



Time Is Up for the United States in Iraq

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Report

“Unjust suppression” of Palestinian social media content

TEHRAN - These days with any big events and concerning developments surrounding our lives, the role of the media cannot and should not be undermined. Those seeking the news should be allowed to take their information from a variety of sources to make their own independent judgement on where they stand on the issue. That can't happen when the narrative of the biggest security problem in West Asia today, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is being narrated to suit one party over the other.

Unfortunately for the Palestinians, most mainstream media do not give them the platform to share their story or to be more precise to share their struggle with the rest of the world. The media is very one sided in favor of Israel, the news is one sided and viewers essentially do not get the full picture of what is going on.

Since the era of social media, Palestinians have switched to this virtual platform to get their message across to the world. Unfortunately, now Palestinian journalists have raised the alarm over what they say is the “unjust suppression” of their content on social media, the latest of which being U.S. based social media giant Facebook.

Earlier this month, a Palestine TV reporter, posted a video on her Facebook account in which Israeli regime forces were seen shooting a Palestinian on the ground, which led to his murder. Shortly after posting the video, Christine Rinawi, who has nearly 400,000 followers, found out it had been deleted from her account.

This was not Rinawi's first experience with Facebook's censorship and the journalist said her account had already been restricted after she shared footage of a November attack in occupied Jerusalem al-Quds. ▶ Page 5

Report

2021 year in review for Iran sports

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN - Another year is almost over for Iran sports and it has been quite a good one on the whole.

Two prestigious events were held in 2021 and the Iranian athletes and Para athletes competed in highly competitive Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

Two prestigious events were held in 2021 and the Iranian athletes and Para athletes competed in highly competitive Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

Iran also registered valuable victories in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification. Dragana Skocic sets a new record of 10 consecutive wins in all competitions and the 'Persian Leopards' have almost qualified for the 2022 World Cup in Doha, Qatar.

The Iranian athletes also shone in the other sports including weightlifting, taekwondo, wrestling, handball and boxing.

Tehran Times takes a look at the Iran sports in 2021.

Iran one step away from 2022 FIFA World Cup

The 'Persian Leopards' have almost qualified for the 2022 FIFA World Cup and they will book their berth in Qatar if they beat Iraq in Tehran in late January. Iran have previously competed in World Cup five times.

Skocic have registered 12 wins and one draw in 13 matches in Iran national football team. ▶ Page 3

Iran sends three research satellites into space



© Ministry of Defence

TEHRAN - On Thursday, Iran launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three “research” devices into space.

“The satellite-carrying Simorgh rocket successfully launched three devices into space,” Defense Ministry spokesperson Ahmad Hosseini told national television.

The research devices were launched aboard homegrown rocket known as Simorgh (Phoenix).

“For the first time, three devices were launched simultaneously to a distance of 470 kilometers (292 miles) at a speed of 7,350 meters per second,” Hosseini explained.

Hosseini said the launch was “initial,” suggesting more are on the way.

“The intended research objectives of this launch were achieved. This was done as a preliminary launch. ... God willing, we will have an operational launch soon.” ▶ Page 2

Omicron rapid test kit produced domestically

TEHRAN - An Iranian technology company has developed an antigen-based rapid detection kit, which can detect the Omicron variant in less than 20 minutes, Mehr news agency reported on Thursday.

The company has developed an antigen-based N and S rapid detection kit that simultaneously detects two proteins of spike and nucleocapsid, which is the first of its kind

in the world, and greatly increases the accuracy of coronavirus detection, in addition to detecting different mutants of the virus.

Last year, as the first manufacturer of COVID-19 antigen-based diagnostic kits during the pandemic, the company was one of the top three manufacturers of this kit in the world.

By daily production of 200,000 test kits, the needs of health centers have been met nationwide.

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. ▶ Page 7

U.S. bears definitive international responsibility for terror attack on Gen. Soleimani: Iran

TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Friday reminding the U.S. government of its “definitive international responsibility” for the assassination of top commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, saying it has adopted measures to hold those who contributed to and perpetrated this terrorist crime accountable.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the statement on the occasion of the second anniversary of General Qassem Soleimani's assassination.

On January 3, 2020, the U.S. assassinated Gen. Soleimani in a drone strike near Baghdad International Airport. Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, was recognized as a famous military strategist ▶ Page 3



© IRNA / Mohammad Mahdi Veral

President Raisi visits Qom Province

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi visited Qom Province on top of a high-ranking delegation on Thursday, as the 13th provincial visit since he took office in August, IRNA reported. Accompanied by members of his cabinet, including Energy Minister, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister, Agriculture Minister, Culture Minister as well as Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister, Raisi arrived in Qom on Thursday morning for a two-day visit. ▶ Page 4

Thousands of daffodils embellish Imam Reza (AS) shrine

TEHRAN - On Wednesday, thousands of daffodil bulbs arrived in Imam Reza (AS) shrine as a gift from florists who are natives of Behbahan in Khuzestan province.

The florists of Behbahan donated 8,000 daffodils to the holy shrine to pay tribute to the eighth Shia Imam, CHTN reported on Friday.

Earlier this year, the annual tradition of donating daffodils to Imam Reza (AS)'s holy shrine was inscribed on the national heritage list.

The history of the ritual goes back at least 50 years as florists of the southwestern county donate their first harvest of daffodils to the holy shrine around late December and early June.

In Persian culture and literature, the daffodil symbolizes the eye, usually the eye of a beloved; a daffodil recalls the pupil of the eye.

In poetry, the beloved is likened to the daffodil because of its leafless and green stem, which is hollowed out, straw-like, and curved, which is associated with humility and dignity. ▶ Page 6

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Interview

U.S. never tolerates competition in arms sale in West Asia market: military analyst

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - A senior Lebanese political and military analyst says the U.S. never accepted anybody to challenge it in the arms market in West Asia, especially in Saudi Arabia.

“America does not accept at all any country jostling it in the arms market of West Asia, regardless of the customer or supplier,” Amine Mohammad Hoteit tells the Tehran Times.

Hoteit is of the opinion that if Saudi Arabia establishes arms deals with China, it would be only a political maneuver and the Biden administration would scuttle it.

“But we know that America sees Saudi Arabia as its colony and as a milk cow, and will not accept to share it with other powers, whether China or Russia or any other party, and even sometimes it cannot tolerate a European presence in Saudi Arabia for armaments,” Hoteit argues. ▶ Page 5

110 Iranian theaters to offer free admission to documentary on General Soleimani

TEHRAN - 110 Iranian theaters will offer free tickets for all on Monday to watch a documentary about Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani.

The theaters will screen “Qassem,” a biographical documentary directed by Mehdi Farsi about Soleimani, to commemorate the second martyrdom anniversary of the IRGC Quds Force chief who was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

The free admission program has been initiated by the Cinema Organization of Iran at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

The film made at the Haqiqat Documentary Film Center chronicles the life story of General Soleimani from childhood until his assassination.

It was broadcast on May 4, 2021 from the Mostanad Channel, an IRIB channel dedicated to screening documentary films.

“The documentary begins with pictures from his childhood and presence in Iran's frontlines during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war,” producer Morteza Shabani, who is also the director of the Haqiqat Documentary Film Center, said at that time. ▶ Page 8

Commemoration ceremony held for martyr Soleimani in Denmark



TEHRAN — A ceremony was held on Friday in Copenhagen, Denmark, to commemorate the second anniversary of the martyrdom of General Qassem Soleimani, known as a hero commander.

Representatives of Muslim communities in Denmark from various countries, including Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iranians living in Denmark, attended the ceremony which was hosted by the Iranian embassy in Copenhagen.

The ceremony was hosted by the Iranian Ambassador to Denmark, Afsaneh Nadipour, according to ISNA.

Nadipour called the assassination an obvious violation of international law and human rights, calling the move a “terrorist crime”.

Referring to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei’s response to martyr Soleimani’s letter regarding the defeat of Daesh, the Iranian envoy said the Leader said, “You have served a great service to the humanity by diminishing the cancerous tumor of Daesh.”

In the commemoration ceremony, the participants presented flowers in honor of the martyr general and his comrades, especially martyr Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, and mentioned the bravery and sacrifices of these two great martyrs in the face of terrorist groups, particularly Daesh.

In a speech at the ceremony, the representative of the Palestinian community in Denmark said, “The position of martyr Soleimani across the

border and the expression of his attributes is beyond words.”

He added that the Palestinian resistance will never forget his bravery.

“If it were not for martyr Soleimani and his courageous actions, Gaza would not be here today. I came here to send the message to the people of Iran that we will live up to our promise, which is to continue the resistance until victory. On this day, I pay tribute to all the martyrs of the resistance. I thank the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the people of Iran for their resistance and support,” he further elaborated.

The Iraqi representative in the ceremony introduced himself as one of the friends of martyr al-Muhandis and gave a description of the the martyr and his friend and companion, General Soleimani.

He then delivered a speech and stressed the importance of the fact that the path of the martyrs of the resistance including General Soleimani is not over and it will continue until the liberation of the Holy Quds and the elimination of terrorism worldwide.

On January 3, General Qassem Soleimani was assassinated near Baghdad airport alongside al-Muhandis, deputy leader of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), otherwise known as Hashd L-Shaabi.

Former United States President Donald Trump had ordered the attack, which faced opposing reactions from inside the United States as well.

In July 2020, a UN expert said the U.S. attack that killed the top Iranian general violated international law.

“Major General Soleimani was in charge of Iran military strategy, and actions, in Syria and Iraq. But absent an actual imminent threat to life, the course of action taken by the US was unlawful,” Agnes Callamard, UN’s special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, said.

Gen. Soleimani’s heart beat for Iran’s dignity: Eslami

TEHRAN – Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani’s heart beat for the dignity of the Iranian nation, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) chief Mohammad Eslami says, ISNA reported on Friday.

Lt. Gen. Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike on January 3, 2020 near Baghdad’s international airport. He was internationally recognized as a legendary commander in the fight against terrorist groups, including Daesh (ISIL).

Gen. Soleimani’s thoughts, career and approach has got the title of the “Soleimani School”.

Talking to a special televised program on Friday, AEOI director Eslami said the Soleimani school was a symbol of “dignity and grandeur” of

the Iranian nation.

The remarks by Eslami comes as Iran is marking the second anniversary of Gen. Soleimani’s assassination.

Gen. Soleimani had a “deep heartfelt belief” for developing the country in all areas, he added.

Sometimes many societal groups “just have just an imagination of a military figure from General Soleimani while he was an ‘all-inclusive’ figure whose heart beat for the dignity of the Iranian nation with a strong belief,” Eslami remarked.

The things that were prioritized by General Soleimani are necessary for each society to prosper and he was never oblivious of anything.

Hooligan and two accomplices who martyred two IRGC servicemen are killed

TEHRAN – In a report released on Friday the IRGC announced that an armed hooligan named Mehrab Shah-Bakhsh and two others who martyred two IRG Quds Force servicemen on December 26 have been killed in a “precise operation”, Sepah News reported.

“In this surprise operation the famous hooligan Mehrab Shah-Bakhsh and two of his accomplices who were involved in creating insecurity and undermining the peace of mind of people in the country’s southeast, and in their last crime had martyred two of the defenders of the Islamic homeland were targeted and murdered,” the press release said.

On December 26, the hooligan and two of his accomplices martyred two IRGC Quds Force

servicemen in an armed clash in Zahedan, the capital of the southeastern border province of Sistan-Balouchestan.

The servicemen were martyred as they were carrying out an operation against the armed outlaws, the IRGC said a statement.

The two martyred personnel were Mehran Shourizadeh and Mohsen Keikhayee, according to Tasnim.

In July 2018, anti-revolutionary terrorists attacked a border post of the Hamzeh Seyed al-Shohada Base in the western province of Kurdistan, killing 11 forces of the base.

The IRGC is tasked with protecting the country’s northwestern and southeastern borders.

Iran sends three research satellites into space

From page 1 ► Hosseini said the launch followed several achievements in Iran’s civilian space program, Tasnim reported.

The rocket emblazoned with the words “Simorgh satellite carrier” and the slogan “we Can” shooting into the morning sky from the Imam

Khomeini Spaceport.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several satellites into orbit. In 2013, it launched a monkey into space.

Iran’s Supreme Council of Space has met for the first time in 11 years.

TEHRAN — As the year 2021 ended on Friday, the exit of U.S. troop from Iraq will once again dominate headlines.

The date for the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq was scheduled for December 31. However, no troops will be evacuated. Only the occupation forces will be renamed. The same combat troops will be assigned an “advisory” role, with no soldiers being removed. This was confirmed by Pentagon officials to The New York Times, who stated that the departure will take place primarily on paper.

Looking back at how U.S. soldiers returned to Iraq in 2014, it is clear that there was never any intention of withdrawing troops from Iraq.

Hassan Ali, a soldier from Kataeb Hezbollah, said on December 28 that the 31st of December will be the last day for American troops in Iraq.

“If they don’t leave voluntarily, they will leave by force. They will face the resistance factions and we will return to the year 2003. The Popular Mobilization Forces are against ISIS and against America at the same time. America is an occupier in Iraq, and we don’t want occupation in our country,” he continued, according to PBS NewsHour.

American troops targeted the headquarters, administration, medical and rocket support units.

PBS NewsHour said, “What the U.S. and the coalition forces will do is provide an enabling mission, they will provide advice, they will provide intelligence, but they will be sitting alongside Iraqis in the operation centers.”

Twenty-five hundred U.S. soldiers will remain in Iraq for that purpose, but their continued presence remains contested by groups like Kataeb Hezbollah, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and other resistance factions.

Time is up for United States in Iraq



Abu Al Fadhil, a soldier from Kataeb Hezbollah who was authorized to give interviews said, “When America hits us, we consider them as an enemy, because they are targeting an Iraqi force.”

“Our responsibility is to control the Iraqi territories and the Iraqi borders, as assigned by the Iraqi government, because we are operating under the Iraqi flag,” he added.

Noor Ahmed, another soldier from Kataeb Hezbollah said because of the American occupation, the security situation in the region has deteriorated.

“They are not willing to let Iraq destabilize,” Ahmed said through a translator quoted by PBS NewsHour.

The Coordinating Committee of the Resistance in Iraq said in a statement on December 30 that they do not trust the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops,

which must leave the country before December 31.

“The American forces do not seriously take the implementation of the Iraqi people’s demand, expressed by the Parliament which approved a decree for the total withdrawal of foreign military,” the text points out.

The note also warns that the Resistance will force this contingent to withdraw at any cost.

The Iraqi MPs voted for the end of the presence of any foreign force in the Iraqi territory in response to the assassinations of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and PMF deputy commander Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis.

According to the Shafaq news agency, Hadi al-Ameri, leader of the Fatah Alliance, said on Saturday, December 26, that withdrawing all American combat forces from Iraq is “a goal that cannot be bargained.”

Trump and others involved in Gen. Soleimani assassination will be punished, cleric asserts

TEHRAN — Seyyed Ahmad Khatami, a top Iranian cleric and Tehran’s Friday prayer leader, asserted on Friday that Donald Trump and everyone who took part in assassinating Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani on January 3, 2020, will be severely punished.

Addressing worshippers in Tehran, Khatami said Iran had two Soleimanis, one who was alive and whose name was the symbol of resistance and courage, and a martyr who fought bravely and did amazingly.

“The Americans had said that it would take at least ten years for Daesh to leave Mosul, but this great man [Soleimani] said that there would be no news of the Daesh government for another three months.”

A member of the European Parliament has acknowledged that nobody did more to defeat ISIL terrorists in Iraq than the legendary Iranian commander.

“While the U.S. and Allies were responsible for the rise of ISIL and the arming of Jihadists Groups, nobody

did more to defeat ISIL in Iraq than General Soleimani,” Mick Wallace said in a post on his Twitter account.

Wallace also condemned the international community for not taking any action about the assassination of the top Iranian general, saying, “Where was the condemnation from the International Community when he was murdered by the US...?”

In July 2020, a UN expert said the U.S. attack that killed the top Iranian general violated international law.

“Major General Soleimani was in charge of Iran military strategy, and actions, in Syria and Iraq. But absent an actual imminent threat to life, the course of action taken by the US was unlawful,” Agnes Callamard, UN’s special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, said.

“Huge funeral for Gen. Soleimani was a kind of military exercise”

The Tehran Friday prayer leader also said the funeral for General Soleimani which was attended by tens of millions in Iran and Iraq was a kind of military exercise.

General Soleimani’s “pure blood” resulted in the fleeing of the American troops from Afghanistan, and it will soon be the same in Iraq, according to a resolution passed by the Iraqi parliament, the cleric pointed out.

He added the dawning of victory in Yemen is obvious thanks to the general’s “pure blood”.

“Iran slapped the United States with an attack on Ain al-Assad [airbase], many of whom were sent to hell but censored [by the U.S. media]. But this was not our final revenge. All the perpetrators, commanders, executors, advisers and the criminal Trump who claimed responsibility for this crime will be punished,” he remarked.

Iran’s attack on the U.S. airbase in Iraq shattered the U.S. image in the world. It was the first time that U.S. was attacked since the Second World War.

“Iran’s policy is deterrence”

Khatami also said last week Israel attacked a warehouse in Latakia, Syria, and struck a food and medicine

He deemed the presence of American troops in Iraq under the pretense of training or advisory missions to be unacceptable, declaring, “Our sovereignty is a red line.”

“My message to U.S. military and the Iraqi government is plain,” he stated. “You must carry out what was agreed upon.”

“We will not accept any manipulation, fraud, or mission alterations,” he stressed.

“If U.S. forces stay in Iraq, they must pay the repercussions of their bad decision... We will not accept even one foreign soldier, whether at the Ain al-Assad base nor in al-Harir, neither for training nor for [giving] advice,” he noted.

Ameri stated that if the Iraqi government requires military trainers and advisers, a contract must be drafted that specifies their “locations, numbers, and tasks.”

Major General Tahsin al-Khafaji, spokesman for the Iraqi Joint Operations Headquarters, also stated that an Iraqi security delegation would join the al-Harir base in the Erbil region in the coming days to accompany the withdrawal of U.S. personnel from the base.

He stated that the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq would be announced publicly on December 31.

However, no such statement was made at the time this story was written.

According to the U.S. coalition, the principal purpose of U.S. and coalition soldiers is to offer advisory services and enable Iraqi forces to permanently destroy Daesh.

However, the message is loud and clear. The Iraqi people do not want the U.S. forces in their soil, whether as advisor or else.

Will Biden hear this message?

warehouse.

According to the Friday prayer leader, this means that the Zionist regime is a regime of “constant aggression” and “will have no destiny but inevitable destruction.”

Referring to the holding of the Great Prophet 17 military exercise, he said the great message of the drill was the example of God’s word in Holy Quran which says “Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, awing thereby the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.”

“Our policy is deterrence and that is why this exercise was held. 16 missiles have been fired, 4 of which can reach Tel Aviv, and if you have the least imagination and dream of aggression against the heroic nation of Iran, with these missiles, your bright day will become a dark evening,” Khatami concluded.

Raisi says his govt seeking interaction with outside world

TEHRAN – President Ebrahim Raisi said on Friday that his government is seeking to interact with the outside world.

Raisi made the remarks in a meeting with grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, in the shrine city of Qom.

Since coming to power in August, the government of Ebrahim Raisi has tried to deepen ties with countries, especially neighbors and Asian countries.

Raisi also said his government is seeking to lessen the economic problems of the people, suggesting, “By tapping all capacities of the country and these problems should be reduced.”

The president said during the nearly first three of months of his government export to neighbors have increased 30 to 40 percent.

“The neighboring countries are keen of Iran’s agricultural and industrial products but they should only be presented in correct way,” Raisi added.

He also pointed to massive vaccination of citizens in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic in the first few months of his government, saying, “At the beginning of the work of the new government about 700 families lost their loved ones (to Covid-19). God willing, the current situation has improved greatly through vaccination.”

He also said as the situation improves in regard to the pandemic the universities will resume their



President Raisi (L) meets grand Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi

classes.

Currently, the universities and schools are held virtually.

“It is possible to achieve 8% economic growth”

During his visit to Qom, President Raisi also held talks with grand Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi.

The president said his government is working round the clock to resolve the people’s livelihood problems, saying it is possible to increase economic growth to eight percent annually.

Raisi added that putting an end to budget deficit in the current Iranian year is one of his government’s concerns. The current Iranian year ends on March 20,2022.

He said unlike the previous administrations, his government does not lend from the central bank in

the face of budget deficits.

The government is fighting on two fronts: nullifying and lifting sanctions.

For his part, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi pointed to the status of Qom in the Islamic world, saying since the Qom belongs to the “entire world of Islamic” as it hosts the shrine of Hazrat Masumeh (SA), Jamkaran Mosque, the Seminary and therefore millions of travels are made to city annually it is necessary to build an airport in the vicinity of the city.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi pointed to high inflation in the country, suggesting that this problem should be resolved principally.

“Government trying to untie the knot”

Also in a meeting with Ayatollah Alavi Gorgani, Raisi said people should not be worried about economic problems because the government is seeking to untie the Gordian knot.

The president went on to say that there are certain shortcomings in the areas of economy that can be resolved through cooperation by all state bodies.

President Raisi also held separate talks with Grand Ayatollah Ja’far Sobhani, Hossein Norui Hamedani. The main focus of talks centered around economic issues, including people’s livelihood, foreign relations, and cultural issues.

U.S. bears definitive international responsibility for attack on Gen. Soleimani: Iran

From Page 1 ► in the war against terrorist groups, including Daesh (ISIL/ISIS).

The attack by the U.S. also led to the martyrdom of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units, along with several others.

The terrorist attack took place while Gen. Soleimani was on an official visit to the Iraqi capital.

What follows is the text of the statement from the Iranian Foreign Ministry:

On the eve of the second anniversary of the martyrdom of the valiant General of Islam, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran commemorates this immortal martyr who spent his blessed life in sincere service to Iran, Islam and peace and security.

Martyr General Soleimani invariably played a role in line with the principled policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran to help establish peace and stability at the regional and international levels, and adopted various measures and devoted a great deal of efforts to combat international terrorism and growing terrorist outfits across the region.

For this reason, he has rightly and proudly been titled the Hero of the Fight against Terrorism and the General of Peace. Despite this role and position, the U.S. government, through applying double standards and false claims like that of countering terrorism, in a criminal act that violates the rules and principles of international law, planned and carried out a terrorist attack against Martyr General Soleimani as one of the highest-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the territory of Iraq as the host country.

The move by then U.S. officials to publicly assassinate the International Counter Terrorism Hero is in itself a message of support for terrorist groups that explicitly expose the lies of counter-terrorism claimants.

The martyrdom of General Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes



and their great companions, not only did not diminish the capacity of the Axis of Resistance, but on the one hand imbued the domestic environment of Iran with national cohesion and unity, and on the other hand further highlighted the strategy and discourse of the Resistance.

In response to this assassination, the prompt and effective action of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran in slapping the American troops stationed at the Ain al-Assad base in Iraq in the face, along with the spiritual effects of the blood of Iranian and Iraqi martyrs, upset the equations and brought about the failure of U.S. regional strategy. The U.S. fleeing from Afghanistan, the beginning of the process of withdrawal from Iraq and the change in the strategy of the U.S. military presence in the geostrategic region of Persian Gulf showcase a small part of such impacts and consequences.

Undoubtedly, the criminal act of the United States in martyring General Soleimani is a clear manifestation of a "terrorist attack" that was orchestrated and carried out in an organized manner by the then U.S. government for which the White House is now responsible.

According to international and legal standards, the U.S. government bears "definitive

international responsibility" for this crime. In this context, all the agents, instigators, contributors and perpetrators of this terrorist crime are responsible. Therefore, in cooperation with other agencies and the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has adopted a number of measures from the very beginning based on the legal principle of "combating the impunity of criminals" to hold such individuals and entities accountable before the courts and will continue on this path until the final result is achieved.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken numerous measures with the aim of following up the issue at all domestic, bilateral, regional and international levels, the reports of which have been presented to the great Nation of Iran at various points to the extent possible. This pursuit of this path will continue vigorously and comprehensively.

These measures have been taken in the political, legal, international and public diplomacy dimensions. In this regard, in the foreign and international arena, special efforts were made to prevent the distortion of truth by the United States and its manipulation of the situation. The moral, political, and legal condemnation expressed towards the U.S. government

on an international level for committing this crime has been one of outcomes of such efforts.

In following up this issue, it is necessary to point to the continuation of endeavors by the Joint Judicial Committee between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always taken effective and active measures to establish peace and stability in the region. Now, according to the approaches of the 13th government, which reaches out to the neighbors of the Islamic Republic of Iran for extensive and stable engagement and cooperation, the groundwork for the development and strengthening of relations among the countries of the region is laid more firmly than before.

The government and people of Iran consider themselves to be on the side of the governments and nations of the region and have not and will not spare any assistance to maintain territorial integrity and establish lasting stability and security, and development and prosperity among the countries of the region and the Islamic world.

In the end, together with all Iranians in the motherland and all over the world, we pay tribute to the lofty spirit of the General of Peace and Security, Haj Qassem Soleimani.

He also reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's solidarity with as well as its unwavering and iron-clad support for the Arab Republic of Syria in this regard.

On December 26, Israeli regime prime minister Naftali Bennett's cabinet voted in favor of a plan that aims to build 7,300 settler homes in Golan over a five-year period. The decision was taken during the cabinet meeting in Golan.

It aims to attract roughly 23,000 new Zionist settlers to the area occupied during the Six Day War in 1967.

Israel annexed the territory on December 14, 1981, in a move not recognized by the international community.

Daesh, he stated.

The president also said security of Afghanistan and Iran are interlinked. The two neighbors have great affinities and their fates are interconnected, he remarked.

Raisi renewed Iran's call for the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan that would represent all Afghan groups and ethnicities and would ensure clam for the entire Afghan citizens.

He also warned against attempts to threaten peace and security in Afghanistan, saying the attacks on mosques and killing of Muslims resemble the measures by the Zionists.

In comments in October, the Iranian president condemned the



number of migrant Zionists in the Occupied Golan Heights cannot change this reality, he said, adding Zionist settlers should understand that they cannot remain in occupied territories forever, the Foreign Ministry's website reported.

upper hand and the initiative," Tasnim quoted the president as saying.

Paying tribute to late Iranian commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and other martyrs for devoting their lives to security of the region, the president said the enemy has not backed off and transferred Daesh terrorists from Syria to Afghanistan.

Denouncing Daesh as a group created by the U.S. with the purpose of destabilizing the entire region, the president said such the group still poses a great threat to Afghanistan.

What guaranteed security in the region was the fortitude that the young, Muslim and firm believers displayed in the face of

‘U.S. weaker than ever,’ says Iranian president

TEHRAN – President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi of Iran on Thursday said the axis of resistance, including and Hezbollah forces, has gained the "upper hand" in the region, saying the U.S., whose power is on the wane, has transferred Daesh (ISIL or ISIS) terrorists from Syria to Afghanistan.

In a meeting with the families of Iranian martyrs in the shrine city of Qom on Thursday night, Raisi also said the American forces have been completely evicted from Afghanistan and the remaining of their forces are being driven out from Iraq and Syria.

"Today, the Americans are weaker than ever. In the region, Hezbollah forces and the (resistance axis) combatants, including Palestinians, have the

SPORTS

2022 FIFA World Cup draw date announced

TEHRAN – The 2022 FIFA World Cup tournament draw will be held on April 1.

The draw ceremony will take place in Doha, Qatar.

Iran have almost qualified for the prestigious competition for the sixth time.

Iran will host Iraq on January 27 in Tehran.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup will be held in Qatar from Nov. 21 to Dec. 18 next year.

Heidarirad pens extension with HC Dinamo Bucuresti

TEHRAN – Saeid Heidarirad from Iran extended his contract with Romanian handball team HC Dinamo Bucuresti.

He has penned a two-year deal.

Heidarirad was chosen as the best goalkeeper of the Romanian Handball League in the 2019-20 season.

The 30-year-old player is a member of the Iran national handball team.

His countryman Alireza Mousavi also plays in Dinamo Bucuresti.

Forouzan Soleymani takes charge of Iran's women's futsal

TEHRAN – Forouzan Soleymani was named the new head coach of Iran's women's futsal team.

Under her tutelage, Iran claimed the title of the 2015 AFC Women's Futsal Championship in Malaysia.

Iran football federation parted company with Soleymani after the 2015 competition but she has returned to the National Team once again.

Soleymani will prepare the Iranian team for the 2022 AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup.

Iran handball defeat Oman in friendly match

TEHRAN – Iran handball national team defeated Oman in a friendly match.

Iran beat Oman 30-19 in the warm-up, held in Tehran's Handball Hall.

The match was held as part of preparation for the 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship.

Iran have been drawn in Group B along with Saudi Arabia, Australia and India.

The Championship will be held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia from Jan. 18 to 31.

2021 year in review for Iran sports

From Page 1 ► Iran football team are determined to make splash in Doha, qualifying for the knockout stage for the first time ever.

Iranian woman weightlifter Jamali makes history

Yekta Jamali won Iran's first-ever medal in the weightlifting championships.

She won a bronze medal in the 87kg weight class at the 2021 IWF Junior World Weightlifting Championships held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in May.

Jamali lifted the 92kg in snatch and 116kg in clean and jerk. She won the bronze medal with a total of 208.

Alireza Yousefi also registered a new record in the 2021 World Weightlifting Championships. The 18-year-old weightlifter made 238kg in the clean and jerk in the +109kg and bettered the world junior record by one kilogram set by his compatriot Ali Davoudi in the 2019 Asian Weightlifting Championships in Ningbo, China.

Iran at 2020 Olympic Games

The Iranian delegation finished in 27th place in the Games, winning three gold, two silver and two bronze medals.

Shooter Javad Foroughi made history in Tokyo, winning Iran's first-ever gold medal in history of Olympics. The 41-year-old shooter also became the oldest Iranian athlete to win an Olympic medal.

Iran had finished in 25th spot in Rio 2016.

Iran at 2020 Paralympic Games

Iran came 13th in the 2020 Paralympic Games, winning 12 gold medals, 11 silver medals and one bronze.

Iran sent 62 athletes to Tokyo and almost one-third of the Para athletes won medals in Tokyo.

Zahra Nemati stole the show in the Games, winning third consecutive Paralympic title.

Iran win 2021 Asian Volleyball Championship title

The Iranian national volleyball team trounced Japan in straight sets to claim the title of the 2021 Asian Men's Volleyball Championship held in Tokyo in September.

After the poor performance in the 2020 Olympic Games, Iran participated in the Asian championship with their young players. The superstars like Saeid Marouf, Mohammad Mousavi, Amir Ghafour and Mehdi Marandi were not invited to the National Team.

Iran advance to AFC Women's Asian Cup for the first time

Iran pulled off a stunning upset to qualify for their first ever AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Maryam Irandoost's girls defeated Jordan 4-2 on penalties after a goalless draw to book their place in India.

Iran have been drawn in Group A along with India, eight-time winner China and Chinese Taipei.

Iran's poor result at 2021 Futsal World Cup

Iran's national futsal team failed to reach the semifinals of the 2021 FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Iran suffered a 3-2 loss against Kazakhstan at the Kaunas Arena in Lithuania in September.

The Persians had won a bronze medal in the previous edition in Colombia.

Boxer Shahbakhsh steals the show in the World

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

He earned a bronze medal in the 60kg weight class in the 2021 AIBA Men's World Boxing Championships.

Iran at 2021 World Wrestling Championships

Iran's freestyle team finished in third place in the 2021 World Wrestling Championships held in Oslo, Norway in October.

The Iranian freestylers won three gold and three silver medals as well as a bronze medal and finished in third place with 162 points in team ranking.

Iran's Greco-Roman team also became runners-up in the championships with 146 points.

The Greco-Roman wrestlers won four gold and two bronze medals in Oslo.

Hassan Yazdani takes revenge on David Taylor

Yazdani defeated his American rival David Taylor 6-2 in the final bout of 86kg in the 2021 World Wrestling Championships.

Yazdani had lost to Taylor in the 2020 Olympic Games.

Yazdani, nicknamed the Greatest, was ahead 3-2 with only 18 seconds left in the match before Taylor scored the winning takedown.

In Oslo, he defeated his American rival David Taylor 6-2 in the final.

Iran top 2021 Asian Youth Para Games medal tally

Iran finished in the first place in the 4th Asian Youth Para Games in Manama, Bahrain in December.

High octave encounters to flurry of emotions and historic first ever medals, the Games lived up to its expectations where most participating nations ended up winning at least a medal with Iran leading from the front on top of the medals table with 122 medals including 44 gold.

Iran at IHF Women's Handball World for very first time

Iran finished in 31st place in the 2021 IHF Women's Handball World Championship.

It was for the first time the Iranian women team participate in the world championships.

Nakhchivan-Mashhad passenger train to restart operation



Iran's Consul General in Nakhchivan Seyed Ahmad Hosseini (1st R) meets Director of Nakhchivan Railways LLC Mahir Aliyev (2nd L)

TEHRAN – Iran's Consul General in Nakhchivan Seyed Ahmad Hosseini met with Director of Nakhchivan Railways LLC Mahir Aliyev to discuss rail cooperation and the resumption of the Nakhchivan-Mashhad passenger train line, IRNA reported.

In this meeting, the Nakhjavani side pointed out that all the necessary preparations have been made for

restarting the routine operation of the Nakhchivan-Mashhad passenger train, and the line could be launched as soon as a final agreement is reached by the railway authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Hosseini for his part announced Tehran's readiness to take all necessary measures in this regard.

Nakhchivan-Mashhad passenger train was initiated two years ago but halted shortly after due to unknown reasons.

The train from Nakhchivan traveled to Iran's northwestern city of Tabriz through Jolfa and thereon to Tehran and finally Mashhad.

The primary deal for the Nakhchivan-Tabriz-Mashhad railroad project had been inked between Iran and Azerbaijan Republic in February 2016.

President Raisi visits Qom Province

From page 1 ▶ As reported, during the visit President Raisi met with provincial officials and discussed the province's problems in various areas including employment, water, housing, environment and urban issues.

Upon arrival, the president referred to the situation of semi-finished projects in Qom province, saying: "Finishing semi-finished projects is a priority. the province's airport and other semi-finished projects must be completed. We have considered a plan to solve the problem of Qom airport in a short time."

He also mentioned the government's plans to increase housing capacity in the province, noting that in this regard a comprehensive program has been prepared.

Emphasizing the need to compensate for the backlogs, the President said: "As we move forward, the hopes for a better future increase and we can solve all the problems through interaction and co-operation."

Raisi stated that research centers can be the think tanks



of the government, adding that change in the country should be a science-based, a change that is based on knowledge is free of subjective ideas and can solve the country's problems.

"The seventh national development plan of the country is being developed using previous development plans, and the seminary can play an important role in this regard," he stressed.

During the visit to the province, President Raisi and his ministers also attended a meeting of the administrative council of this province.

He also mentioned the Tehran-Qom-Isfahan high-speed train project and said: "The contract for this project, which is a new work in the country, has been finalized with a foreign investor, amounting to four million yuan."

Qasemi had previously inaugurated the project for the construction of 41,500 affordable housing units under the framework of the National Housing Action Plan in Qom Province.

Further in the meeting, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi Amin announced the allocation of 600 billion rials (about \$20.2 million) for the improvement of the infrastructure of industrial parks as well as 30 trillion rials (about \$101 million) for the completion of industrial projects in Qom province.

He also noted that seven major banks are going to sign memorandums of understanding with the Industry Ministry in the next week to provide working capital for the provinces' production units.

PETZONE eyes boosting added-value in petchem industry

TEHRAN – Managing Director of Petrochemical Special Economic Zone (PETZONE) in southwestern Iran has said this zone is pushing to prevent crude oil sales to increase added-value of oil products, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a ceremony on the occasion of the National Petrochemical Industry Day on Thursday, Omid Shahidi-Nia said: "Reducing crude oil sales is one of the country's serious policies, and the organization (PETZONE) is taking the necessary measures to participate in creating a value-added chain in the country's oil sector."

Creating added value in hydrocarbon resources and reducing crude sales is a serious concern, and with the flourishing of the petrochemical industry this goal is getting closer to being realized, Shahidi-Nia added.

He put the feedstock consumed by the petrochemical industry at about 1.2 million barrels of crude oil equivalent, saying that the figure is projected to reach approximately two million by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (begins in March 2025).

The official further stated that one of the ways for the development of the pet-



rochemical industry is financing projects through cooperation and interaction with banks, saying: "In this regard, Tejarat Bank

has had significant cooperation with the Petrochemical Special Economic Zone Organization."

Expanding over 2,850 hectares of land, Petrochemical Special Economic Zone is located on the northern coast of the Persian Gulf in the city of Mahshahr, Imam Khomeini Port, southwest of Iran.

Due to its natural and geographical location, as well as the legal facilities that it offers, this Zone has been created to further develop the industry and trade of petrochemicals. By attracting new technologies and generating employment op-

portunities, the Zone also provides economic and social benefits.

From the geographical point of view, the Zone has access to the international waters through Imam Khomeini Port and Khor Mosa Bay. It's also connected to Turkey and Central Asian countries via the national railway network.

This region, which is a part of Khuzestan province, plays a strategic role in Iran's oil and gas industry. Access to oil and gas resources further facilitates the supply of raw materials and feed to industrial units in the Zone.

Over 18.6m tons of crude steel produced in 8 months

TEHRAN- Iran produced 18.648 million tons of crude steel in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), according to the data released by Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry.

The country's eight-month crude steel output indicates a 3.1-percent drop as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Iran is planning to produce 32 million tons of steel in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 2022) to register a 27.7-percent rise compared to the figure for the previous year.

Based on the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry data, Iranian steel companies managed to pro-

duce 28.374 million tons of steel in the previous Iranian calendar year.

The ministry's programs for the current year, which is called the year of "Production, Support and Eliminating Obstacles", have been classified in seven main axes under which 40 plans have been defined.

Boosting domestic production, managing imports and developing the export of non-oil commodities, developing mines and mineral industries with special emphasis on the mining roadmap, developing technology and knowledge-based products, managing market and organizing trade logistics, improving the country's business environment, and eliminating barriers ahead of

the production process, as well as providing financial resources and developing investment are some of the ministry's major plans for the current year.

Meanwhile, as previously reported, Iran exported over 4.937 million tons of steel during the first eight months of the current year, which was 22 percent more than the figure of the same period of time in the past year.

Khuzestan Steel Company posted the best performance through exporting 1.117 million tons of steel in the eight-month period, followed by Mobarakeh Steel Company and Esfahan Steel Company by exporting 814,724 tons and 766,630 tons, respectively.

5,000 mining units inactive throughout country

TEHRAN – There are 11,800 mining units in the country, of which just 6,800 units are active and the rest are inactive, an official with Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry announced.

Reza Mohtashami-Pour, the deputy minister for mines and mineral processing, said more than 60 to 70 percent of the reasons for the inactivity of some mining units in the country are the existence of local opponents or a system that has led to the inability of the investor to operate.

Exploration barriers must be removed in the regions in order

to make good use of the country's mineral capacity, the official further emphasized.

As announced by the director of Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's program for reviving and developing small mines, 392 idle mines have been revived across the country during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21).

Reza Azimi said that the total number of revived mines has reached 791 since the launch of the program in late March 2019 until December 21, 2021.

From the beginning of this year to the end of the Iranian calendar month of Azar (December 21), clinical operations were conducted on 415 mines in collaboration with provincial working groups, and necessary measures were taken which include the removal of administrative barriers, providing investment, and resolving local conflicts, Azimi stated.

According to the official, reviving the mentioned mines have created potential jobs for 3,104 people and the production capacity of the mines has also increased by 18,000 tons.

TSE's main index rises 2.7% in a week

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 38,000 points (2.7 percent) to 1.397 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Mobar-

akeh Steel Company, Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company, Saipa Company, Social Security Investment Company, National Copper Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.



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U.S. never tolerates competition in arms sale in West Asia market: military analyst

From page 1 ► Following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate the missile cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China? Do you think that this development will change the balance of power in the region?

So far, it has not been proven that there is missile cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China. There is media hype, but none of these reports were confirmed by any side; neither from the Saudi side nor from the Chinese side.

Even what the media circulated did not refer to an official source that could confirm it. Therefore, the issue of Chinese-Saudi cooperation in the production of ballistic missiles remains a matter of hypothetical debates and its validity is not definitively confirmed.

How will Israel react to this kind of cooperation? Do you expect Israel would give in to an Arab state with a deterrent potential, even if it is an ally?

In principle, Israel does not accept any of its friends or enemies in the region possess such a force that it sees as a “breaker of balance.”

Within this framework, we can evaluate the possession of advanced aircraft or missiles by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or other states. Israel believes that it is in its interest to turn a blind eye on some cases in order to ramp up the normalization process as a strategic objective, especial-



ly since Mohammed bin Salman pledges making a lot of concessions when he meets them.

Therefore, in principle, Israel refuses, but tactically and as a political maneuver, Israel can accept the idea of starting a missile project but eventually it will intervene to abort it.

Do you think America will give in to purchase of arms by the Chinese to Persian Gulf Arab states?

America does not accept at all any country jostling it in the arms market of West Asia, regardless of the customer or supplier.

Therefore, I think that if Saudi Arabia enters this path and wants to establish an arms relationship with China, it would be no more than a political maneuver and the Biden administration

would put a curb on it.

But we know that America sees Saudi Arabia as its colony and as a milk cow, and will not accept to share it with other powers, whether China or Russia or any other party, and even sometimes it cannot tolerate a European presence in Saudi Arabia for armaments.

Do you think that Saudi Arabia has the necessary infrastructure and capabilities to produce ballistic missiles domestically just like Iran?

Saudi Arabia does not have the required or capabilities necessary to produce ballistic missiles, but if we suppose that the cooperation is signed, China will take over the project in its entirety, including the infrastructure.

The Chinese experts remain

the ones who control the project and they advance the project from the initial designing and construction until its final result.

But until the moment, as I mentioned to you, I do not think that the project has taken effect. I doubt that China has already provided Saudi Arabia with the capabilities of building ballistic missiles or America has allowed Saudi Arabia to be engaged in such a cooperation with China. Therefore, the issue remains a matter of hypotheses and nothing else.

Do you think that Saudi Arabia is being drawn into producing or possessing nuclear weapons?

It is impossible for Israel, America or Europe to allow Saudi Arabia or any Arab country to possess nuclear weapons.

But this or that country may be tempted by Western powers to start establishing a nuclear program for civilian purposes in order to blackmail them into paying more money. As for entering the nuclear club, this is absolutely forbidden to anyone who is not a European or American or one of the five countries that possess nuclear power.

Therefore I absolutely rule out that Saudi Arabia will be drawn into the production of nuclear weapons, firstly, because it does not possess the necessary capabilities, and secondly, because the international stakeholders will not allow it to do so.

“Unjust suppression” of Palestinian social media content

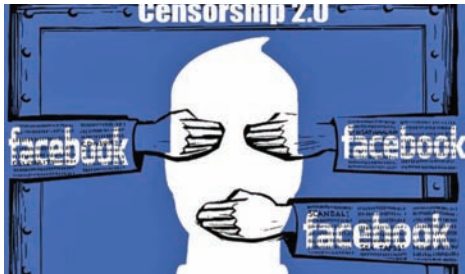
From page 1 ► In both cases, Facebook claimed it removed the footage because the posts “violated the platform’s standards.” A spokesperson for Facebook’s parent company Meta claims its policies “were designed to give everyone a voice while keeping them safe on our apps.” The spokesperson also claims “we apply these policies to everyone equally, regardless of who is posting.”

However, critics say Facebook has allowed very identical and similar posts by Israeli reporters to stay active on their accounts. For years now, accusations of pro-Israeli bias at Facebook have mounted and were renewed in October when the international advocacy organization Human Rights Watch, said the media giant had “suppressed content posted by Palestinians and their supporters speaking out about human rights issues in Israel and Palestine.”

Palestinian reporters have cited numerous cases they say are clearly daylight censorship. One popular online news outlet, Maydan Quds News from its social media department, may even have to fire reporters after its main Facebook page with 1.2 million followers was deleted, a source who requested anonymity said.

The Meta spokesperson says it has “a dedicated team, which includes Arabic and Hebrew speakers, who are focused on keeping our community safe by making sure we’re removing harmful content.” It also alleges to be striving to address “any enforcement errors as quickly as possible so people can keep sharing what matters to them.”

But in May during an eleven-day battle between resistance factions in the Besieged Gaza



Strip and Israeli regime forces, Facebook had acknowledged widescale deletion of Palestinian posts, claiming that it was down to a technical issue that it sought to fix.

According to the Palestinian social media monitoring center Sada Social, a record number of 600 Palestinian accounts or pro-Palestinian Facebook posts were restricted or deleted this year. The center helped launch a social media campaign called “Facebook Censors Jerusalem.”

A Jerusalem-based journalist, Rama Youssef, who volunteered for Sada Social, says Facebook models posts and accounts to an Israeli point of view and has “double standards.”

The Arab Center Washington DC think-tank says the Israeli authorities also push to censor “tens of thousands of posts and accounts” that support a Palestinian point of view. Facebook has refused to answer questions from the media about such requests from Israeli officials.

Media expert Iyad al-Rifai who works for Sada Social says every now and again he meets with Facebook representatives to ask for more trans-

parency. He says the site appears to be targeting the word “shahid”, the Islamic name for martyr, which Palestinians frequently use to describe people murdered by Israeli forces, including those who carry out retaliatory attacks.

Rifai says that Facebook insisted it is bound by American standards which consider “attackers to be terrorists”, not martyrs to a political cause.

But he said censoring the term wholesale ignores the wider important context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Again, Facebook has refused to respond to a question about its policies regarding the use of the word “shahid.”

It claims that it reviews posts according to its own policies, as well as “local laws and international human rights standards.” Rifai said he was concerned that deleting accounts might discourage Palestinians from “engaging with pivotal issues” for fear of losing “their digital history and presence.”

He says he had received from Facebook “promises to improve the working mechanisms of the algorithms so as to differentiate between journalistic content and ordinary content”, but he, along with many other Palestinian activists, believe they offer “temporary rather than radical solutions.”

The increasing censorship and suppression of Palestinian voices led to the launching of a new open-source online platform last month focusing on digital rights violations and censorship by social media firms against Palestinians as well as Palestine-related content.

Highlighting the importance of the measure, the Arab Center for Social Media Development says the platform will allow for more detailed and expert documentation of violations, and rights groups to better document how social media companies handle posts, and accounts that are being singled out.

Saudi, Israeli foreign ministers attend virtual meeting hosted by U.S.

TEHRAN - Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid have participated in a virtual meeting of top diplomats from around the world, hosted by the US State Department.

Two officials familiar with the matter confirmed to English-language online newspaper The Times of Israel that the meeting took place on December 21.

Both Lapid and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued statements afterward, but neither mentioned the presence of Farhan on the Zoom call.

The State Department said Blinken “met virtually with several foreign ministers and representatives of regional organizations”, but did not mention with whom he met.

However, Chinese Ambassador

to the US Qin Gang posted a screenshot of the virtual meeting on Twitter, which showed Prince Faisal and Lapid in attendance, along with a host of other diplomats.

Even though Israel and Saudi Arabia do not have formal diplomatic relations, Riyadh has taken a number of steps in recent years toward normalizing relations with the Tel Aviv regime.

Saudi’s authorities were said to have given a behind-the-scenes green light to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) forging ties with Israel last year, and have since allowed Israeli aircraft to use the kingdom’s airspace for direct flights to Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Riyadh says it would not normalize relations with Tel Aviv outside of the framework of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which calls



for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The United States has raised the issue of normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel in recent years, particularly during the previous administration of former president Donald Trump, which brokered normalization deals between the Tel Aviv regime, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan.

Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law and a senior adviser to the former president, wrote in March that Saudi Arabia-Israel normal-

ization was “in sight”.

According to a report by American news website Axios, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan brought up the idea of Saudi Arabia normalizing ties with Israel during a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in September.

The crown prince did not completely reject the proposal, but rather presented US officials with a list of steps, including an improvement in bilateral US-Saudi relations, before such an agreement could move forward.

Saudi foreign minister alleged in an interview with CNN in April that a normalization deal with Israel would be “extremely helpful” and would bring “tremendous benefits” to the Middle East.

(Source: Press TV)

US Muslim community shaken by ‘spying’ incidents



TEHRAN - A Muslim-American advocacy group says it has uncovered a ‘mole’ in the leadership of one of its state branches as well as a ‘spy’ at a US mosque that passed information to an “anti-Muslim group.”

The two shocking incidents were reported earlier this month by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), sparking fresh concerns over spying in the American Muslim community.

“Community members were shocked and saddened to learn about this specific situation, but a lot of people were also not surprised that an anti-Muslim hate group was targeting CAIR and spying this way,” Whitney Siddiqi, community affairs director at CAIR-Ohio, was quoted as saying by Aljazeera.

The CAIR chapter in Ohio on December 15 said it had fired Romin Iqbal, its executive and legal director in the Columbus-Cincinnati area, for “egregious ethical and professional violations.”

He was accused by the organization of passing confidential information to the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), a group that the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a civil rights organization that tracks hate groups in the US, has said was founded by an “anti-Muslim activist.”

A forensic investigation by a third-party expert found “conclusive evidence that Iqbal had spent years secretly recording CAIR network meetings and passing confidential information regarding CAIR’s national advocacy work to a known anti-Muslim hate group,” CAIR-Ohio said then.

In a separate incident, CAIR’s office in Washington on December 21 said a volunteer at a US mosque had revealed that he was

paid by Steven Emerson, IPT’s executive director, to leak information on the community.

“Community update: a second IPT ‘spy’ has voluntarily come forward, confessed and agreed to cooperate with us. He was not part of CAIR. He was an active volunteer in a large mosque who was invited to national community meetings & events,” CAIR said in a Twitter thread last week.

“We are gathering and vetting additional information from this individual. We have also been directly alerting Muslim leaders and organizations he targeted. We will publicly release his name and additional information after we finish this process, God willing,” it added.

Siddiqi was quoted as saying by Aljazeera that one of the aims of the spying is to create “fear and distrust in our own communities”, while adding that CAIR is moving forward “with transparency” in its fight against the menace of Islamophobia.

Muslim Americans have faced increased surveillance and discriminatory policies since the events of 9/11, with hate crimes and spying activities seeing an alarming surge in recent years, mostly with the active involvement of law enforcement authorities.

Between 2002 and 2014, the New York Police Department assigned an entire unit to spy on the city’s Muslim population.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), police mapped out where Muslim New Yorkers lived, recruited informants from within the Muslim community, and placed mosques under surveillance.

The trend has only accelerated under the present US administration headed by Joe Biden.

Convicted Khashoggi killers staying “in seven-star accommodation”

TEHRAN - According to sources connected to senior members of the Saudi intelligence apparatus who spoke to the Guardian on the condition of anonymity, at least three members of the Saudi hit squad who were sentenced before a Saudi court (in a trial broadly condemned as a sham), of murdering Jamal Khashoggi are living and working “in seven-star accommodation” inside a government-run security compound in Riyadh.

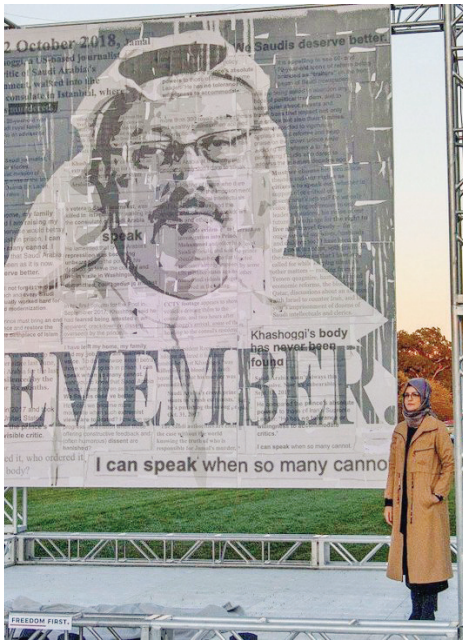
According to the report, the assassins are believed to be staying in villas and buildings run by Saudi Arabia’s State Security agency and not its infamous prisons. Family members are reportedly allowed to visit the men, and the “seven-star” housing units include gyms and offices.

If they are enjoying such freedom of movement, then it will be starkly at odds with assurances provided by the Saudis that the perpetrators are facing tough punishment.

Salah al-Tubaigy, the forensic expert who dismembered Khashoggi, was seen inside the compound. Mustafa al-Madani, the man who posed as Khashoggi’s body double, and Mansour Abahussein, the lead operative, were also spotted in sightings between 2019 and 2020.

Meanwhile, over the last two years, witnesses have been reported to have seen caterers and gardeners visiting the men.

Khashoggi was a Saudi-born U.S. resident and a reporter who was a frequent critic of Saudi Crown Mohamad Bin Salman. He was murdered and dismembered at the Saudi



consulate in Istanbul three years ago by a team of men linked to the crown prince.

A Turkish court is currently trying 26 Saudi nationals connected to the murder in absentia, with the next trial date set for July 8.

Government officials in Turkey, along with UN officials and the CIA, backed up the now widely believe allegations that Khashoggi’s body was dismembered with a bone saw.

His body has never been found.

Thousands of daffodils embellish Imam Reza (AS) shrine



From page 1 ► Mashhad, the provincial capital, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city. Its raison d'être and main sight is the striking massive shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.

Dozens of five-star hotels and hostels are dotted across Mashhad. The city has also the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it also embraces a variety of cultural and historical sites that are generally crowded. The metropolis is also a good place to buy top handwoven

Fire inflicts minor damage to historical café downtown Tehran

TEHRAN – A Wednesday fire that broke out in Aibeta Café has caused minor damage to the historical shop, which is located on Lalehzar Street in downtown Tehran.

“Due to the timely arrival of firefighters, the fire at the historical Aibeta Café was brought under control,” Tehran's deputy tourism chief Morteza Adibzadeh said on Friday.

Fortunately, the fire caused no serious damage to the historical monument, although further evaluation will be made by experts, the official added.

The building's wooden roof caught fire as it was close to the main source of fire; however, the firefighting efforts were carried out without causing any damage to the main structure, he noted.

The owners and the municipality should join hands to refrain from such incidents by restoring, protecting, and ensuring the safety of the historical buildings on Lalehzar Street, he explained.

located in Lalehzar St. in downtown Tehran, Aibeta Café is named after its original owner, a Russian woman who opened the café in 1967.

Soon the cafe was the meeting place for many artists and intellectuals of the time, such as Malek ush'Shoh Bahar.

The café was registered on the national heritage list in 2006.

Lalehzar, which was known as Tehran Broadway during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, was home to 16 cinema halls and six

rugs and carpets, and it's a staging post for travel to Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and little-touristic Khorasan regions.

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

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



theater centers as well as modern shops, cafes, and restaurants.

The aesthetic appreciation of the street was a combination of Western architecture with national symbols and elements. There are still elements of Iranian and western architecture in the façades of buildings and signs.

Nassereddin Shah Qajar ordered the construction of Lalehzar St. after the Iranian monarch paid a formal visit to Europe in 1873.

During his trip to Paris, Nassereddin Shah received a warm welcome in a special ceremony at Champs-Élysées Avenue. It had such a profound impact on the Iranian king that he decided to build a similar street in the capital as soon as he returned home.

The existence of cinema halls and theater centers turned the street into a modern hub for cultural activities. It was also home to the Grand Hotel, the first Iranian modern hotel and one of the most important places of its time.

Achaemenid column bases discovered in farm southern Iran

TEHRAN – Two Achaemenid column bases have accidentally been discovered in a ranch in southern Iran while farmers were preparing the ground for planting.

“Farmers encountered two column bases while plowing, according to a report received from a resident of a southern village near the city of Baft [in Kerman province],” the deputy provincial tourism chief said on Thursday.

A team of experts from Kerman's cultural heritage department was immediately dispatched to the village, Mojtaba Sahfiei added.

Their initial field research suggests that the agricultural land may lie on the ruins of an



ancient site, the official added:

“The two white-colored stone objects are estimated to date back to the Achaemenid period... they are 40 cm in height and 50 cm in diameter.”

The official noted the discovery is of high importance when it comes to architectural studies in Baft.

“The existence of these two column bases hint the active presence of the Achaemenids in the city of Baft, which is of special importance in archaeological studies.”

“Currently, the two objects are being kept in a suitable place till they are transferred to the Kerman Museum in the near

future.”

The column bases are similar to those being kept in Persepolis and its surrounding royal sites, which are situated northeast of Shiraz in Fars province.

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites. Persepolis was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

Craftspeople provided with hundreds of jobs in Ardabil

TEHRAN – The handicrafts sector has generated hundreds of job opportunities in the northwestern Ardabil province during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), a local tourism official has announced.

“A total of 670 jobs have been created for the crafters across the province during the first nine months of the year,” Tohid Delavar Qavam said on Friday.

Recently, 18 high-quality works by artisans in the province were awarded the National Seal of Excellence, which illustrates the expertise and power of the province's artisans in this sector, the official added.

Back in July, local officials announced that some 835 jobs are expected to be created in Ardabil by several investments in tourism-related projects, which are estimated to get off the ground by the end of the current Iranian year 1400 (ends in March 2022).

Back in January, the provincial tourism chief, Nader Fallahi, announced that more than 150 tourism-related projects are underway across Ardebil province. The mentioned projects will prepare the province's tourism sector for the post-coronavirus era when the number of

tourists and travelers is expected to rise magnificently, the official added.

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.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during the



mentioned months in comparison to the same period last a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1398. Of the figure, some \$190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Pakistan resumes flights to Mashhad after five-year hiatus

TEHRAN – Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed direct flights to Iran's Mashhad, after a five-year gap

to develop people-to-people contacts, local media reported on Thursday.

The development took place following the serious efforts of the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad to facilitate air travel between the two neighboring

countries and to boost the tourism industry.

Earlier this month, Chief Executive of PIA Air Marshal Arshad Malik during a meeting with Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini had announced that the PIA is going to start direct flights from Lahore to Mashhad, Asian News International reported.

Ambassador Hosseini in a tweet had also revealed that Iran and Pakistan had agreed on increasing efforts to promote air cooperation between Iran and Pakistan. In this regard, PIA is going to begin direct flights from Karachi to Mashhad on Jan 1, 2022.

Iran Air operates one weekly flight from Tehran to Karachi and vice versa, and there

are reports that Mahan Iran Airlines will resume flights from Tehran and Mashhad to Lahore.

Mashhad is Iran's holiest and second-largest city. Its raison d'être is the striking shrine complex of the eighth Shia Imam (AS) that is encircled by dozens of five-star hotels and many other accommodation centers.

Ecotourism in Iran: opportunities and challenges

(Part 1/2)

TEHRAN – Ecotourism is all about sustainable travel to natural areas with keeping an eye on the conservation of the environment, the well-being of the local people, and the involvement of education.

Ecotourism in Iran is of high versatility as the country is home to many forests, mountainous, deserts, and aquatic ecosystems, coastal-marine areas, wetlands, rivers, and the diversity of plant and animal species.

Below are edited excerpts from a full article by Iranian researchers Seyed Amir Mahmoud Mojabi Sahand Dabiri:

Forest ecosystems

The area of Iran's forests is 14.3 million hectares, which covers 8.8% of the total area of the country. Although the area of forests in Iran is smaller than many countries and Iran is considered poor in terms of forests, but there are very valuable forests in Iran, such as Hyrcanian forests, Arasbaran forests, Zagros forests, and forests. Mangroves (mangroves).

For example, the dense and lush Hyrcanian forests, which are located in a narrow strip on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, date back to the third geological period.

These forests are among the oldest forests in the world and are one of the most valuable forests in Iran and the world (currently a World Heritage Site) that can play an important role in tourism development.

Also, natural forest parks such as Si Sangan, Royan, Saravan, Gisum, Gharg and Deland are the main centers of tourist attraction.

One of the most famous and pristine forest promenades in the country is “Shahrud Cloud Forest”. Currently, the uncontrolled harvesting of these forests to produce wood, change their use to agricultural lands or turn them into villa towns and build numerous roads will cause their irreparable destruction. Other forests in the country that have a high ecotourism value include western oak forests in the Zagros region.

Mountainous ecosystems

Mountains cover about 55% of the country. The mountains of Iran are divided into four mountain ranges: North (Talesh, Alborz, and Khorasan), Zagros, Central, and East. Today, the mountains are one of the most sought-after leisure centers. There are about 40 peaks in Iran with a height of more than 4000 meters, of which Damavand Volcano Peak, with a height of 5671 meters, is the



highest peak in Iran. Sabalan peaks (there is a beautiful lake on top of the peak) and Alam Kooch (with a wall of 450 meters) are world-famous.

Desert ecosystem

More than a third of the country is dominated by deserts. Iran's deserts are mainly due to the impact of the subtropical high-pressure belt and are part of the Earth's desert belt. The deserts of Iran are divided into two main parts, the Dasht-e Kavir, and Kavir Lut.

Dunes, clots, steppes, and salt lakes are among the most important amazing phenomena in the desert areas of Iran. It is also one of the lifeless regions and thermal poles of the planet in the Lut Desert. The Lut Desert is the second natural heritage of Iran in the world after the Hyrcanian forests in

UNESCO.

Aquatic ecosystem

Aquatic ecosystems, which consist of marine, coastal-marine, lake, wetland, and river ecosystems, are among the most important ecosystems in the world. Although Iran is one of the water-scarce countries in the world, it has different forms of these ecosystems. So that the Caspian Sea (the largest lake in the world) with about 873 km of coastline in the north of the country and the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman with about 4644 km (including islands) coastline in the south of the country is proof of this claim.

The existence of 25 international wetlands registered in the Ramsar Convention (this convention was proposed by Iran and signed in the city of Ramsar) indicates that Iran has such a valuable ecosystem.

Variety of plant and animal species

The diverse nature and climates of Iran include many plants and animals that are amazing both in number and diversity compared to other parts of the world.

Iranian plants are very diverse due to the size of the country and the prevailing climatic and ecological conditions. Existence of more than 8000 plant species, among

which about 2000 endemic species of Iran, shows how high the plant richness is even though Iran has an arid and semi-arid climate. Among these species, some are more important for attracting tourists, such as Chelcheragh lily (an endemic and unique species in Damash, Gilan), Laleh Vazhgon (in the Zagros region), Shaghayegh plains, lilies, old cypress trees (Cypress 3000). Herzville in Masuleh and 4500-year-old Abarkooch cypress in Yazd), Gaz and hawthorn desert species, and mangrove sea forests are among them.

Iran has about 545 bird species (because Iran is located in three bird migration routes, it has species from Europe, Africa, and Asia), which is more diverse than all European bird species, so Iran is known to be the bird paradise for bird watchers in the world. The golden crow is the only endemic bird in Iran that lives in the deserts of Iran (Desert National Park).

Other Iranian wildlife attractions that can be targeted by nature lovers include Persian zebra, Persian yellow deer, Asian cheetah (rarely seen), Persian squirrel, bottlenose dolphin, humpback dolphin, purpura, turtles Sea urchins, short-nosed crocodiles (gando), and a variety of fish associated with coral reefs.

Over 700 quakes shake Iran in a month

TEHRAN – A total of 701 earthquakes have been recorded across the country over the past calendar month Azar (November 22-December 21), according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Sixteen 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 December 14, with a magnitude of 5.1 near Zahedan in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Statistically, 614 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, and 71 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 to 4 have occurred.

Among the provinces of the country, Khorasan Razavi with 94 earthquakes, Hormozgan with 78 earthquakes, and South Khorasan



with 76 earthquakes recorded the highest number of earthquakes in the country.

Last month, 20 earthquakes jolted Tehran province, the largest of which occurred at a magnitude of 3.3 near Kilan region of Damavand.

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 percent of the victims 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.

Sixteen earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country.

Lake Urmia provided with 32% of water right



TEHRAN – Some 32 percent of the projected water right for Lake Urmia has been provided over the past water year (September 2020 – September 2021), an inflow of 1.1 billion cubic meters of water.

There is currently 2.5 billion cubic meters of water in the lake, Mehran Nazari, head of West Azarbaijan province's department of environment, said, adding that drought and water withdrawal for other purposes have caused the water right not to be fully granted, although there has been a lot of correspondence in this regard.

In recent days, rainfall has increased the water flow in the Lake, so that the water level estimated at 1270.60 cm and 65 cm lower than the recorded

level for the same period last year, he explained.

“We are against dam construction without environmental assessment, as it is one of the major threats to the lake,” Nazari noted.

Lake Urmia shrinks

Lake Urmia level has decreased by about 61 cm compared to last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020-March 2021), Nazari said on October 16.

The surface area of Lake Urmia has been reduced to 1,835 square kilometers. In other words, 1423 square kilometers of the Lake's surface has been reduced, losing 2 billion cubic meters of water, he added.

He went on to say that this environmental problem has increased the risk of salt dust storms in the region, which can have adverse effects on human communities and the lakeshore.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in West Asia. It was home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets, and ducks, and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advan-

tage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in the agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one-tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

Lake's surface area reached up to 2,917 square kilometers, indicating 1,582 square kilometers increase in comparison to 2013 when the Lake Urmia Restoration Program began.

The level of Lake Urmia has reached 1,271 meters, which indicates an increase of over 1.39 meters compared to the lowest volume recorded. However, it still needs 9.5 billion cubic meters of water to reach its ecological level.

The above normal levels of rain came to help conservation measures to preserve Lake Urmia, but, this year, the drought and low rainfall are threatening the lake again.



Omicron rapid test kit produced domestically

From page 1 ► So far, 43 cases of omicrons have been identified in the country and Tehran recorded the highest number of infections.

Iran's health minister Bahram

Einolahi said last week 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.

Einolahi 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.

Natural History Museum identifies more than 500 new species in 2021

Six new dinosaurs, an Indian beetle named after Larry the cat, and dozens of crustaceans critical to the planet's carbon cycle were among 552 new species identified by scientists at the Natural History Museum this year.

In 2021, researchers described previously unknown species across the tree of life, from a pair of giant carnivorous dinosaurs known as spinosaurs – nicknamed the “riverbank hunter” and “hell heron” – to five new snakes that include the Joseph's racer, which was identified with the help of a 185-year-old painting.

With international travel to field sites restricted, scientists at the London-based museum concentrated on describing existing collections and species that roamed the Earth millions of years ago.

“It has been a fantastic year for the description of new dinosaurs, especially from the UK,” said Dr

Susannah Maidment, a senior researcher in paleobiology at the museum, who helped describe some of the new finds. “Although we've known about the UK's dinosaur heritage for over 150 years, the application of new techniques and new data from around the world is helping us to uncover a hidden diversity of British dinosaurs.”

Spinosaurids were among four UK dinosaur species described by researchers alongside a new iguanodontian with an unusual snout from the Isle of Wight, and Pendraig milnerae, the earliest known carnivorous dinosaur from the UK.

More than half of the new species identified at the museum this year were copepods, small shrimp-like creatures found in salt and fresh water. They form a large part of zooplankton on which krill, fish and other invertebrates feed, playing a vital role in the planet's ecology and carbon cycle.

Because of their abundance, copepods are among some of the biggest carbon sinks in the oceans. Scientists described 291 species this year, many from a collection created over six decades by French researchers Claude and Françoise Monniot.

“Copepods are not only free-living but many are parasites, and they can be found living in virtually every other major animal group,” said Prof Geoff Boxshall, a researcher in the museum's department of life sciences who identified the crustaceans with a South Korean colleague, Il-Hoi Kim.

“The huge Monniot collection was made available to Il-Hoi Kim and myself, and as we are both recently retired, we theoretically had time to finally go through it. However, the collection was so enormous it was somewhat daunting – but then Covid-19 happened and completing the series of papers became my lockdown project.”

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Existing vaccines are effective against mutated coronavirus: Iranian expert

The COVID-19 vaccines, which have been so far produced in the world are also effective on the mutated virus, so people who receive the vaccines will be protected against the new virus strain, Massoud Mardani, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, has said.

What raised concerns about the newly-produced vaccine was the ineffectiveness against the mutated virus, which fortunately studies show, the mutation of the virus and the chromosomal alteration are not enough to change its general nature, he explained.

According to Mardani, it is possible to detect the new coronavirus in Iran. All British and European passengers are tested at the airport for a quick and PCR test, while so far no case has been confirmed in the country, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

واکسن کرونا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند

مسعود مردانی عضو ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا می گوید واکسن تولید و تایید شده در دنیا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند و افرادی که واکسن تایید شده را بزنند علیه این ویروس هم مصونیت پیدا می کنند.

مردانی روز سه شنبه در گفت وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: آنچه نگران آن هستیم این است که واکسن تولید شده برای کووید ۱۹ در دنیا نسبت به ویروس جهش یافته بی اثر باشد که خوشبختانه بررسی ها نشان می دهد، جهش ویروس و تغییر کروموزومی ویروس به قدری نیست که ماهیت کلی آن تغییر کند.

به گفته او، امکان تشخیص ویروس کرونا جهش یافته در ایران وجود دارد. از همه مسافران انگلیس و اروپا در فرودگاه تست سریع و از موارد مشکوک تست دقیق تر «پی سی آر» گرفته و بررسی می شود و تاکنون موردی از این ویروس در ایران تایید نشده است.

Negotiations underway to export Razi Cov Pars vaccine

TEHRAN – A number of countries have requested to purchase the Iranian-made Cov Pars vaccine for COVID-19, and negotiations are underway to take the necessary measures for export, vice president for research and technology of Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute, said.

Developed by the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute, Razi Cov Pars is the second Iranian-made vaccine that started the clinical trial on February 27.

“Our main priority is to meet the country's need, however, after meeting the domestic needs, we will export this technological product,” IRNA quoted Mohammad-Hossein Fallah as saying on Friday.

Regarding the clinical trial of the vaccine on children aged 18 or younger, he said that “We have sent the vaccination test protocol for the 12-17 years old age group to the Food and Drug Administration, and we hope to start trial within the next 2 weeks.”

The study has been conducted to use the vaccine as a booster dose and the results will be sent to the Food and Drug Administration in the next few days to receive the license, he further noted.

The vaccine is protein-based, which employs



recombinant versions of the spike protein and tutors the immune system against the virus by producing antibodies.

It is developed in 3 doses. The first two doses are injectable and the third dose is intranasal. The second dose of the vaccine will be injected into the volunteers 21 days later and the third dose will be inhaled 51 days later.

At the end of the second phase of clinical trials, Cov Pars proved 80 percent of the immunogenicity.

Razi Institute (affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture) is capable of producing 20 million doses of vaccine by the end of 2021, Agriculture Minister Javad Sadatinejad said.

Opportunities and threats facing Earth's biodiversity

(Part 1)

It is no secret that the diversity of life around us is plummeting. Scientists declared more than 100 species to be extinct in 2020 alone. That's bad news not only for the creatures themselves but for those of us (that would be all of us) who rely on them for food, to produce oxygen, to hold soil in place, to cleanse water, to beautify our world and so much more. According to the World Economic Forum, nature plays a key role in generating more than half of global GDP.

So what can we do to reduce future harm? One big thing is to identify emerging threats and opportunities to protect biodiversity and proactively shape policies and actions to prevent harm early on. To this end, a group of scientists and conservation practitioners led by William Sutherland, a professor of conservation biology at the University of Cambridge, create and publish a “horizon scan” of global trends with impacts for biodiversity each year. Read on for this year's top picks.

Floating solar

One of the big challenges for solar power is finding a place to put large arrays of photovoltaic panels. The notion of siting them on water rather than land has taken off dramatically in recent years, with more than 300 installations in place around the world. The approach offers a number of benefits to biodiversity. It saves land resources that might otherwise be covered with solar panels, and it can reduce algal blooms on waterways. It can reduce the demand for other habitat-harming energy sources such as hydropower, and the evaporative cooling water makes the panels more efficient. All that said, the potential implications – positive and negative – for

aquatic and marine ecosystems are still to be determined.

Energy through the air

Power lines and the poles and towers that carry them are staples of civilisation. Imagine being able to replace them with devices that transmit electricity through the air instead. That vision is closer to becoming reality thanks to innovations in materials and technologies that create and direct beams of energy. Think wireless smartphone charging writ large. Deployment of long-distance wireless energy infrastructure could reduce the harms that conventional hardware pose to wildlife, such as collision risks for birds and bats. On the downside, it could also stimulate energy use and make it easier to live in remote locations, hastening the destruction or disruption of our planet's few remaining untrammelled areas.

Soaring satellites

Think human impacts on biodiversity are limited to the biosphere? Think again. More than 2,000 communications satellites orbit our planet, and under current plans the total could reach 100,000 in the next 10 years. The process of deploying and decommissioning these extra-planetary objects can disrupt the stratospheric ozone layer; deposit aluminium in, and otherwise modify the chemical composition of, the upper atmosphere; and alter Earth's albedo – its ability to reflect sunlight. These alterations in turn affect the amount and type of radiation that hits the surface of our planet. As satellite deployment soars, implications potentially loom large for the climate, exposure to ultraviolet light and other conditions that affect the well-being of living things.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 31

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| New cases | 1,703 |
| New deaths | 34 |
| Total cases | 6,194,401 |
| Total deaths | 131,606 |
| New hospitalized patients | 279 |
| Patients in critical condition | 2,694 |
| Total recovered patients | 6,037,090 |
| Diagnostic tests conducted | 41,982,912 |
| Doses of vaccine injected | 119,371,507 |

