lake Urmia gradually dropped due to reduced rainfall and water entering the lake, so that during 3 years, the lake level decreases by about one meter, he added.

According to Soltanpour, since 1998, the lake continued to shrink more rapidly and for 4 consecutive years, the level reduced by another 3.5 meters reaching 1274 meters in 2002.



In 2017, the level even declined to 1271 meters. However, increased rainfall caused the lake level to rise by more than one meter in only several months and exceed 1272 meters.

In the summer and the first two months of autumn this year, the lake's level faced a decrease of 30 to 35 cm compared to the same time last year.

"Part of this situation is due to climate change, in addition to low rainfall, but the excessive withdrawal of water is sometimes irreversible. An example is the uncontrolled abstraction of water from underground aquifers. The groundwater is removed from these reservoirs in such a way that even if it rains, the res-

ervoir loses its original capacity and will not be sufficiently filled," he explained.

Emphasizing that the Caspian Sea water level has been decreasing for 16 years, he noted that some 80 percent of its water is supplied through the Volga River and when the Caspian water inflow decreases, the Caspian Sea level also drops.

In recent years, it has been said that the decrease in rainfall in the Volga has reduced the Caspian Sea water level, but it is possible that water withdrawal in the northern Caspian Sea has been effective in reducing the sea level.

Studies conducted in 2020 and 2021 show that the Caspian Sea loses 25 cm of water level.

In addition, the Gulf of Gorgan is also affected by these conditions, because this bay is connected to the Caspian Sea by a strait, and will soon dry up if the trend continues, he lamented.

Valuable ecological complex

Over 27 percent of the 400 square kilometers of Gorgan Bay - the largest gulf in the Caspian Sea - has dried up in recent years, according to the National Cartographic Center.

Covering an area of about 400 square kilometers, the Gulf of Gorgan also known as Gorgan Bay is located at the south-eastern shore of the Caspian Sea near the cities of Behshahr, Gorgan, and Sari and is separated from the main water body by the Miankaleh peninsula and extends until the Ashuradeh peninsula.

Gorgan Bay was designated as a Ramsar site (defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value) along with Miankaleh Wetland.

The bay and its surrounding area are recognized as a valuable ecological complex in the world which had a direct impact on the livelihood of local communities in addition to conserving the marine life cycle.

Ashuradeh Island, which hosts a variety of native and migratory birds throughout the year, was also introduced and registered as one of the world's first biosphere zones in 1975.

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Charity Foundation to supply water to 1400 villages nationwide

TEHRAN – Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, has so far provided drinking water to 1,115 villages across the country and the number will reach 1,400 by the end of this year (March 20, 2022).

So far, 2,100 villages have been covered by the foundation's water supply activities, Ali Asgari, deputy head of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, said, YJC reported.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation- the social arm of the organization- with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building



roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

The Foundation plans to open up 300,000 job opportunities for those residing in rural and deprived areas over the next [Iranian calendar] year.

Labour demands stricter air pollution limits after child poverty link revealed

The Labour party has demanded stricter limits on air pollution after analysis showed the close correlation between children living in poverty and dirty air in the UK.

Five London boroughs rank worst for child poverty and worst for dirty air, according to government data collated by Labour, mapping areas of high poverty against statistics on air pollution. The analysis showed that the higher the rate of child poverty in a given area, the dirtier the air there was on average, with most of the 50 most polluted areas in the UK also showing the highest rates of child poverty.

Boroughs in Birmingham, Southampton, Portsmouth, Sandwell and Walsall also showed high correlations between child poverty and air pollution, the Guardian reported.

In the 11 local authorities that exceed the WHO's recommended guideline limit of an annual mean concentration of 10 micrograms per cubic metre of air ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), an average of 39.5% of children are living in poverty - much higher than the national average of 31%.

Altogether, about 6.7 million children are living in areas of the UK where air pollution has breached legal limits, of whom about 2 million are also living in poverty, according to the research.

The announcement by the Labour party follows a meeting in December with Keir Starmer, Ed Miliband, and campaign group Choked Up, a group of young black and brown teenagers living in areas affected by air pollution, who are calling for a right to clean air.

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Jim McMahon, the shadow secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, said: "Everyone should have the right to breathe clean, safe air, no matter where you live. If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's that public health has to be at the very top of the political agenda, and that has to start with the air we breathe."

He pointed to Labour proposals for a Clean Air Act, which would establish a legal right to breathe clean air, and legal requirements for air quality based on the advice of the World Health Organization. The government rejected amendments to the environment bill that would have set pollution limits in line with WHO advice.

He added: "The Conservative government refused to protect the health of British children, voting against tougher limits on pollution. Our children should be able to take clean, safe air for granted. Only a Clean Air Act is going to guarantee that."

Under the new environment legislation, the government will set new pollution targets from late next year. The government was repeatedly found to be in breach of EU air pollution rules, when they applied to the UK, before Brexit.

A government spokesperson said: "Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 - at a national level, emissions of fine particulate matter have fallen by 11%, while emissions of nitrogen oxides are at their lowest levels since records began. But we know there is still more to do. To continue to drive forward tangible and long-lasting improvements to air quality, we are committed to setting stretching and ambitious targets on air quality through our Environment Act."

Iran closes Afghan border as Omicron surges



TEHRAN – With the outbreak of Omicron, Afghan travelers are not allowed to enter Iran through the Dogarun border for 15 days, according to the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control.

Restrictions will not apply to passengers traveling for health, study or trade purposes or people having permanent residency permits; freight travel through land borders will continue in the meantime.

On December 25, the Interior Ministry issued

a 15-day travel ban from eight African and four European countries.

Passengers from eight African countries, including Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Botswana, are banned from entering directly and indirectly for 15 days from the date of notification.

Iranians entering from these 8 countries, in addition to having a certificate of receiving two doses of vaccine and performing a negative PCR test with a validity of 48 to 72 hours, if they have a disease, will be quarantined at personal expense.

Direct and indirect passengers from the UK, Norway, Denmark, and France must have a certificate of two doses of the vaccine, a negative test valid for 48 to 72 hours from the date of notification. In case of any symptoms or test positive, they will be quarantined for 14 days at personal expense.

Iran's health minister Bahram Einollahi said

on Saturday that the rapid spread of Omicron may pose serious threats to the country although he insisted that authorities had identified few cases infected with the variant.

Einollahi said that Iran has two "golden weeks" to expand booster vaccination coverage to more people in order to prevent a potential explosion in the number of infections with Omicron in early January.

Health ministry figures published on Saturday showed that booster vaccine shots delivered across Iran had reached nearly 5.5 million doses.

Omicron, which has raised global fears of a surge in infections, was first detected in southern Africa earlier this month and has prompted governments across the globe to impose travel restrictions and take other measures to try and contain it.

So far, 34 cases of omicrons have been identified in the country and 8 suspected cases are being investigated.

Iran ready to send specialized labor force to Serbia

From page 1 ▶ The most important obstacles to the development of trade relations are the financial and banking transfers, which we hope will be facilitated and accelerated by resolving political issues, he added.

Iran has had successful experiences in sending labor to various countries, including private labor to Australia through the private sector, and this experience will be

repeated for Finland, as lately announced by Forouzan in a meeting with Pasi Tuominen, director-general of consular services at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Youth unemployment rate rises

The unemployment rate for Iranian people aged 18 to 35 has risen from 15.6 percent in spring to 17.6 percent in summer, according to a report released by the Statistical

Center.

The jobless rate among of the same age group reached 31 percent in summer from 27.8 percent in spring, the report added.

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for young men rose from 12.9 percent to 14.6 percent.

Last year, the unemployment rate of people aged 18 to 35 was estimated at 16.7 percent, with 27.9 percent related to women and

14.1 percent related to men.

The latest employment report released by the Statistical Center reflects the growing trend of unemployment in Iran.

Iran's unemployment rate has been above 10 percent for the last 10 years, and this rate is estimated to have peaked in 2014, when estimates reached 14 percent, according to Statista website.

ENGLISH IN USE

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All-Iranian COVID-19 diagnostic kits to be released within month

Iran will commercialize domestically-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits by the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22), secretary of biotechnology development of Vice Presidency for Science and Technology announced.

Following a call by the headquarters for the production of COVID-19 diagnostic kits, a contract was signed with five knowledge-based companies and manufacturing process began, ISNA quoted Mostafa Qane'ei as saying on Monday.

Diagnosis is the most important part of coronavirus treatment, he highlighted.

Patients suspected to coronavirus are currently being identified by diagnostic kits that have entered Iran in the form of assistance and purchases by the World Health Organization, China and UNICEF, he said.

So, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology decided to manufacture the kits domestically, he noted.

کیت‌های ایرانی تشخیص کووید ۱۹ ماه آینده روانه بازار می‌شوند

دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری گفت: کیت‌های تشخیصی کووید ۱۹، فروردین ماه وارد بازار می‌شوند.

مصطفی قانع، دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، اظهار داشت: به دنبال فراخوان این ستاد برای ساخت کیت‌های آزمایشگاهی تشخیصی کووید ۱۹، با پنج شرکت دانش‌بنیان برای ساخت این کیت‌ها قرارداد منعقد شده است.

تشخیص، مهم‌ترین راه ورود به درمان بیماری کرونا است.

در حال حاضر بیماران مبتلا به کرونا به وسیله کیت‌های تشخیصی که در قالب مساعدت و خرید از طریق سازمان بهداشت جهانی، کشور چین و یونیسف وارد ایران شده‌اند شناسایی می‌شوند؛ اما ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری با انتشار فراخوانی از دانش‌بنیان‌های توانمند دعوت کرد تا به حوزه ساخت این کیت‌ها ورود کنند.

