

Pandemic, inflation curbed in Raesi administration's first 100 days: Report

National Desk

The incumbent Iranian administration's performance in the first 100 days of its term in office indicates significant achievements, particularly, in the health and economic sectors.

Since taking office in August, President Seyyed Ebrahim Raesi's administration has managed to fulfill its election campaign pledges as shown by an assessment of its 100-day performance, according to IRNA.

Raesi entered the presidential race with clear and precise promises and kept insisting upon honoring them after winning the June election.

Accelerated and widespread public vaccination against COVID-19 was among the pledges, which was initially described by many as impossible or very hard to fulfill.

In addition to that, Raesi vowed to restore calm to the domestic market and prevent further price hikes, which, again, was seen by many as a big promise requiring more than 100 days to fulfill.

During the very first days of the administration's tenure, the Iranian society witnessed signs of improvement in the COVID situation, as the greater momentum of the public vaccination, on the back of imports and domestic production, helped significantly reduce the number of infections and deaths.

The government imported 100 million doses of COVID jabs in less than three months and kept administering them round-the-clock, which have helped reduce daily deaths from record highs of over 700 to below 100.

Even the president personally engaged in efforts to facilitate vaccine imports.

The move, the results of which were lower deaths and infections and thus a safer environment, helped prepare the ground for the resumption of activities by those businesses that had been shut down for months due to the pandemic, and, therefore, led to an improvement in the livelihood of an important part of the society.

This comes as the burden to curb the pandemic was not shouldered solely by the health sector, as other apparatuses, such as the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, were actively involved in efforts to fulfill the administration's most basic promise, paving the way for honoring other pledges.

In addition, during March-August, the domestic market was in turmoil and people's livelihoods adversely impacted. The balance between supply and demand was completely disrupted during the period, which had sent prices soaring.

The country was suffering from a shortage of essential goods and products, such as wheat, that could have sparked off a crisis in the country. The Raesi administration, however, took the required measures and set up a special task force to secure foreign currency resources for importing the essential goods.

The government also placed on agenda reducing tensions in the domestic market for red and white meat, eggs and other basic goods, allocated sufficient foreign currency resources for imports and regulated the distribution network, thus preventing an unrestrained rise in prices.

As a result of such measures, the country's inflation, which had reached 44.5 percent in August, dropped to 38.4 percent in October and November. The figure is expected to witness further declines in view of the determined continuation of the government's effective measures.

The Raesi administration's fulfillment of its initial promises in such a short period of time has rekindled people's hope of seeing improvements in, inter alia, the economic indices and their livelihoods.

Raesi urges continuation of vaccinating foreign nationals against COVID-19



Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raesi addresses a meeting of the National Task Force for Fighting the Coronavirus in Tehran on December 4, 2021.

National Desk

Iran's President Seyyed Ebrahim Raesi stressed the need to continue vaccination of foreign nationals in the country against COVID-19.

Making the remark in an address to a Saturday meeting of the National Task Force for Fighting the Coronavirus, the president added some European countries have recently begun considering the move; whereas Iran started inoculating all foreign nationals from the very beginning in view of the humanitarian aspects of the issue, president.ir reported.

Raesi noted that observing the health protocols, taking preventive measures and tightening supervision are the sole ways to stay safe in the face of a potential new wave of COVID-19 infections in the country.

Lauding efforts by all those involved in the fight against the pandemic in the country, particularly the

medical staff, he emphasized reducing the number of infections and maintaining the favorable status quo are in need of greater attention and seriousness in observing the health protocols and implementing protective measures.

Raesi said Iran must not face a lack of COVID vaccines, noting that in view of the rise in domestic production and imports, the required measures should be taken lest any shortage is experienced in this regard.

He once again called for tightening control over land, sea and air borders and greater seriousness in quarantining suspicious cases, urging for smart and precise supervision over reopening schools, offices and businesses.

The president warned against vaccinating children under 12 years of age unless sufficient scientific research has been conducted.

Since the outbreak, Iran has grappled with five waves of COVID-19 infections, one greater and deadlier

than another.

Until a few weeks ago, the country was grappling with a fifth wave of COVID-19 infections, mainly sparked by the Delta variant, seeing record high daily deaths and cases of over 700 and 40,000, respectively. Although the fifth wave has subsided thanks to the increased pace of the public vaccination process, authorities constantly warn against the start of a new wave given the spread of the new strain of the coronavirus, known as Omicron, calling for full compliance with the health protocols.

Iran's public vaccination has gained greater momentum over the past few months on the back of an increase in imports and domestic production. The country has produced a number of COVID jabs domestically and received several COVID-19 vaccine batches from Russia (Sputnik V), China (Sinopharm), Japan (AstraZeneca) and India (COVAXIN).

Casualties

The Iranian Health Ministry announced in a Saturday statement that 19 provinces reported either zero or one daily COVID-19 fatality.

According to the ministry, the country's daily COVID-19 fatalities and cases stood at 58 and 2,157, respectively.

The total COVID-19 death toll and cases since the beginning of the outbreak in the country in late February 2020 stand at 130,124 and 6,131,356.

It said 3,278 patients are in critical condition, and 649 new ones have been hospitalized.

According to the statement, 5,916,199 people have so far either recovered from the disease or have been discharged from hospitals, and 39,201,601 diagnostic tests have so far been carried out in the country.

The total number of administered vaccine doses stand at 107,143,157, of which 57,993,547 have been given to people as the first dose, and 47,929,171 as the second dose.

In addition, 1,220,439 have received their third dose. Over 275,562 doses were administered during Friday to Saturday.

Two cities in the country are currently coded red (very high-risk) in terms of the coronavirus spread, while nine cities are in the orange zone (high-risk). The number of yellow (medium-risk) and blue (low-risk) cities are 153 and 284, respectively.

Albania arrests MKO terror group members for drug smuggling, human trafficking: Report



The file photo shows the entrance to Camp Ashraf-3 housing members of the MKO terrorist group near Manez, Albania.

Members of the anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO or MEK) have been arrested for drug smuggling, human trafficking, and money laundering, a report revealed.

Albania-based Exit News reported on Saturday that it has seen an official document that gives details of serious offenses involving MKO members, according to Press TV.

According to the document, bearing the signature and stamp of the director of the Criminal Police Department in the State Police, two members of the MKO, along with Albanian and Greek accomplices, have been arrested for direct involvement in human trafficking.

Members of the ill-famed MKO terrorist group enjoy freedom of activity in the U.S. and Europe and even hold big events attended by senior American, European and Saudi officials.

The MKO's meetings have been attended by, among others, different U.S. officials such as former vice president Mike Pence, former senator John McCain, former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, former national security adviser John Bolton and former senator Joe Lieberman, as well as former Saudi spy chief Prince Turki al-Faisal.

The cultish terrorist group was on the U.S. government's list of terrorist organizations until 2012. The European Union also re-

moved the MKO from its list of terrorist organizations in 2009, seven years after blacklisting the outfit.

The report said that on July 11, 2021, police stopped a car carrying Syrian, Iraqi, and Kurdish citizens. Further investigations led to the arrest of the main gang members.

The same gang, it was discovered, had attempted to transfer some 400 MKO members from Albania to France.

On July 18, 2021, a consignment of drugs was seized by Albanian police, and two senior MKO officials – Narges Abrishamchi and Hassan Nayeb-Agha – were detained.

Exit News also said it was reported in the official document that they confessed to having played a pivotal role in organizing and transporting a shipment of drugs to Italy.

This pattern of criminality dates back to 2015, Exit News quoted an official source as saying, adding that the document and the source said information on the crimes had been handed over to the U.S. Embassy in Tirana.

After it was founded more than 50 years ago, the MKO launched a campaign of bombings and assassinations in Iran. Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist attacks over the past four decades, about 12,000 have fallen victim to the group's acts of terror.

The MKO's members fled Iran in 1986 for Iraq, where they enjoyed backing from former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. A few years ago, they were relocated from their Camp Ashraf in Iraq's Diyala Province to Camp Hurriyet (Camp Liberty), a former U.S. military base in Baghdad, and were later sent to Albania.

The MKO has been heavily propagandized by the West as an "Iranian opposition group".

Iran has on numerous occasions denounced Western countries' hosting of the terrorist group, saying both the U.S. and Europe are accomplices in the MKO's massacre of innocent Iranians.

Americans not yet ready to lift sanctions: MP

Political Desk

The Americans are not yet ready to lift the sanctions and solely aim to use the restricting aspects of the 2015 nuclear deal against Iran by seeking a return to the agreement, said an MP.

Speaking to IRNA, Abolfazl Amouei, a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, added the ground must be prepared for Iran's return to global trade and economy.

Commenting on the seventh round of the Vienna talks held during November 29-December 3, he said the main problem stems from U.S. 2018 unilateral withdrawal from the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed between Iran and the P5+1.

Since April a diplomatic process has started in the Austrian capital to revive the JCPOA, as part of which seven rounds of negotiations have been held between Iran and the remaining parties to the deal, namely China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany.

Amouei added that although Iran was honoring its commitments, the Americans illegally pulled out of the agreement, violating the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.

The move, he said, prevented the deal from producing the results it was signed for in the first place, noting that one year after the U.S. withdrawal, and faced with Europe's inaction, Iran reduced its JCPOA commitments based on paragraphs 26 and 36 of the agreement.

Commenting on the change of administration in the United States and its willingness, under President Joe Biden, to return to the JCPOA, the lawmaker said Washington will never be able to become a party to the deal if Iran does not agree.

He stressed that lifting all the sanctions is Iran's main precondition for granting consent to the United States' return.

"The U.S. cannot claim to have lifted the sanctions, while continuing to keep them in place in practice."

He emphasized that removing the sanctions was the pivotal issue in the seventh round of the Vienna talks, saying Iran dispatched a large delegation to the negotiations and seriously pursued the complete removal of the sanctions as stressed in the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions passed by the Iranian Parliament in 2020.

Amouei said that based on international law, the U.S. cannot return to the JCPOA without securing the consent of Iran and other signatories, adding that the Americans were the party that committed violations against the accord, which makes their membership in it dependent on their rectification of their mistake.



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