

NEWS IN BRIEF

G7 FMs hail
Iran-Saudi
rapprochement

SPUTNIK – Top diplomats from the Group of Seven on Tuesday welcomed initiatives to mend relations between Tehran and Riyadh. “We welcome initiatives to improve bilateral relations among countries and de-escalate tensions in the region, including Iran and Saudi Arabia’s recent agreement to restore ties,” the G7 foreign ministers said in a collective statement released following their meeting in Karuizawa, Japan, Sputnik reported. The G7 member states noted with concern the increased threats to stability in Afghanistan, the G7 foreign ministers said in a joint statement after their meeting in Japan. The G7 foreign ministers stated the need to continue to reduce the global nuclear arsenals. “The overall decline in global nuclear arsenals must continue and not be reversed. The NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy,” according to the statement.

Only 17%
in Iran wear
masks

National Desk

As the eighth wave of COVID-19 continues to take the lives of Iranians on a daily basis, a recent survey shows that only 17% of the Iranian people wear masks. Iran’s Health Ministry reported on Tuesday that approximately 37% of the people are still observing COVID-related health protocols. According to the data released by the ministry, only 21% in Tehran, the overly crowded capital, wear masks, which is a highly distressing signal. The social distancing index has also fallen to an alarming 35%. Tehran is one of the lowest in this indicator as well, with almost 31% of its population observing the protocol. According to the data released by the Health Ministry, airports have been at the top with observing the social distancing protocol with almost 72%, while the protocol has not been observed in movie theaters, as only 21% throughout the country have observed the COVID-related protocol. During the past 24 hours, 452 new COVID patients have been diagnosed, 26 of whom have died.

UN Yemen envoy says in ‘close contact’ with
Iranian, Saudi officials on peace in Yemen

UN

International Desk

United Nations’ Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said on Monday that he is maintaining close contact with officials from Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in order for peace efforts to progress in Yemen. Speaking at a virtual briefing with reporters on the situation in Yemen, Grundberg said Ansarallah officials have been engaged in

talks with Saudi negotiators over the past days in an effort to bring an end to the years-long war in Yemen. The UN envoy expressed hope that the ongoing negotiations will bear results. He further noted that all parties in the war-torn country should use the newly-created opportunity to push for lasting peace and a political solution in Yemen. Leading a coalition of countries including the UAE,

Saudi Arabia waged war on Yemen in March 2015 to restore toppled president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi’s government. The war has dragged on ever since, killing hundreds of thousands of Yemenis directly and indirectly, according to the UN, which has described the crisis in Yemen as the world’s biggest humanitarian crisis. The Yemeni capital Sana’a has in the past days hosted peace talks, mediated by Oman, between Ansarallah and Saudi officials. Ansarallah has cited progress in the talks so far, stating that further negotiations are on the agenda. UN-sponsored talks between the Yemeni government and the Ansarallah began the next day on March 11 in Geneva. The talks are the seventh such meeting aiming to implement an agreement on prisoner exchanges made in Stockholm five years ago. here is now the prospect of “direct channels of communication being opened between the two powers”, says Riyadh Sidaoui, director

of the Geneva-based Arab Centre for Political and Social Research and Analysis. “We can even say, for the first time, that there is now real hope for a major breakthrough on prisoner exchanges because the parties have agreed to 11 days of talks, which will allow for several subjects to be discussed,” he says. Optimism stems directly from the renewal of diplomatic ties, he says, “since it is now expected that the Saudis will exert pressure on the Yemeni government and the Iranians on the Houthis to obtain an initial breakthrough. Then, if they are successful on the issue of prisoners, they will need to push talks even further to reach a peace agreement”. Extricating itself from the conflict by building trust with Iran may be a key concern for Saudi Arabia, says former Iranian diplomat Hadi Afqahi. “Saudi Arabia expected to conquer Yemen in six months, but it’s now embroiled in a war that has lasted for years. That’s why

Mohammed bin Salman now wants to end the conflict... to turn his attention to the enormous plans for his Vision 2030 [for Saudi Arabia],” he says. “The first priority is to re-establish diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the first step is to open embassies and send ambassadors. Then, when issues directly concerning each country have been dealt with, it will be a question of regional issues. The first of these that was brought up in negotiations was the war in Yemen.” The conflict in Yemen has caused 377,000 deaths in eight years according to the UN, and sparked a severe humanitarian crisis, which has left 80 percent of the population struggling to access food, water and health care. After a six-month ceasefire, which brought about a marked reduction in violence even though it ended in October, the Beijing agreement brings the potential for real change on the ground.

A powerful Air Force strengthens nation

Defending the country against the sudden attacks of the Baath army of Iraq was an epic struggle, and the noble people of Iran along with the Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and the Basij volunteer force played significant roles in that great victory. In other words, defending Iran was the most democratic defense of the country in which all walks of life played a role, but the role of some strata including Air Force staff and in particular pilots was pivotal. The Air Force pressured the enemy to change its strategy from offensive to defensive. In the first six months of the war, the ground forces of Iran had not yet been integrated in the face of the enemy at-

tacks, but, in the meantime, the Air Force managed the battle in the air and on the ground despite all the pressure it faced. Moving forward, the Air Force continued to play a very constructive role in all military operations during the war. However, Iran’s Air Force has been grappling with both soft and hard wars over the past decades. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, some said Iran was not in a state to fight the war and was not capable of using the advanced technology of fighter jets without the assistance of foreign advisors, but their comments were either out of ignorance or essentially acts of betrayal. Nevertheless, those people called for disbanding the army and selling fighter jets, arguing that they

were inoperable. But in the midst of that chaotic situation, Air Force commanders, and in particular, young officers and pilots, did not allow the Air Force equipment to be damaged. In spite of that, some military contracts were unilaterally canceled, even though it was Iran that had paid for them. As a result, the Army and Iranians suffered the consequences of that unforgivable mistake. The next battle of the Air Force came in the form of a soft war. It pertained to accusations of staging a coup called Nojeh, which incidentally had been given the wrong name. Nojeh was the name of one of the pilots who sacrificed his life to protect the country. The measures taken by this proud force were a clear

example of timely actions in various fields, especially in its first response to the attacks of the Iraqi Baath regime against the country. The Air Force gave a crushing response less than two hours after the attacks. The Air Force also launched a unique operation called Operation Kaman 99 against Iraq less than 10 hours after the Baath regime attacked Iran. During the first 45 days of the war, the Air Force of Iran dropped more than 100 million pounds of ammunition on enemy positions through more than 6,000 sorties. Therefore, it must be said that the bravery and self-sacrifices of the Air Force in the first days of the war turned Saddam Hussein’s dream of conquering Iran within a week

into a mirage and set many great records of air wars in history. Now, the name of Iran’s Air Force is reminiscent of the names of warriors and martyrs who had courage, expertise, faith, and knowledge simultaneously. The Air Force of Iran’s Army is a galaxy full of bright stars in the country’s sky, and the young generation should know how Iran survived a long and difficult war. The track record of this proud force is full of timely actions. Hundreds of books and films should be written and produced in this regard to depict the role of Iran’s Air Force in the war and the rich and valuable culture promoted by its staff and pilots. Over the past two decades, initiators of wars have

again been seeking to gain a quick victory. The Air Force was a very determining factor in speeding up the last war and clinching outright victory for Iran. The equipment used by the Air Force is developed with very advanced technologies since air power is mainly the product of science. Iran’s Air Force is a complete and clear manifestation of real air power and plays a key role in promoting air superiority in the fields of battle as well as the field of national authority. That is why military experts and statesmen call for establishing a powerful Air Force with advanced technologies so that it can accomplish its missions with the highest speed and in the shortest amount of time possible.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
CartoonistIran unveils homegrown military
equipment on National Army DayHomegrown anti-submarine drones operational,
says navy commander

National Desk

The Islamic Republic of Iran Army units have unveiled a broad range of advanced gear such as homegrown missiles, tanks, armored vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, radar systems and air defense missile systems in a military parade marking National Army Day. Among the outstanding achievements unveiled was Iran’s first wide-body un-

manned combat aerial vehicle, Kaman 22, along with Iranian suicide drones such as Arash, Kian and Karrar, which could be flown from both ground and offshore launchers. Kaman 22 is said to have a range of approximately 3,000 kilometers (1,900 miles) and can carry 300 kilograms of explosives. In this regard, the Iranian Navy has developed unmanned aerial vehicles

designed to stalk and hunt submarines, the navy commander said. Rear Admiral Shahram Irani told Tasnim news agency on Tuesday that his forces have developed drones used to detect and destroy vessels and submarines. “We employ a type of sonar with other equipment to identify submarines with drones,” the commander noted, adding that the homegrown drone is currently in service.