

The Head of Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) Said the Fund Has Loaned \$36 Billion to Various Economic Projects Over the Past 10 Years, of Which Only \$5.0 Billion Has Been Returned

IRAN NEWS

Head of Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) Says the First Draft of the National Budget Bill for the Next Iranian Calendar Year 1403 (Starts on March 20, 2024) Will Be Submitted to the Majlis in Late October

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Steely Resolve of Palestinians Harbinger of Final Victory Over Israel

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi says the "steely resolve" of the Palestinians heralds the final victory over the Israeli regime. Raisi made the remark in a phone conversation with Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the political bureau of Hamas, on Sunday, a day after the Palestinian resistance movement launched the Operation al-Aqsa Storm with a heavy barrage of rockets in response to Israel's desecration of the al-Aqsa Mosque and increased settler violence. "What happened with the glorious operation of the Palestinian fighters in the occupied territories was the realization of the 70-year-old expectation of the Palestinian nation and the Islamic Ummah," the Iranian president said. Raisi said all Muslim nations would soon pray together in the al-Aqsa Mosque, the first 'Qibla' of Muslims. The president praised the courageous Palestinian operation and

said Muslim nations honor the dignity of the Palestinian resistance. Haniyeh, for his part, appreciated Raisi's principled stance as well as the support by the Iranian government and nation for resistance. He said although the resistance fighters lack the proportionate military equipment and facilities in comparison with those of Israel, they succeeded in disrupting the regime's balance in the surprise operation. Haniyeh said the achievements of Palestinian fighters in the battle against Israel were made with the support of the Islamic Ummah and Iran. Israeli media outlets say more than 700 Israeli settlers and troops have been killed as a result of Operation al-Aqsa Storm. Over 2,100 Israelis have also been injured. The media also say by unofficial estimates approximately 750 Israeli soldiers and settlers have been missing.

Iran's Inflation to Shrink, Says World Bank



TEHRAN (IranPress) - In its recent report on the economic situation of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the World Bank significantly revised Iran's economic growth for 2022. In October 2022, the World Bank announced Iran's economic growth for that year at 2.9%. The report highlights improvements in Iran's trade balance, which increased from 3.5% of GDP in 2022 to 4.8% of GDP in 2023. This figure was -3.1% in 2021. Additionally, the government's financial balance is expected to improve from -1.9% in 2022 to -1.6% this year. In 2021, this figure stood at -3.2%, indicating a positive trend over the past three years. The report also predicts a decrease in Iran's inflation rate, estimating it to be 42.6% this year compared to last year's rate of 46.5%. It is further expected to reach 35.8% next year. While the Middle East and North Africa region experienced a growth rate of 6% in 2022 due to increased oil and gas prices, this figure has dropped to 1.9% this year. Furthermore, oil-exporting countries have seen a decline in their economic growth from last year's rate of 6.2% to just 1.5% this year. Saudi Arabia, which had an impressive growth rate of 8.7% last year, is projected to enter a recession with an economic growth rate of -0.9% this year. Iraq, which experienced 7% growth last year, will also enter a recession with an estimated economic growth rate of -2.3%. On the other hand, several countries in the region are expected to experience positive growth rates, including Qatar (2.8%), UAE (3.4%), Bahrain (2.8%), Kuwait (0.8%), Oman (1.4%), Algeria (2.1%), Egypt (4.2%), Tunisia (1.2%), Jordan (2.6%), Morocco (2.8%), West Bank and Gaza (3.2%), and Djibouti (4.7%).

Al-Aqsa Storm Made Israelis Believe in Their Nightmare of Collapse

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri says the "glorious" Palestinian military operation in the occupied territories made the rulers of the regime believe their "nightmare of collapse" is coming to life. In a message issued on Sunday, Baqeri congratulated the Gaza-based resistance fighters on their victorious raid, dubbed Al-Aqsa Storm, saying Palestinian youth will soon enough liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque from the occupation of the Zionist enemy. "Al-Aqsa Storm turned the Zionist leaders' nightmare of the regime's collapse into a certainty and proved that some desperate efforts, such as the ridiculous normalization show, will not be able to slow down or delay the decline and the collapse of the spider's den (Israel)," he said. "The Palestinian groups' combined and glorious operation ... against the positions and fortifications of armed to teeth Zionist regime in the occupied territories, once again proved the false awe and fake power of this occupying regime." On Saturday, the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement launched its large-scale operation with a heavy barrage of rockets in response to Israel's desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and increased settler violence. Baqeri emphasized that the surprise operation demonstrated "bright scenes of resistance and perseverance" as it was "the product of the holy anger that the Zionist enemy has planted in the oppressed Palestinian nation." Military analysts and strategists, he added, have been bewildered at the level of power achieved by the Palestinian nation after decades of oppression. "Once the stone Intifada (uprising) was the Palestinian nation's only defense tool, but today Palestinian fighters have reached a level of capability that enables them to deal strong blows to the Zionist enemy and make a mockery of its air defense systems and Iron Dome by firing thousands of rockets and missiles as part of a complex combined operation," the top general said.



Iran, Oman Discuss Prisoner Swap, Judicial Cooperation



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Director-Generals of the Department of Consular Affairs of Iran and Oman's Foreign Ministries have conferred on signing agreements on transferring convicts, extraditing prisoners, as well as judicial cooperation. Following the first joint consular meeting between Iran and Oman in September 2023, Director-General of the Department of Consular Affairs of Oman's Foreign Ministry traveled to Tehran to meet and hold talks with the Iranian side over the latest consular actions and agreements between the two countries. The two sides discussed the signing of agreements on transferring convicts, extraditing the prisoners, as well as judicial cooperation in criminal and civil affairs between the two countries.

Iran, Russia Considering Cooperation in Joint Automobile, Parts Production

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Tehran and Moscow have discussed cooperation in the joint production of automobiles and auto parts in a meeting between Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Manuchehr Manteghi and Head of Russia's Central Scientific Research Institute of Automobile and Automotive Engines (NAMI) Fyodor Nazarov. In this meeting, which was attended by the managers of Iran's major carmakers Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) and SAIPA Group, the two sides explored avenues of cooperation between the Iranian automakers with NAMI for the implementation of the Russian institute's standards on Iranian products. Reducing costs for the export of IKCO and SAIPA products to Russia and taking the necessary measures to create competitive opportunities in the Russian market for Iranian products were also among the subjects discussed in the meeting. Speaking in this gathering, Nazarov pointed out that Iran's automotive market and automotive industry are progressing significantly and there is a good potential for bilateral cooperation in this field. "The NAMI institute has 115 kilometers of test lines for all types of cars, 3000 testing and measurement equipment for auto parts, and 40 different routes to perform different car tests," the official said. He further emphasized that his institute is ready for joint cooperation with Iranian companies, including SAIPA and IKCO in the fields of science, car design, car testing, etc. "The tests of cars and car parts of the NAMI Institute of Russia are approved by all the centers that have a con-

tract with this company all over the world," he added. Manteghi for his part called for the establishment of a representative office of the NAMI Institute in Tehran to conduct tests on Iran-made automobiles and auto parts. The managers of IKCO and SAIPA companies also made some proposals for joint cooperation with the Russian institute.



Iran, Afghanistan Cooperating to Provide Humanitarian Aids to Afghan Quake Victims



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi has said that Iran and Afghanistan are cooperating to provide humanitarian aid to earthquake victims of Herat, Afghanistan. Kazemi Qomi met and held talks with the head of Kabul Zone of Afghanistan's Ministry of Natural Disasters Maulvi Salim Haqqani on Sunday to coordinate in providing comprehensive aid to Herat earthquake victims. After meeting with Haqqani, Kazemi Qomi wrote on social networking websites that "today's meeting at the embassy was at the request of Afghanistan's Ministry of Natural Disasters in response to my tweet yesterday". The coordination for providing comprehensive aid to the earthquake victims of Herat continues, Kazemi Qomi said, adding, "I am in contact with my colleagues to activate the regional contact committee." More than 2,000 people were killed in earthquakes in Afghanistan and more than 9,000 were injured, the Taliban administration said on Sunday.

Zionist Regime Attacks on Gaza to Further Complicate Situation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian and Hungarian foreign ministers conferred on the expansion of bilateral relations and recent developments in West Asia, especially Palestine. In a telephone conversation on Sunday, Hossain Amir-Abdollahian and Hungary's Foreign and Trade Minister Peter Siaro exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral relations and recent developments in West Asia, especially Palestine. Referring to the repeated violations of UN resolutions, the continued occupation of Palestinian lands and the continuation of settlement constructions by the Zionist regime, the Iranian foreign minister emphasized that "the continuation of the Israeli regime's attacks on Gaza in the current situation will complicate the situation and increase the possibility of the spread of war." Amir-Abdollahian also highlighted the repeated violation of international laws and the spread of warmongering policies by the Zionist regime. The Hungarian foreign minister also pointed out that dialogue and cooperation is the right solution to resolve regional conflicts and stated that Hungary always wants to establish peace and save people's lives in such situations. Expressing hope for the end of this conflict in the Middle East, Siaro emphasized the need for all countries to bear responsibility and play their own parts. In the conversation, both sides expressed their satisfaction with the positive trend of relations based on mutual trust.



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Russia to Seek Return to UN Rights Body Despite Ukraine War

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Russia, which was ousted from the UN Human Rights Council after its forces invaded Ukraine, will attempt a return to the body on Tuesday -- an uncertain move that will provide a gauge of its international support. The UN General Assembly will vote that day to elect 15 new members to the Geneva-based UN body, for terms running from 2024 to 2026. The council's 47 members are allocated by region, and each large regional group usually pre-selects its own candidates, which the General Assembly then generally approves. But this year two groups have more candidates than available seats: Latin America (candidates from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Peru will contest three seats), and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria and Russia will vie for two seats). Moscow's candidacy has drawn skepticism, and the vote will come just days after a Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian village of Groza killed more than 50 people in a scene of carnage. "We hope UN members will firmly reject (Russia's) preposterous candidacy," a State Department spokesperson told AFP on condition of anonymity. "Members of Russia's forces have committed violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine," the spokesperson added. Mariana Katarova, a top UN expert, recently said repression inside Russia had intensified since its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, reaching levels "unprecedented in recent history." To be elected to the rights council, a country needs 97 votes of the UN's 193 member countries. In April 2022, 93 countries voted to suspend Russia from the council, while 24 opposed that move. That majority vote against Russia was less lopsided than other resolutions defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine, with around 140 countries approving. But the situation with the rights council is more complex, as some countries also seen as rights offenders fear they may face the same fate. The vote Tuesday will be by secret ballot -- perhaps shining a clearer light on a fragmented world in which several developing countries have grown weary of the West's persistent focus on Ukraine. "I think Western diplomats in New York are rather worried Russia could



sneak back into the Human Rights Council" in what would be "a public relations disaster for the UN on a massive scale," said Richard Gowan of the International Crisis Group. "Russia has always argued that many UN members sympathize with it in private but won't support it in public for fear of antagonizing Western powers," he added. "Moscow will hope that this supposed silent majority supports it in this secret vote." Vassily Nebenzia, the Russian ambassador to the UN, pushed back, saying: "There are no beacons of democracy or rogue states, as is sometimes being portrayed. No member state can claim to be immune from human

rights violations." Louis Charbonneau of the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) conceded that no member of the council "has an unblemished rights record," but added that "every UN member nation should recognize that the council has membership standards for which Russia and China show despicable disregard." His group has called on member countries to also refrain from voting for Beijing, citing its violations of the rights of China's Uyghur minority. China, however, risks little in the vote: It is one of four countries in the Asian regional group vying for four open seats.

Spain's PLD Space Launches Private Rocket in Milestone for Europe



MADRID (Reuters) - Spanish company PLD Space launched its recoverable Miura-1 rocket early on Saturday from a site in southwest Spain, carrying out Europe's first fully private rocket launch in a glimmer of hope for the region's stalled space ambitions. The startup's test night-time launch from Huelva came after two previous attempts were scrubbed. The Miura-1 rocket, named after a breed of fighting bull, is as tall as a three-storey building and has a 100-kg (220-pound) cargo capacity. The launch carried a payload to gather data, but this was not designed to be released during the suborbital test flight. Mission control video showed engineers cheering and congratulating one another as the rocket rose into the night sky. "My voice is shot after so much shouting," said a triumphant Raul Torres, CEO of PLD Space, shortly after the launch. He said all rocket systems worked "perfectly", adding that the company would now focus on tripling its workforce. "This is just the beginning." Spain's acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez posted on social media: "The launch of the Miura 1, the first rocket with 100% Spanish technology, has been a success. A milestone that positions Spain's research and development at the forefront of space transportation." The flight lasted 306 seconds. However, its maximum height of 46 kilometres was barely half the altitude its mission planners had hoped for, according to space.com. The partly reusable launcher landed in the Atlantic Ocean and the company was due to recover it later on Saturday, it said in a statement. A first attempt to launch the Miura-1 rocket in May was abandoned because of high-altitude winds. A second attempt in June failed when umbilical cables did not all detach on time, halting the lift-off as smoke and flames spewed from the rocket.

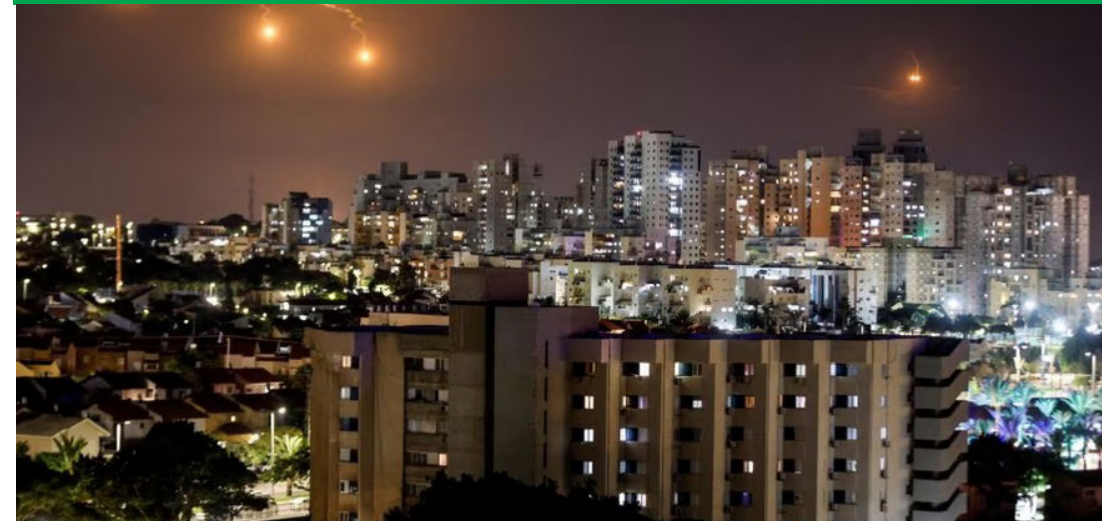
Europe's efforts to develop capabilities to send small satellites into space are in focus after a failed orbital rocket launch by Virgin Orbit from Britain in January. That system involved releasing the launcher from a converted Boeing 747. Saturday's mission on the Miura-1 demonstrator was the first of two scheduled suborbital missions. However, analysts say the most critical test will be the development of full orbital services on the larger Miura-5, planned for 2025. PLD Space faces competition from rivals in Germany, France or the UK for orbital flights from sites in Scandinavia and Scotland, including Rocket Factory Augsburg and Isar Aerospace. Saturday's small rocket launch took place under the shadow of disruption to Europe's mainstream space launch activities. In July, the last launch of Europe's largest rocket, the premier Ariane 5 space launcher, took place at the European spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana.

Europe has until recently depended on Ariane 5 and its 11-tonne-plus capacity for heavy missions, as well as Russia's Soyuz launcher for medium payloads and Italy's Vega, which is also launched from Kourou, for small ones. The end of Ariane 5 has left Europe with virtually no autonomous access to space until its successor, Ariane 6, is launched.

UK's Opposition Labour on Course for Landslide Election Victory

LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's opposition Labour Party is on course to win a landslide victory at a national election expected next year, according to an opinion poll published on Saturday. Most polls put Labour, which gathers in northern England this weekend for its annual conference, about 20 points ahead of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's governing Conservatives, although commentators say the lead is potentially fragile. The Survation poll, carried out for campaign group 38 Degrees and published by the Observer newspaper, questioned more than 11,000 voters between Sept. 11-25 and then used a model to generate constituency-by-constituency results. Its central projection was that Labour would win 420 seats, the Conservatives 149 seats and the Liberal Democrats 23, leaving Labour, who have been out of power since 2010, with a 190-seat majority in parliament's lower House of Commons. It predicted a range of 402-437 seats for Labour, and 132-169 seats for the Conservatives. At the last national election in 2019, the Conservatives won 365 seats and Labour 203. Survation used modelling known as multilevel regression and post-stratification (MRP) to reach constituency-level findings. Pollsters using the method successfully predicted the 2017 UK election result. The Observer said under the projected results, 12 of Sunak's cabinet ministers, including deputy prime minister Oliver Dowden and defence secretary Grant Shapps, faced losing their seats. The polling, which took place before the Conservatives' annual conference this week, found that in every constituency, the cost-of-living crisis and the state of the National Health Service were the two most important issues to voters.

Israel's Security Forces Face Questions After Hamas Attack



JERUSALEM (Reuters) - As Israel reeled from a deadly attack by Hamas militants who broke through barriers around Gaza and roamed at will, killing scores of civilians in Israeli towns, defence chiefs faced growing questions over how the disaster could have happened. A day after the 50th anniversary of the start of the 1973 Yom Kippur war, when Israeli forces were caught off guard by Syrian and Egyptian tank columns, the military appeared once again to have been surprised by a sudden attack. "It looks quite similar to what happened at that time," said retired General Giora Eiland, a former head of Israel's National Security Council. "As we can see it, Israel was completely surprised, by a very well coordinated attack," he told a briefing with reporters. An army spokesman said there would be discussions on the intelligence preparation "down the road" but for the moment the focus was on fighting. "We'll talk about that when we need to talk about it," he told a briefing with reporters. Israel has always regarded Hamas as its sworn enemy, but since inflicting heavy damage on Gaza in a 10-day war in 2021, Israel had adopted a mix of carrot and stick to maintain stability in the

blockaded enclave. It offered economic incentives including thousands of work permits allowing Gazans to work in Israel or the occupied West Bank, while maintaining a tight blockade and the constant threat of air strikes.

For the past 18 months as violence has raged across the West Bank, Gaza had been relatively quiet, apart from sporadic cross border clashes mainly involving the smaller Islamic Jihad movement with Hamas remaining largely on the sidelines. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government has always made great play of its security credentials and taken an uncompromising stance towards the Palestinian militant factions including Hamas, which has controlled Gaza since 2007. However when the time came, Israel's security apparatus appeared to break down as a force of Hamas gunmen estimated in the hundreds by the military broke through security fences and scattered into towns. "This was an intelligence failure; it could not be otherwise," said Jonathan Panikoff, the U.S. government's former deputy national intelligence officer on the Middle East, who is now at the Atlantic Council think tank.

Fighting Flares in DR Congo Forcing 50,000 to Flee

GOMA (Dispatches) - Rival armed groups have clashed in DR Congo's east killing five civilians and forcing more than 50,000 to flee, the United Nations said Saturday, after a six-month lull in fighting. Clashes have erupted between local armed groups and the M23 rebel movement in North Kivu province, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). "The resurgence of violent clashes since October 1 raises concern about a fresh deterioration in the humanitarian situation," OCHA said. About 51,000 people had been "forced to flee their homes" in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The main armed groups operating in the North Kivu had met in the provincial capital Goma at the end of September and declared themselves ready to lay down arms.

Kadyrov Suggests Postponing Russia Presidential Election

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Ramzan Kadyrov, head of Russia's Chechnya region and close ally of President Vladimir Putin, proposed that a presidential election due next March should either be postponed due to the war in Ukraine or limited to one candidate - Putin. The Kremlin leader, who turned 71 on Saturday, has said he will not announce if he will run before parliament calls the election, which by law it is due to do in December. Putin has dominated Russia for more than two decades and, having suppressed all significant political opposition, would be all but certain to win an election and, as widely expected, extend his stay in the Kremlin to 2030. However, Russia's failures in the war, which Moscow calls a "special military operation", have made events less predictable. The state-run RIA news agency said Kadyrov had spoken on Saturday at a rally in the centre of the Chechen capital Grozny, put at 25,000 people, to mark Putin's birthday. "I propose now, while the 'special military operation' is under way, to unanimously decide that we will have one candidate in the elections - Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin," Kadyrov was quoted as saying. "Or temporarily call off the elections, because there's no one else who could defend our country today," added the Chechen strongman, a Putin protégé who has raised his public profile since the war began. Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has become his biggest challenge. Far from swiftly taking control of Russia's neighbour and thwarting its attempts to draw closer to the West, he controls less than a fifth of Ukraine, with front lines static, military spending soaring, and hundreds of thousands of Russians fighting a war they did not volunteer for. He has also ruptured relations with the West, which has imposed sweeping economic sanctions, armed Ukraine at huge cost, and expanded and reinforced the U.S.-led NATO alliance.

