



Guterres calls for Ukraine ceasefire amid warning over UN's existence

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appealed to Russia and Ukraine to halt fighting as over 200 former UN officials sent a joint letter to the UN chief warning of the world body's future existence if he does not personally intervene to end the war.

Guterres has called for a four-day "pause" in fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces during the upcoming Christian Easter Holidays to allow humanitarian aid and evacuations.

Noting that the Easter season is on the horizon amid escalating fighting in eastern Ukraine, the UN chief said the need for a cease-fire is all the more urgent.

"The onslaught and terrible toll on civilians we have seen so far could pale in comparison to the horror that lies ahead. This cannot be allowed to happen," urging Russians and Ukrainians "to silence the guns and forge a path to safety for so many at immediate risk."

According to Guterres the goal of the quite limited initiative is to open "humanitarian corridors" for civilians to escape different conflict zones with more humanitarian convoys reaching those areas.

In particular, he referred to the eastern region of Donbass that comprises Donetsk, Luhansk as well as the southeastern city of Mariupol and Kherson in the south.

The Russian military is widely believed to have shifted its focus on Ukraine's east and southeastern regions.

According to the UN, more than four million people in those areas, and 12 million nationwide, need food, water, and medicine.

Ukrainian Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya is said to have called on Moscow to heed Guterres' call.

The Russian deputy permanent representative to the UN, Dmitry Polyanskiy, has been cited as saying he was "a bit skeptical" about the idea. ▶Page 5

Iran criticizes UK intention to deport migrants to Rwanda

TEHRAN - The secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights and deputy chief of the Iranian Judiciary has condemned the United Kingdom's decision to transfer asylum seekers to Rwanda.

In a tweet on Wednesday, Kazem Gharibabadi said, "The British government's plan to forcefully transfer asylum seekers is a breach of its international commitments and responsibilities. The move entirely neglects human and ethical considerations. The UK's dark human rights record speaks for itself."

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that certain unlawful migrants and asylum seekers will be transferred to Rwanda, with "tens of thousands" of individuals expected to travel there in the following years.

Opposition parties, human rights organizations, NGOs, and the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, all reacted angrily to the measure.

Earlier on Saturday, Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, condemned the British government's proclaimed plan as a retreat from the country's international duties.

Transferring refugees outside of British territory, according to Khatibzadeh, violates the spirit and text of the Refugee Convention.

Khatibzadeh went on to say that such a British plan, which places responsibility for refugees on the shoulders of a third country, exposes refugees to violations of the rights mentioned in refugee conventions and human rights agreements, and utterly disregards human and moral concerns.

"Cruel, inhumane and "neo-colonial"

The British government has been accused of trading people like commodities after it unveiled the controversial plan to send asylum seekers on a one-way ticket 6,000km (3,700 miles) away to Rwanda, Al Jazeera said on April 15. ▶Page 2

Arab Normalizers Have Become Disenchanted with Israel

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Iran's economic growth to reach 3% in 2022: IMF

TEHRAN - The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest World Economic Outlook report titled "War sets back global recovery", has revised up its projection of Iran's real gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 to three percent from its previous report in which the figure was two percent.

The increase in Iran's economic growth comes as the entity has modified its forecasts of the global economic growth from 4.4 percent in its previous report published in January to 3.6 percent; the fund expects the global economy to follow the same modest growth and settle at 3.6 percent in 2023, as well.

The IMF's new report reflects a small-paced economic growth for advanced economies due to a combination of war and pandemic, while for low-income developing countries the growth is even less largely due to the pandemic.

"The outlook for the low-income develop-

ing country group has darkened considerably due to worsening pandemic dynamics. The downgrade also reflects more difficult near-term prospects for the advanced economy group," IMF stated.

"The global recovery continues but the momentum has weakened, hobbled by the pandemic. Fueled by the highly transmissible Delta variant, the recorded global COVID-19 death toll has risen close to five million and health risks abound, holding back a full return to normalcy. Pandemic outbreaks in critical links of global supply chains have resulted in longer-than-expected supply disruptions, further feeding inflation in many countries. Overall, risks to economic prospects have increased, and policy trade-offs have become more complex," the report read.

IMF has predicted West Asia's GDP to grow by 4.1 percent in the current year, with no change from the fund's previous report. ▶Page 4

Iran hosted 2m migratory birds in Jan.-Feb. 2021

TEHRAN - Some 1,998,615 birds out of 156 migratory waterfowl and shorebirds migrated to Iran in January-February 2021, the head of wildlife conservation and management office of the Department of Environment, has said.

Statistics were collected from 491 bases across the country, IRIB quoted Reza Faraji as saying on Wednesday.

The annual census for migratory birds in Iran begins in the middle of the Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22-January 20) and ends in the middle of the month of Bahman (January 21-February 19), through which Iran hosts rare species of migratory birds heading from north to the southern countries due to reduced seasonal temperatures and food availability.

About 61,493 migratory birds were among the IUCN Red List, including Dalmatian pelican, lesser white-fronted goose, red-breasted goose, common pochard, marbled duck, white-headed duck, Siberian crane, and great knot, which were observed in various parts of the country.

The largest population of migratory birds on the IUCN Red List belonged to the common pochard species with a population of 53,882 and the lowest population belonged to the two species of Siberian crane (one) and the red-breasted goose (two), he explained.

Mazandaran, Golestan, and Gilan provinces hosted the largest population of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds in the winter of the [Iranian calendar year] 1399 (January-March 2021), he stated.

Every year, with the participation of about 15,000 forces, many of whom are volunteers, migratory waterfowl and shorebirds are counted in more than 100 countries. ▶Page 7

Iran Greco-Roman team runner-up in Asian Wrestling Championships

TEHRAN - Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling team finished in second place in the 2022 Asian Wrestling Championships.

Iranian wrestlers claimed three gold medals and a silver on Wednesday in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Mohammad Mokhtari seized a gold medal in the 72kg after beating Kazakhstan's Abylaikhan Amzeyev 4-1 in the final.

Rasoul Garmsiri beat Dias Kalen from Kazakhstan 4-3 in the final match of 82kg.

Mehdi Mohammad Bali emerged victorious over Uzbekistan's Rustam Assakalov 5-1 in the final bout of 97kg.

On Tuesday, Naser Alizadeh claimed a gold medal in the 87kg after defeating Jalgasbay Berdimuratov from Uzbekistan 3-1. ▶Page 3



Zoolbia Bamieh popular in Ramadan

Zoolbia Bamieh – a Persian doughnut made of deep-fried dough drunk in tasty syrup – is highly popular during the holy month of Ramadan.

In Iran, a variety of delicious and healthy foods are offered for Suhoor (meal consumed early in the morning before fasting) and Iftar (fast-breaking meal).

Ardabil's first 5-star hotel to be inaugurated on Eid al-Fitr

TEHRAN - The first five-star hotel in the north-western Ardabil province is scheduled to be inaugurated on Eid al-Fitr, the end of the fasting month of Ramadan which falls on May 2 this year.

The hotel has been constructed in the capital city of Ardabil, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Ardabil's selection as the cultural capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) for 2023 calls for increasing the number of

5-star hotels and enhancing tourism infrastructure in order to make the event a success, Nader Fallahi said on Wednesday.

Investing in the tourism sector is welcomed and supported in the province, the official added.

In 2019, Ardabil along with Sari, the capital of Mazandaran province, were selected as the cultural capitals for the Economic Cooperation Organization for 2022 and 2023 respectively. ▶Page 6

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Report

We are already in the beginning stages of an Intifada: analyst

By Zahra Samimi

TEHRAN - A British political analyst, Robert Inlakesh, believes that the recent developments in Palestine are signs of a new Intifada.

"I believe we are already in the beginning stages of an Intifada, the only thing in the way of making the revolution manifest itself in the ways of the past is the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, but even the PA isn't enough to hold this Intifada down," Inlakesh tells the Tehran Times.

"The (Israeli) attacks are clearly in of themselves barbarism, there can be no excuses for such repeated Islamophobic attacks during Ramadan and it is clear that the intention is to assert Israeli supremacy over the Holy Site, as seen through the attacks perpetrated by Israel's occupation forces and also the storming of Masjid Al-Aqsa by illegal Israeli settler extremists," the British analyst points out.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you describe developments in Quds and al-Aqsa Mosque in the fasting month of Ramadan? Is it a new Intifada?

The attacks are clearly in themselves barbarism, there can be no excuses for such repeated Islamophobic ▶Page 5

Winners of 2022 Islamic Revolution History Book Awards announced

TEHRAN - Top works published on the Islamic Revolution over the past year were honored during the second edition of the Islamic Revolution History Book Awards on Tuesday.

"Absolute Value of a Conspiracy: The Neqab Coup in Documents" won the award for best documentary research.

In this book, scholars Shadab Asgari and Esmaeil Qamarian Moammareh delve into the Neqab (Mask) Coup, which is also known as the Nojeh Coup.

The Coup was attempted on July 9, 1980, by several hundred nationalist Iranian high-ranking officers and paratroopers who made their way to the Nojeh air-force base near the city of Hamadan to lead a military revolt against the newly-established Islamic Republic. ▶Page 8

Amir Abdollahian condemns Israeli aggression in Al-Aqsa Mosque compound

TEHRAN- Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has denounced the attacks of the Israeli regime on Palestinian worshippers in the complex of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

During a phone conversation with his Mauritanian counterpart Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug on Tuesday, he said, “Unfortunately, we bore witness to Zionists’ transgression on the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy fasting month of Ramadan.”

The senior diplomat added, “We hope for the Palestinian nation to achieve its historical rights with the support of Muslim countries and nations.”

On Friday, Israeli forces assaulted the compound in the historic occupied city of al-Quds’ Old City, injuring around 150 Palestinian worshippers and detained 400 others. They have continued to violate the basic rights of Palestinians while also cracking down on solidarity rallies in the occupied West Bank, where the complex is located.

Amir Abdollahian also hailed Mauritania for its genuine support for the oppressed Palestinian people.

The Iranian minister stated that Tehran supports the establishment of a truce in



Yemen and renewed Tehran’s call for a total removal of blockade on the war-torn country and resolving the country’s problems through intra-Yemeni negotiations.

Also, Amir Abdollahian embraced expansion of mutual ties with Mauritania, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic encourages close relations with African states.

The Mauritanian diplomat, for his part, underscored the countries’ shared sympathy for the Palestinian cause.

He praised his country’s relationship with Tehran as robust, adding Mauritania welcomes expansion of relations with Iran and seeks the Islamic Republic’s support for developing his country’s infrastructure.

Universities serve as the government’s think tank: Raisi

“Support for research is not a cost but an investment”



TEHRAN- In a meeting with university professors on Tuesday, President Ebrahim Raisi stated that university is a center for human development and production of science.

The president said guarding the dignity of university professors is a national obligation and directed the Minister of Science, Research, and Technology to pursue university professors’ demands and allay their concerns, particularly in the area of livelihood.

Underling that university atmosphere should be the atmosphere of science, knowledge and education, Raisi said, “We believe that supporting science and research in universities is not a cost but an investment for the development of the country.”

“Today, we are obliged to address the concerns of professors and satisfy them so

that they can nurture the future builders of the country with high enthusiasm,” the president noted, recalling the high importance and status of university professors in the process of developing the country.

“We in the government believe in using all the intellectual capacities and human resources of the country,” Raisi pointed out, describing empathy, consensus, and utilizing the vast capacity of the country’s young people and academics as the best ways to overcome the country’s obstacles and problems.

“University should study the issues of the country with priority and in a problem-oriented manner, and should provide the government with operational solutions on issues such as water, soil, agriculture, air, industry, employment and new technologies,” Raisi underscored, referring to universities as the government’s think tank.

“Sustainable and effective change in the government depends on everything being done on the basis of science and knowledge, and

requires a deep and continuous relationship between the government and the university,” Raisi said, emphasizing that government transformation should be scientific-based.

The Presidential Centre for Strategic Studies, according to Raisi, serves as a link between the government and universities, mentioning some attempts at the center to develop a framework for organized communication between the government and academics.

The most essential approach to take care of the country’s talented persons, according to the president, is to create hope through practical approaches.

He suggested that students should be treated in a way that they pin hope on the future of the country to prevent brain drain.

The president went on to say that there exit precious motivations for the young and students in the country, saying, “Inside the country and at the level of knowledge-based companies and educational centers, attractions should be created so that students and young people feel that they have the fields for research.”

Ayatollah Raisi listed the promotion of human sciences as one of the country’s top goals, saying, “University is a center for human development and production of science.”

“I have repeatedly emphasized in the government that instead of the university following industry, today all executive bodies have a duty to follow the university and work with universities and scientific centers,” the president added.

“Respect for the dignity of professors is very important and both students and management should have such an approach in the university,” stated the president, underlining the importance of Islamic morality and respect for teachers.

TEHRAN – The talks in Vienna to resurrect the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA- have stalemated due to indecision by the U.S. and inventing new excuses, Iran’s former ambassador to Paris and Brussels says.

In an interview with IRNA published on Wednesday, Abolqassem Delfi said negotiations have been going through ups and downs since the new administration in Iran came to power.

Iran’s senior negotiators were saying that the sides had reached a good stage to revive the deal and sometimes they said “we are in a difficult situation” but in the process of negotiations the Americans set “new conditions” as they don’t intend to commit themselves to their obligations.

“The situation that we are facing now can be one of those difficult and sensitive stages. The situation for the Biden has become difficult and as the mid-term congressional elections are approaching, they are worried that the Democrats lose the majority in Congress. It should be noticed that if the Democrats lose the congressional election, they will naturally face some weaknesses in the 2024 presidential election.”

The United States will hold its congressional midterm elections on November 8. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives will be up for grabs. Thirty-five Senate seats will be contested as well.

The former diplomat said the Democrats have had no tangible achievement at the international stage. He said the Americans’



U.S. seeking to avoid JCPOA obligations by inventing pretexts, says ex-ambassador to France

disorderly withdrawal from Afghanistan is considered a weak point for Washington and its allies.

And now that the Biden administration says it wants to leave the Persian Gulf and West Asia region does not herald a bright prospect for Americans, Delfi said.

“If it cannot gain anything in return for its withdrawal (from the region) and define a clear strategy for the national interests of Americans, the Biden administration will suffer again,” he opined.

The former ambassador also pointed to the Ukraine-Russia

war, arguing a refusal by NATO and the West, especially the U.S., to be directly involved in the war despite the fact that the war is a result of their behavior by expanding the NATO military alliance to the East, the future of the U.S. during the leadership of Biden will be remembered with weakness.

Therefore, Biden’s policies abroad will not bring successes to face challenges at home and they will eventually have repercussions on the nuclear talks because the Republicans are adamantly opposed to the nuclear agreement and they will put pressure on Biden not to honor American obligations

under the JCPOA.

Delfi added since the talks began in April last year to revive the JCPOA Iran set conditions that the U.S. must give assurances that it will not renege on its obligations again and that all nuclear and non-nuclear sanctions on Iran will be lifted in a verifiable manner.

And, though Americans announced that they had found solutions to thorny issues, their approach show that they are not serious in committing themselves to removal of all sanctions, verifications, or give assurances that they will not leave the agreement again, the former ambassador remarked.

The ambassador went on to say that lifting sanctions on the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and delisting them from the so-called foreign terrorist organizations are Iran’s legitimate demands and the Islamic Republic is insisting on this demand.

“But the U.S. is bringing pretexts for these conditions set by Iran,... and they are seeking ways to avoid their obligations,” the former diplomat noted, adding the Biden administration is inventing “new baseless pretexts not to fulfill its obligations and hide itself behind problems.”

Former U.S. president Donald Trump put the IRGC on the list of foreign terrorist organizations (FTO) in order to make a return to the JCPOA difficult. The Trump administration’s move was purely politically motivated because the IRGC was the main force against the Daesh terrorist group.

Iran criticizes UK intention to deport migrants to Rwanda

“The UK’s dark human rights record speaks for itself”

From page 1 ► Rights groups and refugee organizations have called the decision “cruel”, “inhumane” and “neo-colonial”.

“It’s truly shocking and inhumane,” said Steve Valdez-Symonds, the refugee and migrant rights program director at Amnesty International UK.

“The plan is not going to decrease the number of refugees. It will inflict a huge amount of cruelty and fuel more dangerous refugee routes to be set up,” Valdez-Symonds told Al Jazeera.

According to the plan, the British government would screen asylum seekers after arriving and provide their personal information to the Rwandan officials before they are transported to Kigali. The Rwandan government would deal with the asylum process and, if they are successful, asylum seekers will settle in the country.

Some details are still a bit murky but all refugees arriving in the UK in boats will be sent to Rwanda. If their application is successful, they will not be given refugee status in the UK but will be granted asylum by Rwanda. Those unsuccessful could be deported back to their country of origin, or another country where they have a right to reside.

Refugees who flee to the UK from prosecution, civil war and torture have the right to claim refugee status under international agreements. However, they can only claim asylum in the UK on British soil.

Hence, if the proposal is implemented, those

fleeing Iraq, Syria, Eritrea or Sudan will most likely be transported to Rwanda even before making an asylum claim – which would eventually lead to a drastic decline in asylum applications.

The proposal will come into an effect after the passage of a law that is currently being considered in Parliament that could criminalize any refugees entering the country without a valid visa. The legislation is expected to pass as Johnson’s party enjoys the parliamentary majority.

The UN’s refugee agency also voiced opposition.

“People fleeing war, conflict and persecution deserve compassion and empathy. They should not be traded like commodities and transferred abroad for processing,” said UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Gillian Triggs.

The chief executive of Refugee Action, Tim Naor Hilton, accused the government of “offshoring its responsibilities onto Europe’s former colonies instead of doing our fair share to help some of the most vulnerable people on the planet”.

Others, meanwhile, criticized Rwanda’s human rights record.

“There is nothing ‘safe’ or ‘compassionate’ about Boris Johnson’s neo-colonial plan to send refugees to offshore camps in Rwanda, where the government tortures, intimidates and assassinates their political opponents and persecutes marginalized people,” said Bella Sankey, director of Detention Action, an NGO

providing support to migrants in detention.

Rwandan Foreign Minister Vincent Biruta said Rwanda is going to provide refugees “a dignified life with shelter, with skills for them to be able to socially and economically integrate into our society, or to have those skills for them to be able to integrate into their country of origin when they decide to go back to their countries”.

The deal, which Home Secretary Priti Patel signed during a visit to Kigali, came as more Ukrainian refugees keep arriving in the UK through various visa programs that the government has rolled out in the wake of Russia’s invasion in February.

So far, more than 55,000 visas have been issued to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine and 16,400 of them arrived in the UK as of Monday.

Zoe Gardner, policy and advocacy manager at the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, highlighted the contrast between the proposed policy and the attitude towards Ukrainian refugees.

“Most of us want people fleeing danger to be treated with dignity and respect – the UK public’s response to Ukraine has made that clear,” Gardner told Al Jazeera.

“But instead of welcoming those who need protection,” she said, the deal will be “deporting Black and brown people who have fled desperate circumstances thousands of miles away”.

IRGC Gaza drone passes flight tests, becomes operational

TEHRAN – Islamic Revolution Guards Corps’ new combat drone, called Gaza, has successfully passed flight tests and it is now fully operational.

The super heavy combat drone, which was unveiled in May last year, has a 21-meter wingspan and a 3,100-kilogram takeoff mass, and is capable of carrying a payload of 500 kg, Press TV reported on Monday.

The flight duration of the Gaza drone is 35 hours. It can soar to an altitude of about 10,668 meters, equivalent to 35,000 feet, and has a flight speed of 350 km per hour.

“Operational tests of this drone have been conducted, it is fully operational, and can be used in a variety of reconnaissance and combat missions,” the report noted.

In addition to military and defense applications, the Gaza drone can also carry out missions in monitoring forests, rescue operations and providing assistance in natural disasters such as floods and

earthquakes.

Last month, the IRGC unveiled one of its new kamikaze drones, dubbed Me’raj 504, which is specialized in attacking enemy’s defense systems.

The unmanned aerial vehicle has been designed and produced by the IRGC’s Ground Force is capable of carrying a 2.5kg explosive payload over 100 kilometers. It uses a reciprocating engine for propulsion.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great progress in indigenously developing and manufacturing a broad range of equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in this regard.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the Islamic Republic will not hesitate to build up its defense capabilities, emphasizing such abilities are entirely meant for the purpose of defense and will be never subject to negotiations.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has repeatedly called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran’s defense capabilities, hitting back at the enemies for disputing the country’s missile program.

In a military parade on Monday marking National Army Day, the Iranian Army units unveiled a number of new drones and homegrown missile systems.

One of the major achievements put on display during the parade was the new generation of Ababil drones, named Ababil-5, according to Tasnim.

The new design of the drone’s nosecone suggests improved aerodynamic efficiency and reduced radar cross-section.

At least three Ababil-5 drones were displayed in the event, one equipped with 4 Almas (diamond) missiles, another one carrying three Qaem bombs, and the third one armed with a heavy Qaem-class bomb.

A new suicide drone also joined

the Army’s fleet of UAVs on Monday. The homegrown aircraft, called Omid (hope), is comparable with Israeli Harop drone. The delta-wing Iranian drone is propelled by a powerful piston engine.

Omid, which has joined the club of Iranian suicide drones such as Arash, Kian and Karrar, could be flown from both ground and offshore launchers.

The Army also unveiled three missile systems in the event.

One of them is Fath-360 ground-to-ground missile system, adapted to fire Naze’at rockets.

The Iranian Fath missile weighs 790 kg and can carry a 150-kg warhead with a velocity of Mach 4 at a distance of 120 km.

Another missile system displayed on Monday was the tactical version of Sayyad, comprised of radar and missile launchers at the same time. This feature increases the mobility and combat survivability of tactical Sayyad.

Arab normalizers have become disenchanted with Israel

TEHRAN – Less than two years after “making history” with normalization deals, Arab countries that normalized diplomatic relations with Israel have begun parting ways with a regime they increasingly find too rigid to moderate.

Ever since September 15, 2020 when the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain signed normalization deals with Israel, a lot of ink has been spilled and oxygen expended arguing that a different kind of peace can be achieved between an Arab state and Israel. The argument centered around the notion that peace deals between Jordan and Egypt on the one hand and Israel on the other represented an outdated era in Israeli-Arab relations that are no longer compatible with the current zeitgeist of the Arab world.

They asserted that Jordanian and Egyptian peace accords with Israel were “cold peace” while those of the UAE and Bahrain were “warm peace.” At some point, there even calls for turning the cold peace between Cairo and Amman and Tel Aviv into a warm one, a la the one between the UAE and Israel.

That argument proved wishful thinking. Simply because it failed to take into account the importance Arab and Muslima attach to the Palestinian cause, particularly the Muslim sanctities in Jerusalem (al-Quds), which Israel continues defiling.

After Israel took a number of sacrilegious moves against Muslim sanctities in Jerusalem including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, some Arab and



Muslim countries which used to be at the forefront of normalization efforts strongly condemned Israel's measures.

On Tuesday, The UAE foreign ministry summoned Israeli Ambassador to the UAE Amir Hayek to inform him of “the country's strong protest and denunciation of the events taking place in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque, including attacks on civilians and incursions into holy places that resulted in the injury of a number of civilians,” according to a UAE foreign ministry statement.

The UAE also canceled the participation Etihad Airways and Wizz Air Abu Dhabi in an Israeli air show scheduled for May 5, on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the establishment of Israel. The move was made against the backdrop of tensions in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The UAE foreign ministry “stressed the need to immediately stop these events, provide full protection for worshippers, respect the right of Palestinians to practice their religious rites, and halt any practices that violate the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

Turkey is now openly highlighting the distinction between its normalization moves and the need to defend the Palestinian people. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said Ankara still does not intend to turn a blind eye to the occupation or attacks on holy places in Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories, according to Anadolu Agency.

In a Tuesday phone call, Erdogan told Israeli President Isaac Herzog: “We are deeply saddened by the fact that more than 400 Palestinians were injured and 18 people, including children, lost their lives in the events that took place in the West Bank and

Al-Aqsa Mosque since the beginning of the month of Ramadan.”

Earlier on Friday, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain condemned the Israeli police's storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday, and the resulting acts of violence, injury and arrest of dozens of worshippers, which acts as a provocation to Muslims, especially in the holy month of Ramadhan, the Ministry said in a statement.

Turkey, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco all have diplomatic relations with Israel but these relations had zero effect on Israel's approach toward the Palestinian. Some of the Arab states that recently joined the normalization bandwagon with the hope that would be able to moderate Israel's stance toward the Palestinians. But now they are discovering the impossibility of their hope.

Ukraine should borrow a page from Iran: ambassador

TEHRAN – Ukrainian ambassador to Iran Serhii Burduliak has urged his country to follow in Iran's footsteps in terms of building up domestically developed military capabilities.

In an exclusive interview with Tasnim, the Ukrainian ambassador lashed out at the Western governments' reluctance to accept his country as a new member of NATO, saying that Ukraine should develop its military capabilities instead.

Pointing to the U.S. and European states' opposition to Ukraine's NATO membership, he said, “So why should we go to a place where they are not waiting for us?”

Although the cost of membership in NATO would amount to 2 percent of the gross national income while building, maintaining and developing a national army would cost around 15 to 19 percent of the gross national income, now that the Western countries and NATO are not ready to accept Ukraine, Kiev should have its own army and forces, the ambassador said.

Pointing to Israel as an example that has built its own army, Burduliak said, “If you don't prefer the Israeli example, one can choose an Iran in Eastern Europe, a country that has its own army, supports and protects it, invests on it, and produces and develops its own weapons, albeit without sanctions.”

The envoy also expressed hope that Iran would soon get rid of the sanctions.

Burduliak further dismissed the notion that the expansion of NATO to the East has provoked Russia into launching a war on Ukraine.

While Ukraine intends to join NATO and is being rejected, a series of other countries, whose plans

to join NATO have received a warm response, pose a much more serious threat to Russia, like Finland whose missiles would reach Saint Petersburg much faster than those of Ukraine, he added.

“But (Russian President Vladimir) Putin is sending its forces to kill civilians in Ukraine, to rape the Ukrainian girls and women, and to detonate and destroy all civilian facilities,” the ambassador stated.

“Therefore, the main reason for Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not (Ukraine's) membership in NATO. I believe that analysts and politicians, either in the West or the East, who claim that the main reason for Putin's attack on Ukraine was NATO's membership, are mistaken,” the envoy said.

Burduliak further disputed the claims of the presence of neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine as a pretext for the Russian attack, saying, “Thousands of foreign reporters are currently working in Ukraine and all of them are trying to find neo-Nazi groups, but have not been able to do so. Because neo-Nazi groups are not in Ukraine.

“You cannot find a black cat in a dark room, especially when there is no such cat in the room. You cannot find neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine, because we don't have such groups in Ukraine at all.”

The ambassador said 75 percent of Ukrainians have in the last presidential election voted for Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish. “So such claims on the presence of neo-Nazis in Ukraine are fake news.”

Burduliak further cited a report published in Russian state-owned news agency RIA Novosti, saying it has explained how Russia should deal

with Ukraine and has even described plans for massacre and genocide in Ukraine explicitly.

“What I'm telling you is not my fantasy. These are the cases published by RIA Novosti. They have written that with the existence of countries like Georgia, Poland and the Baltic states, Ukraine is an artificial country and nation,” the envoy deployed.

The article has insisted that Ukraine should not exist, the Ukrainian military forces must be destroyed in the battlefield, those Ukrainian people that Russia claims are Nazis must be removed physically, and the Ukrainian civil servants, such as teachers, diplomats and officers must be physically eliminated, he said.

According to the envoy, the crimes that Russia is said to have committed in Bucha were a small example of the large-scale crimes and match exactly to the stages mentioned in the RIA Novosti article.

“We are now waiting for the second wave of the war, since Russia has been defeated in the first stage. They thought they could conquer Ukraine in the very first days and topple the president,” Burduliak added.

The ambassador claimed his country has killed more than 19,000 Russian forces since the outset of the war, has destroyed over 700 Russian tanks, and shot down more than 150 military aircraft.

“In fact, we have destroyed four ground armies, one air army and one armored army out of the ten armies they (Russians) have. We are now waiting for the second wave,” he added.

Burduliak finally expressed confidence that Ukraine will win the war, although Russia, is going to launch a new attack.

Iran Army unveils new achievements

TEHRAN – The Iranian Army Ground Forces unveiled on Wednesday their latest achievements in terms of developing new equipment.

An unveiling ceremony was held on under the auspices of the Commander of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi in which the latest achievements of the Army Ground Forces were put on display.

The ceremony was also attended by Deputy Commander of the Army Brigadier General Mohammad Hossein Dadras, Assistant Commander of the Army for Coordination Affairs Admiral Habibullah Sayyari, Head of the Army's Strategic Studies Center Brigadier General Ahmad Purdastan, Commander of the Army's Ground Force Brigadier General Kiumars Haidari, Commander of the Army's Naval Force Admiral Shahram Irani, and Commander of the Army's Air Defense Force Brigadier General Ali Reza Sabahi Fard.

The new, ultra-heavy tank transporter Kiyan 300 plus and other heavy vehicles as well as various departments of mobile hospitals, which include laboratories, operating

rooms, radiology, ICU rooms, and an armored ambulance capable of transporting 6 injured were unveiled.

The unveiling came on the heels of the Army Day on which the Army showcased a set of its upgraded equipment.

On the occasion of the National Day of the Iranian Army, the Air Defense Forces displayed their new equipment and achievements in the field of radar and reconnaissance systems, electronic warfare, drones, different types of missiles and command and control systems.

Fars News reported that the equipment and achievements of the Air Defense Forces, which were displayed on the Iranian Army Day, are as follows:

Drones of the models: Mohajer 6, Karrar, Nasser, Kayan 1, Kayan 2, Arash, Omid, Mohajer 4.

Missile and radar systems: the Majid missile system, portable CPC system, TM wheel COS ICT system, Damavand system, S300 loader system, Sayyad Communications vehicle system, S200 missile launcher, Sayyad 3 and 4 missile systems, Talash missile

launcher, Joshan missile system radar, Radtla 15 Khordad system, Command control system, Bavar 373 missile system, Mersad 16 system equipped with Shalamcheh 2 missile, Hadi radar system, the Kavosh radar system, Mersad 15 missile system, Kavosh system operations room, Khatam system to direct fire, and Skycard system's radar.

Also on Monday, the latest drone of the Iranian army, dubbed Kaman 22, was unveiled for the first time in Tehran.

The Kaman 22 unmanned aerial vehicle of the army is considered a strategic and multi-tasking aircraft. And it is the first giant combat drone of the Iranian army, and it can fly for 24 hours continuously, and its operational range is three thousand kilometers.

The Kaman 22 drone can fly up to an altitude of 8,000 meters and is capable of carrying all types of ammunition, laser-guided missiles and smart missiles. It also has the ability to monitor, control, gather information and photograph distant targets, according to Al Alam.

It weighs 1.5 tons and carries

300 kilograms of weapons and ammunition. It is equipped with combat weapons, cameras and electronic warfare equipment. It was designed according to the operational specifications required by the Air Force of the Army, and it carries 4 bombs of the Qaem class, in addition to two smart missiles, and it was also equipped with the X-Band jamming system.

This unmanned aircraft is similar to the American aircraft MQ9 and is currently undergoing the final testing stage, and the Iranian army has used it so far in the operations of guidance, control and monitoring of the maneuver area.

It is 6.5 meters long, two and a half meters high, and has a wingspan of 17 meters, and its range has increased by 2,000 kilometers compared to its prototypes.

Iran also unveiled the surface-to-surface Fat'h 360 and Labeik missiles as well as the Dezful and Majid air defense systems on Monday.

They were unveiled as the Iranian Army held an annual military parade near the shrine of Imam Khomeini in southern Tehran.

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran Greco-Roman team runner-up in Asian Wrestling Championships

From Page 1 ► Iman Mohammadi also won a bronze medal in the 63kg after withdrawal of Syrian wrestler Ahmad Al Nakdali.

In the 77kg weight class, Aref Habibollahi seized a bronze medal after Kim Hyeonwoo from South Korea pulled out of the third-place match.

The 2022 Asian Wrestling Championships are the 35th edition of Asian Wrestling Championships of combined events, and take place from April 19 to 24 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Women and men from all over Iran attend referee camp in Tehran

TEHRAN – A referee camp was organized by the FIBA Regional Office – Asia from April 13-18 in Tehran, Iran.

The six-day camp attracted 55 referees from all over the country, both male and female. The spirit of the camp was great and friendly for all participants and provided a profitable landscape to develop officiating in the country.

“The federation was able to refresh the referees with updated knowledge of basketball during this fruitful workshop held in Iran,” said Iran Basketball Federation (IRIBF) President, Mr. Javad Davari.

“The referee camp for the Iran Basketball Federation (IRIBF) will be an important part of the development of referees in Iran,” said IRIBF Refereeing Committee Chief, Mr. Fereydoun Salimian. “What was good to see in this camp was the presence of 15 young female referees who I believe can positively impact on the future of the refereeing in our country.”

Throughout the course of the entire camp, 10 games were organized with 2 games played per day. These games provided the perfect platform for the development of the referees and the participants displayed a very positive attitude and were ready to learn. At the same time, it was a good opportunity for the Regional Office to scout and identify potential young national referees in Iran.

This camp is a continuation of the plans set out by the Regional Office to improve the quality of officiating in the region, which in result will heighten the level of competition.

Wrestler Alizadeh feels great to win back-to-back Asian title

TEHRAN – Naser Alizadeh can certainly take pride in winning a second straight gold medal at the Asian Championships. Particularly since he had to beat another champion from 2021 to do it.

Defending champion Alizadeh defeated Jalgasbay Berdimuratov from Uzbekistan 3-1 in an intense Greco-Roman 87kg final on the opening day of the six-day tournament at the Buyant Ukhua Sports Palace in the Mongolian capital.

“I am part of the national team and it's an honor,” said Alizadeh, who was also a world U23 bronze medalist in 2021.

Alizadeh's ability to take advantage of the par terre (hands and knees on the mat) position, while being able to defend when he was put on bottom, made the difference in beating Berdimuratov, who won the 82kg gold last year in Almaty.

“The final is always tough and I had the point for passivity in the first period. I managed to score from par terre and lead 3-0,” Alizadeh said. “In the second period, he got the passivity but I was determined to defend. In my mind, I was thinking that I have to only defend this attack to win.”

Alizadeh was somewhat amazed that he could achieve the golden repeat.

“It's a special feeling to win two Asian gold medals,” he said. “Last year and now I am again champion. Incredible.”

Nassaji beat Mes to advance to Hazfi Cup final

TEHRAN – Nassaji Mazandaran defeated Mes Kerman 1-0 here Tuesday night and booked their place in the final match of the Iran's Hazfi Cup.

The match finished in goalless draw in regular time.

With two minutes remaining, Mohammadmehdi Nazari was brought down in Mes area and referee Mehdi Seyedali showed the penalty spot.

Hamed Shiri converted the penalty.

Nassaji will play Aluminum on April 27 in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Emam Stadium in the final match.

Barij Essence to travel to Kazakhstan on Thursday

TEHRAN – Barij Essence of Iran will travel to Kazakhstan on Thursday to participate at the 2022 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship.

The Iranian team will compete in the event which will be held in Semey, Kazakhstan from April 24 to 30.

Kazakhstan A, Kazakhstan B, Iran, Thailand, Japan and Uzbekistan will pit their expertise against one another in the single round-robin competition.

Hazfi Cup final to be held in Tabriz

TEHRAN- The final match of Iran's Hazfi Cup will take place at the Yadegar-e Emam Stadium in Tabriz.

The final match is scheduled for April 27.

Nassaji and Aluminum have qualified for the final match.

Nassaji has defeated Mes Kerman and Aluminum edged Khalij Fars Mahshahr in the semifinals.

China withdraw from 2022 AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait

TEHRAN – China will not participate at the 2022 AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait.

The AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 – Qualifiers (East Zone) will take place in Malaysia from May 17 to 21, 2022 with the top three teams qualifying for the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022.

China will not compete in the competition due to COVID-19.

So far 12 teams – Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam have confirmed their spots and will join hosts Kuwait in the Finals, which is scheduled for September 25 to October 20, 2022.

Pele back in hospital as tumor treatment continues

Brazilian soccer great Pele returned to hospital on Monday as he continues to receive treatment for cancer, Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein hospital said in a medical note on Tuesday.

Edson Arantes do Nascimento's clinical condition is good and stable, and he is likely to be discharged in the next few days, doctors said, using Pele's full name.

The 81-year-old had a tumor removed from his colon in September 2021 and has since been in and out of hospital for treatment on a regular basis.

Widely considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, the former Santos, New York Cosmos and Brazil player has suffered a series of health issues in recent years, including hip surgery that left him with recurring pain and trouble walking unaided.

In February, Pele was admitted to hospital for a round of chemotherapy when a urinary infection was identified, keeping him in longer than was planned.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran's economic growth to reach 3% in 2022: IMF

From page 1 ► The international body sees Iran's inflation (consumer price changes) at 27.5 percent in 2022, decreasing 11.8 percent from 39.3 percent in 2021.

As reported, the country's account balance which was – 0.1 percent of the country's GDP in 2020 is expected to climb to one percent in 2022.

Based on the IMF data, despite the sanctions and the negative impact of the pandemic, the Iranian economy is going to outperform many



countries both in the region and across the world.

Govt. praises Oil Ministry for ensuring uninterrupted gas supply in winter



TEHRAN – Ali Bahadori Jahromi, spokesman for the Iranian government, has praised the Oil Ministry's efforts for ensuring uninterrupted natural gas supply during the winter, Shana reported on Wednesday.

"In previous years, we mostly faced interruption in gas supply during the peak consumption periods, but this year with the Oil Ministry's good management we did not face any gas cut-off in the domestic

sector," Bahadori Jahromi said.

During the previous Iranian calendar year's cold season, despite the unprecedented increase in natural gas consumption in the country, the gas industry was able to register a record high in terms of gas supply during the peak consumption period.

The consumption of natural gas by the domestic and commercial sectors reached 662 million cubic meters (mcm) in January to register a new record high in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and all its subsidiaries were seriously working in a few months before the winter to ensure the sustained supply of gas during the cold season.

Having the biggest network in the region, Iran is one of the leading countries in terms of gas accessibility, and in this regard, making sure that this access stays uninterrupted during the pick consumption periods is a top priority for NIGC.

TEHRAN – The Iranian government paid 1.686 quadrillion rials (about \$6.10 billion) as the development budget in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) to realize the budget allocation for the said year by 72 percent.

As IRNA reported on Wednesday, over the past three years, issues like the pandemic and sanctions have reduced Iranian oil revenues and the government's incomes in general. This has affected the allocation of budget in all areas including the development and infrastructure.

Despite the above-mentioned hurdles, the country's economy is passing through the hard conditions and is moving toward stability.

Earlier this month, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji said the country's oil incomes in the previous Iranian calendar year were 10 percent more than the target set in the national budget bill for the year.

"The government did not have a budget deficit in terms of oil revenues in [the Iranian calendar year] 1400," Oji said.



Last year's development budget realized by 72%

The official stressed that Iran is not going to reveal the ways through which the country handles its oil exports.

According to Oji, based on the previous year's national budget bill the government was supposed to realize 1.99 quadrillion rials (over

\$7.9 billion) of oil revenues by the yearend while the oil ministry managed to realize 10 percent more than the mentioned figure.

President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year 1401, to the Majlis in early December 2021.

The budget for development projects is estimated at 2.51 quadrillion rials (about \$9.07 billion), with a 43 percent rise year on year.

The head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) said in October 2021 that the national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year has been prepared in a way that it will not face any deficits.

"Experts and decision-makers in preparing and drafting the [Iranian calendar year] 1401 budget bill have tried to have a macro view and to make sure that the decisions made by them will have positive effects for the entire nation and not just a certain group," Mirkazemi said in the 14th meeting of the budget bill preparation headquarters on October 10, 2021.

Iranian industrial workforce being trained in Germany

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Ali Rasoulian said Germany is currently holding training courses for Iranian industrial workforces, under the framework of an agreement previously signed between the two countries.

According to Rasoulian, the ISIPO has inked similar agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with South Korea and China as well, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

"These memorandums facilitate both manpower training and the transfer of related technologies into the country," the official said.

Iran and Germany signed an MOU for cooperation in the training and education of industry managers and entrepreneurs back in October 2018.

"In total, we provide more than 85 services in 25 categories to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) active in industrial parks,

including supporting the presence of Iranian units in foreign international exhibitions and accepting foreign trade delegations in Iran. We also have a plan for branding companies and financing them," Rasoulian said.

He further mentioned ISIPO's program for reviving idle industrial units, saying: "last year we had a good performance in reviving stagnant units. Although we had planned to activate 2,000 units, with the help provided, 2,067 units were revived."

The ISIPO head said that with the activation of the mentioned idle units, 35,000 new jobs were created in the country.

We plan to revive 2,000 idle units in the current year as well, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rasoulian mentioned other ISIPO programs for supporting units active in industrial parks and zones, saying: "Another plan is to increase the capacity of the units that



operate below their capacity. In this regard, we have targeted 3,300 units, and SMEs that have a good marketing and scientific level are the priority,"

The official noted that his organization has allocated two trillion rials (about \$7.2 million) in this regard, and is negotiating with the country's banking system in order for them to provide facilities to SMEs active in industrial parks.

Over 95m tons of goods loaded, unloaded in Hormozgan ports in a year

TEHRAN – More than 95 million tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded in the ports of Hormozgan province, in the south of Iran, during the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), a provincial official announced.

Alireza Mohammadi Karajiran, the director-general of the province's Ports and Maritime Department, said that the loading and unloading of goods in the ports of the province rose 16.7 percent in the past year, from its preceding year.

Of the mentioned 95 million tons, 56 million tons were non-oil goods, and 39 million tons were oil products, the official announced.

Saying that 58,992 vessels entered the ports of Hormozgan province in the past year, he said that loading

and unloading operations in the container sector of the ports reached 1.839 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs).

Based on the data released by Transport and Urban Development Ministry, loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 17 percent during the past year.

The ministry's data show that loading and unloading of goods in the country's ports reached 152.91 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year, while the figure stood at 130.69 million tons in the preceding year.

During the said year, loading and unloading operations in the container sector reached 2.1 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) with a weight of 24.57 million tons, which was 13.5 percent more than the 1.85 million TEUs in



the Iranian calendar year 1399, the report said.

The loading and unloading of goods during the previous year also grew by 12.8 percent in the dry bulk sector, while in the liquid bulk sector the figure increased by 12.6 percent, in the general cargo sector rose by 13.1 percent, and in the petroleum sector grew by 22.5 percent.

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

serious and vital.

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

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

According to Ports and Maritime Organization, the capacity of the country's ports has increased from 180 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 250 million tons in 1399 (ended in March 2021).

Fars province's annual fishery output stands at over 12,000 tons

TEHRAN- As announced by a provincial official, 12,437 tons of fishery was produced in Fars province during the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20).

Ali Fallahi, the director for fishery affairs in Agriculture Department of the province, said that of the figure 150 tons were caviars.

The official also put the value of annual worth of the province's caviar export at \$1.5 million.

As stated by an official with Iran Fisheries

Organization (IFO), production of 714,000 tons of fishery has been targeted for the current Iranian calendar year.

Morteza Afrasiabi, the acting head of the IFO's fishery development department, said that of the mentioned figure, 277,000 tons will be fishes bred in cages and 70,000 tons will be shrimps.

Achieving the targeted 714,000 tons of fishery requires infrastructure as well as

credits and banking facilities, the official added.

Fishery production has increased noticeably in Iran in recent years.

Enjoying high quality, Iran's fishery products were sold easily in the export markets, and also some new export destinations welcomed these products in the past three years; as new markets including China, South Korea, and the Eurasian Union nations opened up for Iranian fishery products.

CBI releases list of major defaulters on bank loans

TEHRAN- Central Bank of Iran released the list of major defaulters on bank loans on Wednesday.

The mentioned list, which comprises the names of major defaulters on loans received from 14 state-owned and private banks, is available at the website of the CBI.

Last week, CBI Public Relations Director Mostafa Qamari-Vafa had announced in a tweet: "The central bank, within the framework of the comprehensive plan to reform the banking network and based on financial discipline and credit health of banks, according to paragraph D of Note 16 of Budget Law of 1401 (current Iranian calendar year) will publish the names of major defaulters on bank loans from next

week."

According to the CBI, the table related to the large bank debtors' information will be completed in the middle of the next Iranian calendar month (April 20-May 20) after receiving the relevant information from the banks.

On April 11, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi pointed out that this level of transparency has been unprecedented in the country's banking history, saying that the deadbeats on bank loans have been revealed, and we hope that this will help the banks collect the debts and provide the ground for more creditworthy people, whether producers or ordinary people, to have access to the banking resources."

TEDPIX loses 818 points on Wednesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 818 points to 1.512 million on Wednesday.

Over 9.956 billion securities worth 58.561 trillion rials (about

\$212.9 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index gained 182 points, but the second market's index dropped 4,062 points.

TEDPIX returned to the level of above 1.5m points on Monday.

The index rose 9,000 points to 1.454 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported, the indices of Iran

Khodro Investment Development Company (IKIDO), Social Security Investment Company (SSIC), Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), Saipa Company, and Isfahan Oil Refinery were the mostly followed ones during the past week.

From page 1 ► attacks during Ramadan and it is clear that the intention is to assert Israeli supremacy over the Holy Site, as seen through the attacks perpetrated by Israel's occupation forces and also the storming of Masjid Al-Aqsa by illegal Israeli settler extremists. As for the rise of a new Intifada, I believe we are already in the beginning stages of an Intifada, the only thing in the way of making the revolution manifest itself in the ways of the past is the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, but even the PA isn't enough to hold this Intifada down.

What are the main reasons for the uprising of Palestinians, especially those who live inside occupied territories in the West Bank?

The context to this assertion that I make, that the Intifada has already started, is key. The Palestinian population, inside the occupied territories [those occupied in 1967- West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza] are largely children (18 or under) and/or young adults. Take the example of an average 22-year-old, let's call them Khaled, they were born in the year that the Second Intifada [Palestinian Uprising] began. The Second Intifada was a response to the failure of the Oslo Process, which had ended the first Intifada in 1993 and which ushered in a short era of relative calm. Israel did not live up to its commitments under the Oslo Accords and additionally continued its settlement expansion in both the West Bank and Gaza. So think about that 22-year-old, what have they seen in their lifetime in terms of Israel or the international community helping them to secure a brighter future? Nothing. All they have seen is war, executions, arbitrary arrests, home demolitions, settlement expansion and the list goes on. Israel's past two Prime Ministers won't even consider the idea of a Palestinian State, Premier Naftali Bennett won't even meet with PA President Mahmoud Abbas. What hope do you have of securing peace when Israel's official rhetoric on a so-called two-State solution has returned to its pre-Oslo days, or when the positions of the Israeli regime regarding Palestinian self-governance has returned to that which they maintained during the 1970s? You saw what happened when Gazan's protest non-violently for their rights to just end the illegal siege on Gaza alone, the 'Great Return March' of 2018 resulted in the slaughter of 310+ Palestinians, the injury of 30,000+ and complete international silence. So Palestinians have made the active decision to pursue resistance by any means necessary. Israel is only speeding up the process by attacking the third Holy Site in Islam. Jenin camp is now a no go zone for Israeli occupation forces, Gaza's resistance

We are already in the beginning stages of an Intifada: analyst

“The Palestinian national movement has to be revived and led by the younger generations”



has evolved through new leadership and strategies into an unbreakable force, Israel is trapped and has enraged everyone from the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Bedouin Palestinians of al-Naqab, to those in the West Bank and beyond. Once the PA either takes a step back or is forced out of power in the West Bank, the Israeli regime will be under enormous stress and the situation is starting to head in that direction, the Palestinians are fed up and most of the Arab regimes have betrayed them. The last real prospects for the so-called two-state solution came through the Arab Peace Initiative, since then we have had nothing and that has pretty much faded away by around 2010 anyway.

How do you see the solidarity between Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with the recent developments?

The solidarity between Gaza and the West Bank is at an all-time high, but that isn't the most important thing because these two territories, along with Jerusalem have always been part of the picture to some extent. What is more shocking is the developments with Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Bedouins of al-Naqab, especially in the case of the Bedouins. Israel, despite having placed Palestinian citizens of Israel under military law up until 1966, the Palestinians there have never really been the most active towards their cause for national liberation in the ways that those in the West Bank and Gaza have been. This is not to undermine them, as many of them have resisted and for instance, the national Palestinian holiday, Land Day, is celebrated yearly as a marker in Palestine's history of resistance, but as a whole, they tend to be

less active as those under the direct military occupation in the 1967 occupied territories. This is rapidly changing and more are becoming active. As for the Bedouins, despite massive displacement during the Nakba, Bedouin communities in al-Naqab and elsewhere have been perhaps the friendliest of all Palestinians to Israel, due to a large portion of them not necessarily aligning themselves with a national identity, Israel is now turning this situation on its head. Israel seeks to move millions of Jewish Israeli settlers into their lands, demolish their villages and usurp the territory for Israeli settlements and projects, this has driven many Bedouins to align themselves with their natural allies up north and elsewhere and has been a driver of Palestinian nationalism in Bedouin communities. Palestinians today are becoming more united than ever before.

Do you think the new moves by Palestinians are a kind of response or reaction to the normalization of ties between Israel and some Arab states?

The normalization deals were the last nails in the so-called two-State solution coffin. Jordan and Egypt had of course normalized back in the 80s and 90s, but these new deals followed by the recent 'Negev Conference' is a clear sign that the Palestinian national movement has to be revived and led by the younger generations. The biggest negotiating chip the Palestinian Authority had in possible talks with Israel was the backing of the Arab Regimes, this has faded and the PA is simply there to do Israel's dirty work in the West Bank now. Palestinians

overwhelmingly want President Mahmoud Abbas to resign and the PA, which has now absorbed the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), is in essence the new South Lebanon Army. The PA does not even possess the symbolic power of the Arab masses, as the PLO once did under its commander in chief Yasser Arafat. The people are turning to a new strategy and the Palestinian parties engaged in armed struggle - all considered terrorist groups to the West - are the ones to which Palestinians gravitate, they will all be part of the new Palestinian movement in the future. The launch of the Masar Badil - the Palestinian Alternative Revolutionary Path (PARP) Movement - is an expression of what is to come in the future. If the Palestinian revolution is successful and weakening Israel and scoring more symbolic victories against it, we will see that the Arab Regimes that were heading towards normalization will have to adapt to a new approach and those that normalized will eventually face problems.

How do you evaluate Western countries' reaction to what is going on in Palestine, especially in comparison with their support for Ukraine? In Palestine, Western powers call on "both sides" to "step back from the brink".

The Western world, which is really controlled by the United States, is openly hypocritical. They will support whoever benefits their interests and there are no principles involved here. It will, however, be entertaining to watch these Western regimes and their propaganda machines answer questions when it comes to double standards. Why do they support Ukrainians fighting an invading force and using Molotov cocktails, cheering on the Ukrainian armed forces in the process, but when it comes to Palestinians they aren't allowed to or they are terrorists? Well, it comes back to these regimes having no clearly definable principles. The Western world believes in Capitalist Liberal hegemony, whether the political parties in power are right or left, they reflect this view. The West views its own Liberal ideology as superior, this is why we hear news anchors call Ukraine a "relatively civilized country", as opposed to the Global South that they see as inferior. Now that Liberal Hegemony has failed, we are moving into a multipolar order, the Western populations are turning rapidly to far-Right Nationalism and with that, we will continue to see more manifestations of White Supremacy. At this point, the often racist Western perspective is not the main concern, Palestinians shouldn't have to wait for a white savior to save them, one who looks down on them as inferior, they will ultimately be the ones to determine their own fate.

an invading force and using Molotov cocktails, cheering on the Ukrainian armed forces in the process, but when it comes to Palestinians they aren't allowed to or they are terrorists? Well, it comes back to these regimes having no clearly definable principles. The Western world believes in Capitalist Liberal hegemony, whether the political parties in power are right or left, they reflect this view. The West views its own Liberal ideology as superior, this is why we hear news anchors call Ukraine a "relatively civilized country", as opposed to the Global South that they see as inferior. Now that Liberal Hegemony has failed, we are moving into a multipolar order, the Western populations are turning rapidly to far-Right Nationalism and with that, we will continue to see more manifestations of White Supremacy. At this point, the often racist Western perspective is not the main concern, Palestinians shouldn't have to wait for a white savior to save them, one who looks down on them as inferior, they will ultimately be the ones to determine their own fate.

Guterres calls for Ukraine ceasefire amid warning over UN's existence

From page 1 ► “I really don't know what's the point of entering in the game with Ukrainians on such issues” report have cited Polianskiy as saying and maintaining that Russia has already offered to create humanitarian corridors on multiple occasion but Ukraine “didn't use them or misused them”.

Ukraine has accused Russia of hindering the joint efforts to create such safe routes

Earlier this month, the UN humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, traveled to both Ukraine and Russia to try to assess any possibilities for a cease-fire but returned with a pessimistic tone.

On Monday however, Griffiths suggested that there could be what he described as “some ripeness” for a cease-fire as the Orthodox Easter holiday approaches on Sunday.

UN spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric says the world body had already informed the two countries before Guterres went public with his appeal to Moscow and Kyiv noting “we are always hopeful about the prospects for a ceasefire.

This comes as more than 200 former senior UN officials have warned Guterres he risks ending the world body's very existence, let alone its irrelevance unless the Secretary-General takes a more personal role to mediate a peaceful solution to the Ukraine war.

The former staff members, including many former senior officials such as UN undersecretaries, issued the warning to Guterres in a joint letter.

They have urged Guterres to take the lead role in peace talk efforts between the two sides saying this “could include visits to the conflict-stricken areas, discussions with the opposing sides, even moving your own office temporarily to Europe, closer to the urgently needed negotiations and, thereby, indicating the UN's resolve to address this major crisis head-on.”

The tone of the letter suggests concern by the signatories the UN chief is not living up to his responsibilities.

The letter urges him to be prepared to take personal risks to secure peace, saying the UN is facing “an existential threat”.

“What we and the broader public want to see, though, is a political UN presence and public engagement, in addition to the UN's notable humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis,” the authors said.

“We want to see a clear strategy to re-establish peace, starting with a provisional ceasefire, and the use of the UN's capacity for good offices, mediation, and conflict-resolution.

Critics say there is concern that mediation in Ukraine (where Russia argues it is fighting NATO's expansion on its border) towards peace has been conducted by actors ranging from different countries instead of an international approach.

This is in stark contrast to the Cuban missile crisis when in 1961, the newly appointed Burmese UN secretary-general, U Thant, played a major role in de-escalating and then mediating the conflict between Russia and the United States.

Likewise, during the buildup to the Persian Gulf war the UN secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar convinced the U.S. to negotiate with Iraq.

Prior to the 2003 illegal American invasion of Iraq, the UN also took the task of mediation very seriously and its senior envoy Sergio Vieira



de Mello was in the country's capital Baghdad when an explosion by terrorists at the office of the UN headquarters led to his death.

The authors of the letter include Jeffrey Feltman, UN undersecretary-general for political affairs 2012-2018; Andrew Gilmour, the former UN assistant secretary-general for human rights between 2016 and 19; Franz Baumann, former UN assistant secretary-general for the general assembly until 2015; Ajay Chhibber, assistant secretary-general UNDP; and José Antonio Ocampo a former United Nations undersecretary-general for economic and social affairs.

The signatories have pointed out that “we have decided to raise our voice out of concern for the existential challenge that the United Nations is facing in this historic juncture,”

They write the crisis where Russia on one side and NATO on the other “severely undermines the post-world war two global order. It is the pinnacle of a series of threats to humanity's peace and security, shared prosperity, and respect for human rights that the UN embodies.”

Defenders of the UN Secretary-General argue that Guterres has been paralyzed in taking any effective measures because of the scale of division between the permanent members of the UN security council, as well as by votes in the general assembly that have revealed deep splits.

The authors of the letter do acknowledge they are not aware of any behind-the-scenes mediation that Guterres may be involved in.

“We know that you care deeply about ensuring a positive impact of our United Nations on humanity and the planet, which will also mark your legacy at the helm of the world body,” they write.

“We, therefore, implore you to intensify your personal efforts, deploying all capabilities at your disposal and acting upon lessons learned from previous conflicts, for the cessation of hostilities and conflict resolution through peaceful means,”

“This is the raison d'être of the United Nations, which is being tested again in this case. We are horrified at the alternative, the UN becoming increasingly irrelevant and, eventually, succumbing to the fate of its predecessor, the League of Nations, with the human losses and material destruction that went with it,” the letter concludes.

There has also been some criticism of the signatories of the letter itself, as they cite one of the risks to the UN's decline is because Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council with veto power.

Analysts say similar concern was not expressed when another permanent member of the UN Security Member with veto power, the U.S. invaded other countries.

Nevertheless, more than 200 former UN officials conveying such a warning to the Secretary-General himself is another example of the many issues which experts say the United Nations itself faces.

US to train Ukrainian troops on howitzers



The Pentagon will train Ukrainian troops on how to use howitzer artillery systems sent to Ukraine to help in its war with Russia, a senior U.S. defense official said Monday.

U.S. forces “in coming days” will train Ukrainian forces on howitzers outside the country. The troops will then return to Ukraine to relay the information and train their fellow soldiers.

“We believe we're going to be able to start this training in the

next several days. It'll be just the initial efforts. There may be additional ones and in other places and at other times,” the official told reporters.

They did not say where such training will take place, but it's likely that American troops based on NATO's eastern flank, particularly in Poland and Romania, will conduct the lessons. The Pentagon has deployed thousands of U.S. forces to bolster the easternmost areas of NATO since Russia's war

on Ukraine began on Feb. 24.

The official added that the U.S. military is exploring other options for training the Ukrainians on additional systems or further educating them on using howitzers, which were included in the Biden administration's latest military aid package to the country

The U.S. has already trained several Ukrainian soldiers on how to use switchblade drones, which can strike targets such as personnel and vehicles. Those

troops were already in the U.S. for planned military education and returned to their country earlier this month.

The Pentagon has since explored other ways it can help Ukraine use the weapons it sends over.

The aid has drawn the ire of Russia, however, with Moscow warning Washington last week that there will be “unpredictable consequences” if it continues arming Ukraine.

(Source: The Hill)



Ardabil's first 5-star hotel to be inaugurated on Eid al-Fitr



From page1 ► Last April, the tourism authorities of the province announced that they have developed extensive plans to draw more tourists during the winter season to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country.

Historical mansion in Gorgan turns into traditional café

TEHRAN – The historical mansion of Molla Sanam Baqal in the historical texture of Gorgan, the capital of northern Golestan province, has turned into a traditional café, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The Qajar-era (1789-1925) mansion, which is privately owned, has been fully restored, CHTN quoted Rahman Farmani as saying on Tuesday.

A budget of 800 million rials (about \$3,000) was allocated to the project, the official added.

The traditional café has generated three job opportunities directly, he noted.

The mansion has been inscribed on the national heritage list.

Gorgan, previously known as Astarabad, is situated along a small tributary of the Qareh River, 37 kilometers from the Caspian Sea. The city, which was prosperous during the Achaemenid era (c. 550 – 330 BC), for long suffered from inroads of the Turkmen tribes who occupied the plain north of the Qareh River and were subjected to incessant Qajar-Turkmen tribal conflicts in the 19th century according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

It was renamed Gorgan in the 1930s after

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.

This year's Ramadan began on April 03, which falls in the spring season in Iran and it is estimated to end on May 2. Because of the nature of the lunar calendar system, the dates of Ramadan vary each year and there is always a sort of disagreement among scholars as to when Ramadan precisely start or come to an end.



being devastated by a massive earthquake. In modern times the plain around Gorgan has become a flourishing granary.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous.

Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Ancient castle in northwest Iran to be restored

TEHRAN – Zahhak Castle, in Hashtroud, East Azarbaijan province, is planned to undergo some rehabilitation works, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Built around 2000 BC, Zahhak castle is one of the lesser-known tourist attractions of the northwestern province. It was used as a government building and later as a fire temple in the times of the Parthians (247 BC – 224 CE).

Strengthening the stone foundations, repairing the walls, and documenting the excavated relics are parts of the project, Ahmad Hamzehzadeh announced on Wednesday.

Due to the fact that Zahhak Castle is the only Parthian-era work remaining in the northwest of the country, the

restoration of this historical castle is always on the agenda of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, he noted.

Perched on top of a hill near Hashtroud, northwest Iran, the castle contains depictions of animals and symbols that show what life was like for the royalty in ancient Iran. It includes a square-shaped hall made of bricks built during the Parthia period. During this time, Zoroastrianism was the religion of the ruling kings, who likely used part of the castle for a fire temple.

The castle is named after a Persian legend, Zahhak is the name of an Arab king who conquered and ruled over ancient Iran. The story is



recounted in the Shahnameh, or Book of Kings, written by Ferdowsi. Kawa is the hero in this particular story, who rescues his Kurdish people in Iran from Zahhak's control.

Zahhak castle also served as a military defense during the Parthian era given its position close to the Iranian border with other nations in the northwest, including Turkey and Armenia.

Soaked in history and culture for millennia, Tabriz, which is the capital of East Azarbaijan, embraces several historical and religious sites, including the Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

The city became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his

successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548 when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

The ancient city was declared a world craft city of carpet weaving by the World Craft in 2016. It also bore the title of 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital.

National Seal of Excellence awarded to 28 Iranian handicrafts

TEHRAN – The National Seal of Excellence was awarded to 28 high-quality works handcrafted by the natives of the northern Mazandaran province over the past Iranian year (ended on March 20), the provincial tourism chief has said.

The National Seal of Excellence is given to high-quality, selected works to support craftspeople, improve the quality of their works and preserve the originality of this industry, and create sustainable employment.

The handicrafts sales of the province also reached 1.1 million dollars in global markets during the mentioned time, Mehdi Izadi said on Wednesday.

During the time noted, some 40 handicrafts markets were also set up throughout the province, the official added.

An early civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabarestan).

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol



invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty.

The northern section of the region consists of lowland alongside the Caspian and upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Marshy backlands dominate the coastal plain, and extensive

gravel fans fringe the mountains. The climate is permanently subtropical and humid, with very hot summers.

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.

Shiraz was named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a "world city of filigree". And Qassemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts.

Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Cultural heritage elements added to national list

TEHRAN – A total of 10 cultural elements, which are practiced in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, have been added to the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Wednesday announced the inscriptions in separate letters it submitted to the governor-general of the province, CHTN reported.

The skills of making several local dishes and pickles, the art of Khameh-duzi, a traditional embroidery, and traditional plowing of the land were amongst entrees to the prestigious list.

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



The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

10 properties in Hormozgan made national heritage

TEHRAN – A total of 10 historical and natural sites in the southern province of Hormozgan have been inscribed on the national heritage list, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Four historical sites, four intangible items, and two natural sites were added to the national heritage list during the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), Sohrab Banavand explained on Wednesday, CHTN reported.

Known as the province of islands, Hormozgan is located on the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf. It embraces scenic islands among which Kish, Hormuz, Hengam, and Qeshm are the most beautiful ones and top tourist destinations in southern Iran.



Over the past couple of decades, the coral Kish Island has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop, and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever-

growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks, and retail complexes.

Hormuz, which is mostly barren and hilly, is situated some eight kilometers off the coast of the Strait of Hormuz, which attracts many tourists

by its colorful mountains, silver sand shores, and great local people.

Hengam Island has scenery rocky shores, serene sunset, and kind natives, which can attract travelers who enjoy a relaxing trip by spending time on this tranquil island.

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

products, especially Turkmen handmade, are so famous in this bazaar.

Gorgan's old bazaar is one of the most beautiful bazaars in northern Iran in terms of architectural style. According to available evidence, this bazaar dates back to the 375 AHS. The Jammeh mosque that is located next to the bazaar, is the oldest in the city.

There is an alley in the bazaar that the shops of the bazaar are located on either side of this alley. The Na'lbandan Bazaar has several Rasteh (there is an alley in the bazaar that the shops of the bazaar are

Na'lbandan Bazaar: an old bazaar with different architecture in Gorgan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Na'lbandan bazaar is a local bazaar in downtown Gorgan, north

of Iran, and is one of the city's historic places.

Local bazaars are one of the city's most popular attractions for tourists. The bazaar is a crowded and noisy place with very tasty and varied foods and vegetables.

In general, Golestan province has two local bazaars, one of them is located in Gorgan and the other one in Gonbad called Russia bazaar. These bazaars are located about 100 kilometers from each other.

This bazaar is one of the great centers of presentation of all kinds of native and non-native products. Its handicraft



located on either side of this alley.) that connected by sub-Rasteh.

Improper waste management incurs loss of \$1.7b annually

TEHRAN – Improper waste management brings the environmental damage amounting to 448 trillion rials (nearly \$17 billion) to the country, Hassan Pasandideh, director of the waste management office of the Department of Environment (DOE), has announced.

Today, one of the most serious problems of the country's environment is improper management of all municipal, household, industrial, hospital, and hazardous wastes, which has caused environmental pollution and a negative impact on the quality and quantity of biological resources (water, soil, and air), he explained.

Developed countries recycle nearly 70 percent of the total waste, but in Iran, an estimated 10 to 17 percent is recycled, which shows that we are weak in segregation at source, he lamented.

He went on to say that the most important problems and obstacles in waste management in the country are the lack of implementation of the national program by setting specific goals, lack of necessary control in decision-making, lack of proper organizational, executive, and operational structure in related organizations, lack of priority on environmental issues, especially waste management in urban, rural, medical, industrial



and agricultural sectors.

Specifically, the first law that deals with the issue of waste is the "Waste Management Law" approved by the Majlis [Iranian Parliament] in 2004, with no revision in over 17 years.

One of the most important environmental problems in the country is the issue of improper management of urban and rural wastes, especially in the northern provinces, he further highlighted.

He estimated the amount of waste produced in Mazandaran and Gilan provinces as 3,500 and 300 tons per day, respectively.

Proper implementation of waste management programs in these two

provinces and promoting education and community members' attention to their social responsibility towards the environment, creating a suitable platform for non-governmental sector participation and encouraging private sector investment, the introduction of appropriate technologies, and utilization of knowledge-based firms in this sector will lead to the development of waste recycling, which will lead to sustainable job opportunities for local communities, and economic benefits for all sectors, even citizens, he suggested.

Iranians produce 50,000 tons of waste per day
Per capita waste production in

European countries is 300 to 350 grams, and in Iran, it is 700 grams and sometimes up to one kilogram, which unfortunately a very small part of it is separated and recycled.

With an average per capita of 700 grams to 1 kg, Iranians produce more than 50,000 tons of waste per day, which is basically twice the world standard.

This situation is worse in the capital city of Tehran. The per capita waste production in Tehran is 750 to 800 grams per person daily. In fact, every person in Tehran produces about 5 times their own weight of waste every year.

According to statistics, about 8,000 tons of waste is produced daily in Tehran, nearly 17 percent of which is recycled, and the rest is landfilled, while in the developed world 70 percent of the waste is recycled and 30 percent is buried.

Many countries have been so successful that some even claim to reduce waste to zero by 2030, and some are looking to generate energy from waste.

In Iran, it requires the promotion of a culture that must begin in schools, or governments must adopt incentive and punishment systems to reduce waste production and make separation at source into a culture among Iranian families.

National Document for the Elderly to take effect next year

TEHRAN – The National Document for the Elderly will come into force in the next [Iranian calendar] year (March 2023–March 2024), Hesamoddin Allameh, head of the secretariat of the National Council of the Elderly, has announced.

The Document thoroughly focuses on various aspects of the elderly's lives by meeting six prime objectives of income and livelihood, health, training and employment, building an empowering environment, promoting the cultural level of society in the field of aging, and developing the infrastructure required for aging, he explained.

According to this document, it is necessary to see the duties of the devices in relation to aging in future budgets.

For implementing the National Document for the Elderly, at least a hundredfold increase in the aging budget is required, Allameh said.

Referring to a fivefold increase in the National Document for the Elderly, he stated that in the current year's budget bill, a sum of 500 billion rials (about \$2 million) has been proposed.

A total of 100 billion rials (nearly \$400,000) has been proposed to implement the document, he stated.

The population of senior citizens currently exceeds 8.8 million in Iran, constituting less than 10 percent of the whole population, and the annual growth rate of the country's aging population is about 3.8 percent, Hassan Salmannejad, head of the secretariat of the National Council for the Elderly, said in December 2018.



The 2011 census observed a significant demographic change in the elderly population of Iran (the percentage of the elderly population increased from 7.27 to 8.20 percent from 2006 to 2011, and to 8.65 percent in 2016). The aging population is predicted to rise to 10.5 percent in 2025 and to 21.7 percent in 2050.

Mohammad Esmaeil Akbari, the senior advisor to the minister of health, has said that the world has grown about 5 years older over the past 70 years, but the population of Iran has unfortunately grown 10 years older in the past 60 years.

"In the next 20 years, we will be one of the oldest countries in the world and the oldest by the next 30 years," he explained.

Although the increase in the number of old persons in any country indicates an increase in life expectancy, the elderly's population growth needs more welfare and social institutions, which affects the policies and capacities of the country.

Amphibians and Reptiles from Iran

Part 3

Within Iran it probably occurs in west and east Azarbaijan eastward along the northern flanks of the Alborz mountains through Gilan and into Mazandaran; all of the well-documented Iranian records appear to be from Mazandaran.

Frogs and toads. The frogs and toads of Iran are in general representative of the Palearctic anuran (tailless) fauna and belong to four families, all of which occur throughout the north temperate regions of both Old and New Worlds.

Frogs are most numerous, both in numbers of species and population sizes, in the north and west of Iran, although each geographic region has at least one species of frog or toad.

A single genus and species of spadefoots, *Pelobates syriacus syriacus*, extends into northwestern Iran. The Southwest Asian spadefoot is readily distinguished from other Iranian frogs by the vertical pupils of its eyes, lack of the large parotoid glands on the back of the head characteristic of toads, and the presence of a spade-like digging tubercle on the underside of the hind foot.

It is found in light, loose soils in the lowlands and spends the day burrowed into the soil, emerging at night to feed on insects and other small invertebrates. In northern Iran, the southeastern extent of its distribution, it is known only from Urmia basin (west and east Azarbaijan) and the Gilan and Mazandaran coasts of the Caspian Sea.

The common toad, *Bufobufo*, is widely distributed through the Palearctic and just enters Southwest Asia in Turkey and northern Iran, where, in spite of its European vernacular name, it is by no means common.

It has been found in Iran only along the coast of

the Caspian Sea in Gilan and Mazandaran provinces. Little is known about its habitat since few specimens have been collected, all in pastures invaded by shrubs along the Caspian coast.

It is not yet known with certainty to what subspecies the Iranian common toads belong, but they may be *Bufobufoverucosissima*, which occurs in the Caucasus.

The green toad, *Bufoviridis*, is the most common, most conspicuous, and most widely distributed toad in Iran. Females are light, dull brown, or olive-green, with large, conspicuous green blotches. These blotches are not so pronounced in males, which consequently are more uniform in color.

This toad's broad ecological tolerance enables it to live in most provinces of Iran where annual rainfall is dependable enough to produce breeding sites most years. Three subspecies of the green toad are now recognized within Iran; *B. v. viridis* in northwestern Iran, *B. v. arabicus* in southwestern Iran, and *B. v. kermanensis* in the mountains of Kerman.

Bufo latastii oblongus replaces the green toad in the mountains in Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan, while the recently described *Bufokavirensis* has been found in the Kavir desert south of Tehran.

Three small toads related to the green toad are found in scattered localities in southern Iran. The earless toad, *Bufo surdus surdus*, from Kerman and Baluchistan provinces has been found from near sea level at Bandar-e Langa to 2,150 m at the summit of Kuhha-ye Genu. It extends eastward to Quetta in Pakistan.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
To be continued

WHO, IBTO discuss fields of joint cooperation

TEHRAN – The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) reviewed bilateral cooperation over the next four years in an online meeting on Wednesday.

In August 2021, the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization and the High Institute for Research and Education in Transfusion Medicine were selected for the third time as partner centers of the WHO.

The programs include a workshop on centralization and management of blood transfusion centers, a workshop on purification and optimal use of plasma, and two research projects on the management of blood donors and the study of blood health and adequacy in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

It was further decided that the workshop on centralization and management of blood transfusion centers, as the first activity of the partner center, would be held online in July for four days and two hours every day for the member countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Office.

Moreover, the IBTO will help implement the World Health Organization strategies on blood health and adequacy in the Eastern



Mediterranean region.

Blood donation in Iran

Blood donation in Iran has long been done voluntarily as over 2.1 million Iranians donate blood annually, the IBTO spokesman Bashir Haji-Beigi said on June 14, 2021.

There are currently 178 blood donation centers in the country, with Fars, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Tehran, and Mazandaran provinces having the largest number of blood donation centers, he stated.

Highest blood donation in Eastern Mediterranean

While blood donation in 70 countries still

depends on replacement or paid donors, Iran is the first country in the region that has enjoyed voluntary blood donation by 100 percent since 2007.

More than 85 percent of all donated blood worldwide is used to produce blood products, while the rate is 65 percent in Eastern Mediterranean countries. Iran ranks among the highest-income countries in terms of converting more than 97 percent of the blood donated by people to plasma-derived medicinal products (PDMP).

Only 55 of 171 countries produce PDMP through the fractionation of plasma collected in the reporting country. A total of 90 countries reported that all PDMP are imported, 16 countries reported that no PDMP was used during the reporting period, and 10 countries did not respond to the question, according to WHO.

Iran currently has the highest blood donation rate in the Eastern Mediterranean region so out of 9.9 million blood donation units in this region, more than two million belongs to Iran.

Also, the index of blood donation is 25 per 1,000 populations, while in the member states of the Eastern Mediterranean region, this number is 14.9 per 1000.



birds for having sufficient resources, as the movement of migratory birds is closely linked to the seasonal availability of resources.

about 530 species of birds in Iran, 320 of which are migratory species, some of which are native species.

Among the various groups of migratory birds wintering in Iran, the largest population belongs to the group of geese, swans, and ducks amounting to 781,499 and the smallest population of seven are the long-tailed ducks or oldsquaw.

The provinces of Mazandaran and Golestan are the first provinces with the highest number of migratory

fit from this rich climate.

Every year, from early September to late February, Iran hosts rare species of migratory birds heading from north to the southern countries due to reduced seasonal temperatures and food availability.

It is estimated that there are about 50 billion birds in the world out of 9,000 species, many of which are migratory. Accordingly, about five to seven million birds migrate to Iran in different seasons. There are

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‘Water transfer from Sea of Oman entails no considerable environmental risk’

Transferring water from Sea of Oman to central drought-ridden provinces of the country, provided that the environmental requirements are met, will not poses threats to the environment, Issa Kalantari, the Department of Environment (DOE) chief has announced.

To provide the amount of water needed for the country, agriculture and industries, there is no choice but to use seawater, the incredible and abundant resources, now and in the future, Kalantari stated, IRNA reported on Monday.

He went on to say that Iran located in an arid and semi-arid area, is facing environmental problems including water shortage, sand and dust storms due to low precipitation amounts coupled with climate change.

شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان مشکل زیست محیطی ندارد

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست کشور گفت: شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان به استان های مختلف به شرط رعایت الزامات محیط زیستی، جانیایی مناسب در ساخت آب شیرین کن و ره سازی پساب آن مشکل و مانع زیست محیطی ندارد و از نظر این سازمان بلا مانع است. عیسی کلاتری دوشنبه شب در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: برای تامین آب کشاورزی، آشامیدنی و صنایع کشور چاره ای جز استفاده از آب دریا نداریم و باید چه اکنون و چه آینده به این منابع بیکران و بسیار فراوان رجوع کنیم. وی افزود: ایران کشور پر آبی نیست و سالهای سال با بحران بی آبی، خشکسالی و مسائل زیست محیطی، گرد و غبار و ریزگردها مواجه است.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON APRIL 20

New cases	1,607
New deaths	19
Total cases	7,212,395
Total deaths	140,896
New hospitalized patients	221
Patients in critical condition	1,225
Total recovered patients	6,954,941
Diagnostic tests conducted	50,601,607
Doses of vaccine injected	148,495,353

