

First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber Is Reportedly to Visit Belarus on Tuesday Where He Is Scheduled to Meet with the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the Parliament of Belarus

The Latest Educational Statistics in Iran Indicate a Growing Trend in Terms of Literacy Rates in Both Urban and Rural Areas of the Country from 2017 to 2022, Which Increased From 87.9% to 90.4%



Islamic Republic of Iran to Become Only Superpower in World

Ahamad Moeini Jam

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - In the near future, there will be only one superpower and that is the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria's Shia Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky said. Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky made the remarks in the ceremony of receiving an honorary doctorate at the University of Tehran during his visit to Iran. Referring to the speech of one of his professors in the field of peace studies, he said, "There are two superpowers in the world today; One is the United States and the other is the Islamic Republic of Iran." According to the professor, the United States has reached its highest level and is now declining, but the Islamic Republic of Iran is rising, Zakzaky said. He also noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran must prepare itself to not only lead the Islamic world but the whole world. Zakzaky, who is a largely venerated cleric in Nigeria as well as the neighboring countries, has gained immense popularity among

Iranians in the past years for his altruistic endeavors and support for the oppressed. This is the Nigerian scholar's second trip abroad since getting released from house arrest. Zakzaky was initially arrested in 2015, when the Nigerian army attacked his residence, which also served as a place of worship for Nigerian Muslims, killing 250 of Zakzaky's followers including his three sons. The attack happening in Zaria, Kaduna state, is now known as the Zaria Massacre. Zakzaky and his wife were acquitted of all charges after six years of house arrest on August 28, 2021. He has founded more than 300 schools in Nigeria and other African nations and has also established charities for the health and educational support of African Muslims. He has also been an avid advocator of Islamic values. Millions of people have reverted to Islam after getting inspired by Zakzaky's humble and fair-minded character.

Iran, Brazil Review BRICS Mechanism for Banking Cooperation



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Top financial officials of Iran and Brazil have met to exchange views about making use of potentials to develop bilateral trade ties and multilateral relations under the BRICS emerging economies' mechanism. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 2023 annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Morocco between Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammad Reza Farzin and his Brazilian counterpart Roberto Campos Neto, it is reported on Sunday. Farzin, in the meeting, said expansion of banking and trade relations between Tehran and Brasilia will be of benefit to both countries in the present conditions. Making use of the potentials of Iran and the BRICS emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will lead to increase in banking ties among the mentioned states in a short-time period. The CBI chief noted. For his part, the Brazilian official stressed the importance of strengthening Brasilia-Tehran ties in various issues. Roberto Neto proposed use of the BRICS potentials to establish mechanism for promotion of financial cooperation. The Islamic Republic of Iran officially became a member of the BRICS bloc of emerging economies in August, 2023.

Saudi Arabia Welcomes Conducting Joint Projects With Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Tehran Abdullah bin Saud al-Anzi has termed the Islamic Republic as a very important neighboring country with many potentials, noting Saudi Arabia welcomes conducting joint projects with Iran. According to the website of Iran Chamber of Guilds, Al-Anzi in a meeting with the head of Iran Chamber of Guilds said that relations of Iran and Saudi Arabia will be stable. There is a great capacity to expand trade ties between the two countries, he further noted. He noted that the Islamic Republic is a very important neighboring country, adding that the country enjoys many potentials and a good strategic position in the world. He called for boosting mutual cooperation through inking contracts between the private sectors of the two countries.

Israeli Actions in Gaza Clear Example of Genocide, War Crimes

TEHRAN (PressTV) - President Ebrahim Raisi denounced the Israeli aerial assaults on the besieged Gaza Strip as war crimes, calling for an end to the regime's genocide of Palestinian people. Raisi made the remarks during a telephone conversation with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Saturday, amid Israel's relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip, which followed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas on October 7. "The Zionist leaders' statements and actions in recent days are an obvious example of war crimes and genocide in flagrant violation of all international treaties," the Iranian president said, stressing that the occupying entity's crime machine should stop as soon as possible. He also held the US and other allies of Tel Aviv responsible for the atrocities committed by Israel against the Palestinians. "The situation in Palestine is a clear proof of contradictory and hypocritical positions of the Westerners who are claiming to defend human rights," the Iranian chief executive added. "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm showed that no order can be established in the region without taking into account the rights of the Palestinian nation. The Zionists' crimes must be pursued in international bodies." "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm is rooted in 75 years of occupation, humiliation and desecration of sanctities of the Palestinians, Raisi said, noting that the oppressed nation's new generation has risen up to demand its breached rights. "The leaders of the Zionist regime are seeking to avenge their humiliating and historic defeat on the battlefield on the defenseless people of Gaza by cutting off water and electricity [to the coastal sliver], preventing the entry of food and medicines, and using prohibited weapons such as phosphorous bombs," he asserted. "If oppression and aggression could silence the Palestinians' call for rights, it would have happened in the past 75 years." The Qatari emir, for his part, underlined the need for Tehran-Doha cooperation towards ending the Zionist regime's crimes in Gaza and upholding the Palestinians' rights. The Western media try to show a false and reversed image of regional developments despite a global awakening with freedom-seeking people supporting the Palestinians' rights, he added. Sheikh Tamim further emphasized that stability in the region will not be achieved without upholding the rights of the Palestinian people. Today, he said, the world witnesses the disastrous behavior of the Zionist regime and its efforts to once again displace the Palestinians from their homeland.



Al-Aqsa Storm Proved Palestine Is Alive

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister has praised the ongoing anti-Israeli operation launched by the Gaza Strip-based Palestinian resistance movements, saying it proves that unlike what some people mistakenly think Palestine is alive. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a Saturday meeting with head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, in the Qatari capital city of Doha. Noting that the issue of Palestine is the most important issue for the Muslim world, Iran's top diplomat said, "Supporting Palestine is a religious, humane and moral responsibility." Stressing the spontaneous design and implementation of Operation al-Aqsa Storm by the Gaza-based resistance groups, Iran's foreign minister said the operation proved that unlike what some people erroneously thought, Palestine is alive. Hamas and its fellow Gaza-based resistance movement, Islamic Jihad, started the operation last Saturday, moving deep inside the occupied territories, killing around 1,200 Israeli forces and illegal settlers, and taking many others captive. Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian said the Palestinians' operation also proved that "the process of normalization of some countries' relations [with Israel] cannot weaken the strong will of the Palestinian nation in pursuing its natural, humane and legal rights." Amir-Abdollahian was referring to normalization of relations between some regional countries, which previously claimed to be supporters of the Palestinian nation, and the Israeli regime through US-mediated detente deals starting in 2020. Palestinians and their supporters have called the deals "a stab in the back of Palestine" and its cause, asserting that such normalization agreements can never break down Palestinians' determination to reclaim their rights. Explaining about the measures taken by Iran on regional and international levels to stop the Zionist regime's savage attacks against the oppressed people of Gaza, Iran's foreign minister said, "We have ... proposed holding of an extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of Islamic countries ... and we back any initiative by Muslim countries in support of the Palestinian nation." "The Islamic Republic of Iran will never back down on its principles and values in support of the Palestinian nation," Iran's foreign minister said. He noted that Operation al-Aqsa Storm was the Palestinian nation's "natural reaction" to continued crimes and provocative moves by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's extremist cabinet. "If the Zionist regime's war crimes continue in Gaza, any possibility in the region can be taken into consideration and the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its efforts to stop the war crimes committed by the Zionists." Amir-Abdollahian said. Haniyeh, for his part, said Operation al-Aqsa Storm was a natural reaction to the Israeli regime's crimes against the Palestinian nation

during past decades and its increasing violations of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in recent months. He added that the crimes committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza prove Israel's helplessness and confusion in the face of the powerful blow they have dealt by Palestinian resistance fighters. Haniyeh said despite the regime's war crimes and destruction of Gaza's homes, mosques and hospitals, the Palestinian resistance remains powerful and strong.



Catalysts Worth \$9m Exported to Russia in Six Months

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran's deputy oil minister for international affairs and trade said an Iranian knowledge-based firm exported various types of catalysts worth some \$9 million in the first 6 months of the current Iranian calendar year. Ahmad Asadzadeh, who made the remarks on the sidelines of the 6th Russian Energy Week International Forum in Moscow, added that the catalysts exported to Russia in the previous year fetched Iran \$8 million. Asadzadeh pointed to talks held between Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, and some managers of Russia's oil and gas sectors, saying the two sides exchanged views on Russia's participation in development studies of three Iranian oil fields. Shana reported. Owji held several

talks on Iran's plan to become a gas hub, said the deputy oil minister, adding negotiations were held in Russia as the two countries' delegations are exchanging expertise with the aim of putting the creation of a gas hub into action. Some Russian companies voiced their willingness to invest in Iran's petrochemical sector during Owji's visit to Moscow, mentioned Asadzadeh. Owji and Novak, as the heads of the Iran-Russia Joint Economic Commission, met to discuss the topics of the commission's session in Tehran in November. Accompanied by a delegation and Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali, Owji arrived in the Russian capital on Wednesday at the invitation of Novak to participate in the 6th Russian Energy Week International Forum. He attended the forum's opening ceremony addressed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on the same day. The Iranian oil minister had also a meeting with Russian energy giant Gazprom Alexei Miller and visited some oil and gas companies.



Weekly Trade on IME Exceeds 3m Tons

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 3,064,574 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$733m on its physical market. According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,567,404 tons of commodities valued at more than \$468m. On this floor the IME sold 1,229,740 tons of cement, 702,000 tons of iron ore, 47,519 tons of steel, 146,000 tons of sponge iron, 8,410 tons of copper, 6,380 tons of aluminum, 1,185 tons of zinc, 225 tons of cast iron and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate. Based on this report, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 479,739 tons of commodities worth almost \$255m. Commodities traded on this floor included 173,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 111,018 tons of bitumen, 107,305 tons of polymeric products, 46,500 tons of lube cut, 36,828 tons of chemicals, 2,280 tons of sulfur, 2,084 tons of oil, 940 tons of waterproofing materials, 750 tons of petroleum products and 190 tons of feedstocks. The IME also traded within the same week 17,431 tons of goods on its side market.

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Gaza Braces for Israeli Ground Assault, Fears of Conflict Spreading Grow

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli troops prepared on Sunday for a ground assault on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip as the country hit back for an unprecedented assault on its territory, and Iran warned of "far-reaching consequences" if Israel's bombardment was not stopped. Israel has vowed to annihilate the militant group Hamas in retaliation for a rampage by its fighters in Israeli towns eight days ago in which its militants shot men, women and children and seized hostages in the worst attack on civilians in the country's history. Some 1,300 people were killed in the unexpected attack. Israel responded by subjecting Gaza to the most intense bombardment it has ever seen, putting the small enclave, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, under total siege and destroying much of its infrastructure. The expected ground assault had not begun by the early hours of Sunday. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken began a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh soon after 7:30 a.m. (0430 GMT), a U.S. official said, as he works with regional allies to prevent the war from spiralling into a bigger conflict, and help win release of the hostages. Gaza authorities said more than 2,300 people had been killed, a quarter of them children, and nearly 10,000 wounded. Rescue workers searched desperately for survivors of nighttime air raids. One million people had reportedly left their homes. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government also told the militant group Hezbollah, which neighbours Israel to the north, not to start a war on a second front, threatening the "destruction of Lebanon" if it did. Iran's mission to the United Nations warned late on Saturday that if Israel's "war crimes and genocide" were not halted immediately, "the situation could spiral out of control" and have far-reaching consequences. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, meeting Iran's foreign minister on Saturday in Qatar, discussed the Palestinian group's attack in Israel "and agreed to continue co-operation" to achieve the group's goals, Hamas said in a statement. The Israeli military said that in an air strike in Khan Younis it killed a commander of Hamas' elite Nukhba Force who led the Oct. 7 attack on the two Israeli border villages of Nirim and Nir Oz. U.S. President Joe Biden and other world leaders warned against any country broadening the



conflict. International organisations and aid groups urged calm and pressed Israel to allow humanitarian assistance to get through. In New York, Russia asked the U.N. Security Council to vote on Monday on a draft resolution on the Israel-Hamas conflict that calls for a humanitarian ceasefire and condemns violence against civilians and all acts of terrorism. Biden called Netanyahu on Saturday and, while reiterating "unwavering" support for Israel, discussed international co-ordination to ensure innocent civilians have access to water, food and medical care. Biden also spoke with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who stressed the urgent need to allow humanitarian aid corridors in Gaza. The U.S. Department of Defense said the Eisenhower aircraft carrier strike group would start moving towards the eastern

Mediterranean to join another carrier strike group already there. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said it was "part of our effort to deter hostile actions against Israel or any efforts toward widening this war following Hamas's attack on Israel." On Friday, the Israeli military told residents of the northern half of the Gaza Strip, which includes the enclave's biggest settlement, Gaza City, to move south immediately. On Saturday, it said it would guarantee the safety of Palestinians fleeing on two main roads until 4 p.m. (1300 GMT). Troops were massing as the deadline passed. Hamas told people not to leave, saying roads out were unsafe. It said dozens of people had been killed in strikes on cars and trucks carrying refugees on Friday. Reuters could not independently verify this claim.

Pro-Palestinian Demonstrators March Outside White House



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters gathered in the US capital on Saturday, marching past the White House to chants of "Free Palestine" as the death toll continued to climb in the conflict between Israel and Hamas. "What is happening today is just beyond the pale. It's so upsetting, we are watching people being killed by an army that this country supports," demonstrator Linda Houghton told AFP. Across the country, Americans have held pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian protests in the week since Hamas militants broke through the heavily fortified border between the Gaza Strip and Israel killed more than 1,300 people. Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip in response has killed more than 2,200 people. As on the Israeli side, most of them were civilians. More than one million people in the northern part of the crowded enclave have been ordered to flee ahead of an expected Israeli ground assault, an exodus that aid groups said would worsen the humanitarian disaster. Israel has also cut off food, water and electricity supplies to Gaza's 2.4 million people. Clashes in the occupied West Bank have killed 53 Palestinians in the past week. "I wish we could all do something, I wish we could stop the war, just stop the war," said Ahmed Abed, one of the protesters marching through downtown Washington under a sea of Palestinian flags. "They are in prison," he said of the blockaded Gaza Strip. Signs carried by marchers included messages such as "End the occupation" and "Cease-fire now." In New York, home to the world's largest Jewish population outside of Israel, hundreds gathered in Brooklyn on Friday in solidarity against Israel's offensive, wielding a banner emblazoned with the message "Jews Say Stop Genocide Against Palestinians." Jewish New Yorkers have been split, with some voices urging Israel to defend itself and others increasingly warning of Palestinian "genocide." On the other side of the country, more than 1,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched in Los Angeles on Saturday, local media reported. Videos on social media showed tense moments between the crowd and pro-Israel counterprotesters.



Second U.S. Aircraft Carrier to Back Israel

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. on Saturday deployed a second aircraft carrier "to deter hostile actions against Israel" while President Joe Biden pushed for the protection of civilians amid the American ally's siege and bombardment of Gaza. The presence of the USS Eisenhower and its affiliated warships in the eastern Mediterranean signals Washington's "ironclad commitment to Israel's security and our resolve to deter any state or non-state actor seeking to escalate this war," Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in a statement. The Eisenhower joins the USS Ford carrier strike group which arrived earlier in the week "as part of our effort to deter hostile actions against Israel or any efforts toward widening this war following Hamas's attack," Austin said. The powerful show of support came as Israel appeared poised for a ground offensive against Hamas militants in Gaza.

Poland Votes in Most Important Parliamentary Elections Since Communism



WARSAW (Dispatches) - Poles cast their votes on Sunday in parliamentary elections that will prove crucial for future ties with the European Union and neighbouring Ukraine, as the ruling populists bid for a third consecutive term in power. Opinion polls indicate the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party will get the most votes but may struggle to build a governing coalition, giving a chance to the opposition led by former EU chief Donald Tusk. Polling stations across the EU and NATO member opened at 0500 GMT and closed at 1900 GMT, with exit polls expected immediately after and final results on Monday. Some 29 million people are eligible to vote, including half a million registered abroad in a large diaspora. A PiS victory could exacerbate tensions with the EU and Ukraine and will dismay campaigners concerned about the future of media freedoms, women's and migrants' rights. "We are in the EU, and we want to stay there, but in an EU of sovereign countries," PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski said at the party's last major rally in Sandomierz on Friday. At his own final rally, Tusk told supporters in Pruszkow that PiS had "secret plans" to leave the EU and said they were "leading the country down the wrong path." "This is the most important day in the history of our democracy since 1989," Tusk said at the rally. "We will also be voting for Poland to remain in the European Union. Poland is the heart of Europe," he added. PiS has vowed to press ahead with controversial reforms of the judiciary which it says are aimed at rooting out corruption but which the EU sees as undermining democracy. The row has blocked billions of euros in EU funding. The most likely coalition partner for PiS would be Confederation, a far-right party that has called for an end to Poland's large-scale assistance for Ukraine and has campaigned on a strongly anti-migrant platform. But Confederation has publicly ruled out such an alliance and some analysts say it is unlikely to happen because of simmering tensions between the two parties. The hope among liberals is that, even if Tusk's Civic Coalition comes second, it will have

enough votes to form a government with two smaller potential allies. The elections are for the lower and upper houses of parliament and PiS has organised a referendum on the same day with leading questions on migrants and the economy, which the opposition has called for people to boycott. Supporters of PiS say victory on Sunday will allow the party to fulfil its vision of a strong, sovereign Poland based on traditional Catholic values. The campaign has been characterised by personal attacks on Tusk by the ruling party, which has accused him of working in the interests of Germany, Russia and the EU. PiS has also ramped up anti-migrant rhetoric, with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki saying the country should be protected against illegal immigrants "who have no respect for our culture." Many voters are exasperated by the divisive, bitter tone of the campaign and polarised political scene. "I want a better Poland than the one we have now. I want my children to live in a free, democratic and smiling country," said Beata Myszkiewicz, a self-employed 53-year-old. "I don't want people glowering at each other because their political opinions differ. I think these are the most important elections and everyone should go and vote," she said. Ukraine and its Western supporters are also watching warily in case Poland follows Slovakia, which last month elected a government that promises to take a much more sceptical view on sending aid to Ukraine. Poland has been a leading cheerleader for Ukraine in the EU and NATO and has taken in a million Ukrainian refugees, but there is growing fatigue among many Poles. The government has also fallen out with Ukraine over a grain import ban aimed at protecting Polish farmers. Marcin Zaborowski, an expert at the Globsec think tank, said the ruling party has adopted a chillier stance towards Ukraine in a bid for nationalist votes. "After the elections, it may be too late to go back on this since the damage will have been done," he said.

Ecuador Votes for New President Amid Escalating Drug War



QUITO (Dispatches) - Ecuadorans voted for a new president Sunday in the midst of a bloody drug war and a rash of political assassinations that cut short the bid of a popular candidate. The remaining finalists -- lawyer Luisa Gonzalez, 45, and banana empire heir Daniel Noboa, 35 -- campaigned in bullet-proof vests as a climate of fear grips the once-peaceful country. Both have vowed to prioritize the escalating violence. The main concern of Ecuadorans, according to recent polls, is crime and insecurity in a country where the murder rate has quadrupled in the four years to 2022. Some 54,000 police were deployed to keep the vote safe. Long a haven between major cocaine exporters Colombia and Peru, violence in the South American nation has exploded in recent years as enemy gangs with links to Mexican and Colombian cartels vie for control. The fighting has seen at least 460 inmates massacred in prison since February 2021 -- many beheaded or burned alive in mass riots. And the bloodbath has spilled into the streets, with gangs dangling headless corpses from city bridges and detonating car bombs outside police stations in a show of force. Some 3,600 Ecuadorans have been murdered so far this year, according to the Ecuadorian Organized Crime Observatory, including nearly a dozen politicians. In August, the violence claimed the life of anti-graft and anti-cartel journalist and presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, mowed down in a barrage of submachine gun fire after a campaign speech. He had been polling in second place. A state of emergency was declared after Villavicencio's assassination, and Noboa and Gonzalez both campaigned with heavy security details. Reporters following them have also had to don protective jackets and helmets and travel in armored vehicles. Many have received death threats. Seven suspects in Villavicencio's assassination were killed in prison. Whoever wins Sunday will be elected to only 16 months in office -- completing the term of incumbent Guillermo Lasso who called a snap vote to avoid possible impeachment for alleged embezzlement. They will be allowed to run again for the 2025-29 presidential term, and the one after that. Both relative unknowns, a win for either candidate would make history: Gonzalez becoming Ecuador's first woman president, or Noboa its youngest.

Russia Does Not Violate UN Sanctions Against North Korea

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Moscow does not violate United Nations sanctions against North Korea, but is categorically against new restrictive measures on Pyongyang, a high-ranking Russian diplomat told the RIA state news agency in remarks published on Sunday. "Russia, as a responsible member of the world community, strictly adheres to its international obligations towards Pyongyang through the UN Security Council," Russian Ambassador at Large Oleg Burmistrov told RIA in an interview. "At the same time, we are categorically against the introduction of new restrictive measures. The White House on Friday said North Korea recently provided Russia with a shipment of weapons, calling it a troubling development and raising concerns about the expanded military relationship between the two countries. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin met for a rare summit last month at which they discussed military matters, the war in Ukraine and possible Russian help for the secretive state's satellite programme. North Korea has been under U.N. sanctions for its nuclear and ballistic missile programs since 2006. Those measures have unanimously been strengthened over the years, but the Security Councils is now deadlocked as China and Russia push for them to be eased to convince Pyongyang to return to denuclearization talks. Burmistrov told RIA that the risk of a nuclear conflict on the Korean Peninsula have grown sharply, partially as a result of Washington's actions. "The rhetoric of North Korean officials about a hypothetical 'nuclear conflict' clearly illustrates the sharply increased risks that are provoked by drawing strategic assets to the peninsula," Burmistrov said.

