

U.S. Faces a Diminishing Range of Choices in Vienna

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Report

Saudis wage huge bombing campaign

TEHRAN - Yemeni officials say the “Saudi-American” coalition has carried out wide-scale attacks in a number of provinces in Yemen, the Kingdom southern neighbor, mostly with aerial bombardments that have left a number of civilians dead and others injured while significant damage has been caused to public and private buildings and residential areas. This is while the Saudi-led coalition continues to violate the Stockholm agreement that was supposed to bring peace to the key North Western port city; where 90 percent of Yemen’s vital commodities enter the country.

The escalation in the bombing campaigns can be attributed to Saudi territorial losses on the ground as Yemeni forces liberate more of their land.

In the Northern province of Sa’dah that neighbors the Kingdom, Yemeni media have reported that Saudi forces have fired artillery shells and other forms of gunfire that killed at least one civilian and injured four others, including two African immigrants in the areas of al-Raqq and al-Mufattah as well the border district of Munabbih. Reports also say another civilian has been wounded when Saudi Arabia launched a fresh round of attacks on civilian homes with missiles and artillery shells landing in separate areas on the border districts of Razih and Shada.

In the capital, Sanaa, the “Saudi-American” aggression launched a series of air raids, including two bombing campaigns in the Dhahban neighborhood of the country’s capital leaving several people injured as well as material damage. ► Page 5

Opinion

Cultivation of tourism in the countryside

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – In recent years, many potential travelers are looking for something different such as spending a day in tranquil countryside, picking fresh fruits, watching rice grow, fishing by the seaside, eating traditional dishes, or even staying with locals.

Urban residents choose rural tourism to experience a different lifestyle that resembles something like ‘the Internet + countryside’.

In the past, the majority of holidaymakers may choose to roam more through travel agencies, but as tourists mature, more and more sorts of travel are welcomed. Therefore, many are no longer satisfied with traditional travel routes and are in search of off-the-beaten routes.

Having numerous pristine yet diverse natural gifts, Iran has many to offer to nature lovers. In recent years, this trend has been the focus of tourism development and is supported by the government and private investors in every corner of the country, which has significantly encouraged the rural economy.

In addition to farmers, the key suppliers of rural activities include initiatives that attract investment. Therefore, the tourism products and activities provided by rural tourism are naturally rich and colorful, covering all kinds of gardens and green fields, water entertainment, farmhouse entertainment, folk customs, traditional culture, etc.

Moreover, the Iranian countryside areas have traditionally been a place of production, dominated by farming. ► Page 6



Iran embarks on “neighborhood” foreign policy

TEHRAN — In his trip to Turkmenistan, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and his high-ranking delegation held several bilateral meetings in Ashgabat, reaffirming the fact that Iran is following a balanced, Asia-oriented foreign policy.

President Raisi arrived in Ashgabat on Saturday to attend the 15th Economic Cooperation Organization summit. Later that day, he met with his Turkmen counterpart, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

The two sides discussed developing bi-

lateral relations and increasing the level of trade between the two countries during the meeting.

On Sunday, Raisi spent a busy day, meeting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azeri and Pakistani counterparts. ► Page 2

Non-oil trade rises 40% in 8 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - The value of Iran’s non-oil trade rose 40 percent during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi said that Iran has traded over 110.3 million tons of non-oil products worth

\$63.1 billion with other countries in the mentioned period, IRIB reported. According to the IRICA head, the weight of trade in the mentioned period also grew by 43.5 percent in comparison to the figure for the previous fiscal year.

The official put the eight-month non-oil exports at 83.7 million tons valued at \$31.1 billion, with a 42-percent rise in value and 10.5-percent growth in weight.



It’s very logical Iran seeking guarantee that U.S. wouldn’t quit nuclear deal again: Russian ambassador

By Ali Akbar Jenabzadeh and Saeed Mavadat

TEHRAN – The Russian Ambassador to Tehran, Levan Dzagharyan, says some Iranian demands for a success of the Vienna talks primarily intended to lift sanction against Iran in accordance to the 2015 nuclear agreement are “very logical”. ► Page 2

Vaccination of 4m Afghan refugees a great achievement for Iran: WHO

TEHRAN – Four million Afghan refugees in Iran, regardless of nationality and residency status, have received vaccination against COVID-19, which is a great achievement for Iran, World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran Jaffar Hussain, has said.

Providing the vaccine to refugees living in Iran is a big deal for the government, he emphasized.

With the expansion of vaccination cover-

age, coronavirus mortality has declined to less than 100 in Iran and most provinces are out of the red (high-risk areas), he added, IRNA reported.

The vaccination program and health measures in Iran should be more complete and the situation should be better, he suggested.

The WHO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Iran, is studying the effec-

tiveness of Sinopharm, AstraZeneca, and COVIRAN vaccines.

About one million people in Iran have received the third dose of the vaccine and we are trying to help the Pastu Covac and COVIRAN to complete documentation and receive the World Health Organization quality certificate so that it can be exported to low-income countries in the region, like Africa, he explained. ► Page 7

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Interview

Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem live under the Zionist threat: Hamas representative

By Ramin Etesam

TEHRAN - Khaled al-Qaddoumi, the Hamas representative in Tehran, says that the Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem live under the Zionist suppression.

“The Muslims and Christians of Jerusalem live under the Zionist threat through the annexation of spaces, the Judaization of the Islamic places, and changing some places, whether Christian or Islamic, into a Jewish identity,” Qaddoumi tells the Tehran Times.

The Hamas representative says the extremist Zionist groups in Quds want to desecrate the Al-Aqsa Mosque while the Israeli authorities welcome and promote such decisions.

“They want to change the demography of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque by increasing the number of Jews in the city and the neighborhood of Al-Aqsa Mosque,” Qaddoumi states.

Following is the text of the interview:

What are the reasons behind Britain’s move to designate Hamas as a terrorist organization?

I want to divide the answer into three titles: The first is the position of the British colonial government in establishing and cultivating the Zionist entity in 1948 through the Balfour Declaration. ► Page 5

Book delves back into past to explore mysteries about General Soleimani’s character

TEHRAN – A book analyzing the character of General Qassem Soleimani through articles written by a number of Iran’s senior officials has recently been published.

The articles have been selected by Ahad Karimkhani for the book entitled “Mysteries about Soleimani”.

IRGC chief Hossein Salami; Ali-Akbar Velayati, the Leader’s adviser on international affairs; Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian; and former diplomat Mohammad-Sadeq Kharrazi are among the people whose articles have been published in the book.

“Mysteries about Soleimani still remain locked and seem not to be revealed easily, but this book explores General Qassem Soleimani’s way of thinking ► Page 8

From page 1 ► “Some Iranian demands are very logical,” Dzhagaryan tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

“For example, they, the Iranian side, want to guarantee, let’s say, in future Americans wouldn’t repeat the same step as they did before. The Iranian side also needs some guarantees from the European businesses to fulfill and to implement all that contract. It is quite logical,” Ambassador Dzhagaryan notes.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and returned the previous sanctions lifted under the agreement and imposed new ones under different names. The European parties also refused to honor their commitments under the agreement and only paid lip service to the pact.

The U.S. sanctions, which are still on despite a new president in the White House, run contrary to international law because the JCPOA is confirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Diplomats from Iran, Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain, and the U.S. officially resume talks in Vienna on Monday with the intention of restoring the historic agreement.

The U.S. is involved in the talks indirectly because Iran has said it will not enter direct negotiations with Americans until they return to the JCPOA.

The talks are being resumed after a five-month hiatus due to the June presidential election in Iran. New Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has said Iran is serious in the talks and asked the Western sides to enter Vienna with a “new and constructive” approach.

Following is the text of the interview with Ambassador Dzhagaryan:

The first question is about the nuclear talks that are scheduled to be resumed in Vienna on Monday. In a recent phone call on November 16 with his Iranian counterpart, the Russian President, Mr. Putin, expressed hope that all nuclear deal parties would have sufficient political will to conclude the Vienna talks. What is Russia’s view toward the Vienna talks and does Russia believe that the Vienna talks should come to a swift conclusion?

Of course, telephone conversation between our presidents touched upon

nuclear issue which is very important not only for Iran or Russia, but for the region, and I would say even for the world because it can result in establishment of sustainable stability in the region.

First of all, the situation which was created recently around JCPOA was as a result of a destructive policy of the previous American administration. The Iranian side from the very beginning of 2015 was committed to its obligations and in terms of transparency was the most verified country under the JCPOA. Unfortunately the American administration blatantly violated its international obligations and international law.

Iranians just tried to be committed to their obligations but finally we know that Tehran decided to, let’s say, come back from their previous obligations. Of course, we were very concerned with the current situation, that’s why the negotiations were resumed in Vienna and finished on June 20 with some very important agreements from both sides after six rounds of talks.

Now fortunately all parties, and first of all the Iranian side, have agreed resume the talks on November 29. We would like to continue these negotiations based on the agreements which had been reached on June 20, because a lot of job was done by all parties including the Iranians during the 6 rounds. These [negotiations] of course, were very fruitful.

Some Iranian demands are very logical. For example, they, the Iranian side, want to guarantee, let’s say, in future Americans wouldn’t repeat the same step as they did before. The Iranian side also needs some guarantees from the European businesses to fulfill and to implement all that contract. It is quite logical.

We also have some expectations from our Iranian friends, and we have conveyed this message during video confidence together with our Chinese friends which was held on November 15 at the level of deputy foreign ministers. We are sincerely interested in fruitful results in cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Some people have been expressing the view that Russia wasn’t interested in reaching a final result and the Russian role

was just demonstrated as a negative one, but it was not correct. Russia from the very beginning was constructive and we’ve just paid a lot of efforts to revive the original JCPOA reached in 2015 and we will continue to do our job.

Our second question is about the recent tensions between the two neighboring countries of Iran, namely Azerbaijan or Armenia. The tensions between the two countries have risen again and we notice that there have been sporadic border clashes. Does Russia have a specific plan for resolving the tensions between the two countries?

First of all, I would like to underline that Armenia is our military ally and Azerbaijan is our strategic partner and we have a very good relationship with both countries including the relationship between my president, President Putin and the leadership of Azerbaijan and Armenia. I would like to underline and to recall you that last year Russia played an active and key role to stop these clashes after the 44-day war between the two countries, and we have deployed our peacekeepers. We do a lot, just to observe ceasefire and to try to help the stability in the region between the two countries.

On November 26 in Sochi Russian President Vladimir Putin, Armenian Prime Minister Nikola Pashinyan and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev held trilateral talks. The sides agreed on a number of issues which are vital. The first of them is establishment of mechanism for border demarcation and delimitation between the two states, and the sides agreed to complete this work by the end of the year. The second is the very sensitive point related to humanitarian issues. And finally, three leaders held in-depth discussion on economic issues, on developing economic ties and spoke about unblocking transport corridors. This concerns both railway and road traffic. The deputy prime ministers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been working on all of this issues.

We are also working on a mechanism to create a sort of confidence between the two countries and to find a political solution at format of 3+3 (Russia, Turkey, Iran plus Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). Russia

It’s very logical Iran seeking guarantee that U.S. wouldn’t quit nuclear deal again: Russian ambassador

Dzhagaryan says ‘we are ready to consider very attentively all Iranian proposals’ for arms purchase



had proposed to hold a meeting at the level of the five deputy foreign ministers in Moscow. Unfortunately, right now for some political reasons Georgians aren’t ready but the door is open. Maybe, if not now, maybe in future Georgian colleagues will join the process because it’s very important.

That’s why we are working as an honest broker in this regard. Iran, also I think, is an honest broker and we appreciate Iran’s balanced stance, and Iran has very friendly relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia and both countries also have confidence on Iran.

Our next question is about a conversation between Ayatollah Raisi and Mr. Putin. Mr. Putin supported drafting a document on long term cooperation between Iran and Russia. Earlier, Iranian officials said that talks had been held on the document. What are the latest developments related to this document?

First of all, I would like to remind you that the previous document or the current one was signed in March of 2001 in Moscow and when I was working as a counsellor there on the Iranian desk, I participated directly in preparing this document together with my colleagues and I was an interpreter in the negotiations between the two presidents of our countries at the time. Now 20 years have passed. It’s high time, maybe, to modernize the document, taking into consideration new realities. We are waiting for our Iranian friends to sum up the document and we are ready to get it as soon as possible.

The UN arms embargo against Iran expired in October 2020 under the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal. Do Iran and

Russia have a plan for arms trade, and has Russia sold weapons to Iran since the embargo expired. And what about the future?

I would answer you briefly. First of all, you are right. This arms embargo expired on October 18, 2020 last year and now we have no problems to sell any weapon to the Islamic Republic of Iran of course by taking into consideration issues such as nonproliferation, and some issues like export control and so on. Once again, we are ready and we are ready to consider very attentively all Iranian proposals. No problem, because right now it’s legal. Any unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran are illegal I would like to underline once again.

The next question is what are the latest developments on the status of Russian-Iranian talks on the Caspian Sea legal convention and what is Moscow’s view on this issue?

You know this question was just touched upon in our last phone conversation between the two presidents and we, from time to time, adjust to raise the issue in our talks with our Iranian friends. We know that the issue is a little bit sensitive for Iran. In 2018 in Aktau, Kazakhstan, the Convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea was signed and Iran is the only country which didn’t ratify this document, and as far as I understand, domestic discussions are underway. We expect our Iranian friends to once again attentively consider it and join the other countries in ratifying it because it is very important, though of course we will also be able to separately discuss some

other issues. For example, the basis lines. We now are preparing the negotiations between 5 littoral countries; I mean the so-called working group in Moscow. We are talking to arrange the meeting at a time which is acceptable for all Caspian countries and the Russian Federation is ready to host it next month again.

Let’s point to the recent visit by the UAE foreign minister to Syria. Some Arab circles claim that these moves are made to reduce Iran’s influence with a tacit support of Russia. What is your opinion?

You know, this visit is very important. We also try to convince all our partners to be more active in relations with the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic and to convince them to help, let’s say, return of the Syrians and the city of Damascus to the Arab family. We have the same stance with our Iranian friends.

The contribution of Arab countries is very sensitive for the reconstruction of Syria and its economy. We are considering a possibility to export electricity from Jordan and gas from Egypt to Lebanon using Syria’s transit route. There is also a very important phone conversation between Jordanian King Abdallah and Syrian President Bashar Assad. I do believe that these steps are very useful and they are not reduce Russian or Iranian presence in Syria. I would like to underline that only our troops are present in Syria legitimately at the invitation of the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

For our last question, I want to ask you what’s your reaction to recent allegations that Russia together with China inked a gas deal with Iran for development of the Chalus gas side? What is the purpose behind these allegations?

We have hit a lot of such allegations. False and baseless. There was also a reaction from our embassy and these false allegations are spread by those who are against the friendly relations between our countries and so what we say that our talks with the Iranians are quite transparent and mutually beneficial.

As I thought this allegation is maybe being spread by American special services because a big reason in just spreading such false allegations is that to make a gap between friendly countries but these things wouldn’t get any success. They are doomed to failure.

Iran embarks on “neighborhood” foreign policy

From page 1 ► During the meeting, Raisi said that Iran and Turkey can bring economic and political relations closer to the strategic level by improving the current level of trade exchanges.

Referring to the wide and diverse areas of cooperation between Iran and Turkey in various sectors, including energy, banking and monetary issues, and trade and commerce exchanges, Raisi said, “We should facilitate the development of economic relations and in this regard, preferential tariffs can be reviewed.”

Emphasizing the close cooperation and relations between Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkey, the president said that the three countries have many cultural, religious and ideological affinities, and these relations should not be allowed to be disrupted. Instead, Raisi suggested, relations should be as close as possible to disappoint the common enemies.

Further, he touched upon the Afghanistan issue, saying, “Terrorist groups not only cause insecurity in Afghanistan but also threaten the security of the region, so we should not allow terrorist groups such as Daesh (ISIS) and the PKK to threaten the security of countries in the region.”

The president added that Iran supports the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

“We believe that all groups and ethnicities of Afghanistan should have a role and participation in the future of Afghanistan,” he elaborated.

Referring to the establishment of stability and security in Syria, Raisi said, “We should use our capacities to create peace and security in Syria.”

For his part, Erdogan said that his country considers it necessary to develop and strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

“We can make a leap in the relations between the two countries, especially in the economic sectors,” Erdogan said.

“The White House is training and arming all terrorist groups in the region, including ISIS and the PKK, and providing them with terrorist equipment

and tools to create insecurity,” he said.

Erdogan added that Iran, Russia and Turkey can maintain security and stability in the region with the cooperation of other countries in the region.

Iran, Azerbaijan sign deal that allows Turkmenistan to swap gas with Azerbaijan

Later in the day, Raisi met the Azerbaijani President, Ilham Aliyev.

After the meeting ended, Iran and Azerbaijan signed a deal that allowed Turkmenistan to swap gas with Azerbaijan, using the Iranian territory.

The agreement was signed with the presence of ministers of oil of Iran and Azerbaijan in Ashgabat on the sidelines of the 15th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit.

According to the agreement, Turkmenistan will export one and a half to 2 billion cubic meters of gas to the Republic of Azerbaijan through the territory of Iran.

The agreement also made Turkmenistan sell 5 to 6 million cubic meters of gas a day to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Iran will withdraw its required gas consumption in five northern provinces of the country as the right for transfer the gas.

In this regard, Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian also met with his Azeri counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov.

During the meeting, Amir Abdollahian hailed as important cooperation at various political, economic, cultural areas as well at the level of officials, including presidents, foreign ministers, etc.

He lauded Azeri Deputy PM and Chairman of the Joint Commission’s visit to Iran.

Iran’s top diplomat described the meeting between Iran and Azerbaijan officials as indicating the right path of diplomacy.

He also congratulated Azerbaijan’s membership in the UNESCO Executive Board and stressed the importance of developing international cooperation. *(See full text at tehrantimes.com)*

Air Force commander meets Navy chief on occasion of Navy Day

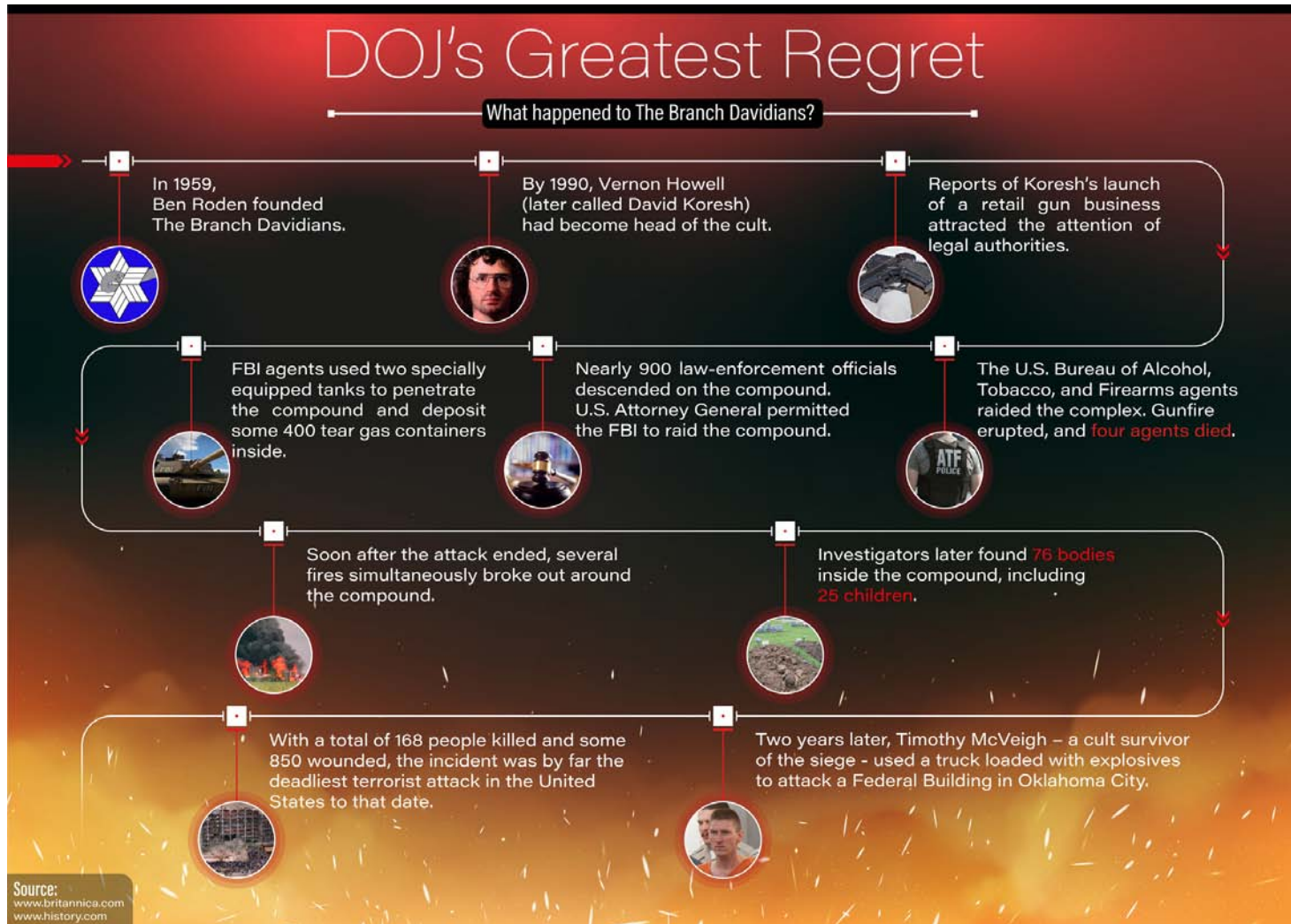
TEHRAN - Air Force Commander Hamid Vahedi and his accompanying delegation met on Saturday with Navy Commander Shahram Irani to congratulate him on Navy Day, which falls on November 28.

Congratulating Navy Day, Vahedi said, “The Navy has been able to achieve significant strategic and defense progress by relying on internal capacities and trusting the capabilities of the country’s elites

and supporting creativity and initiatives.”

The commander of the Air Force stated that certainly through unity and empathy that exist today among all the armed forces units coupled with the wise and prudent leadership of the Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief, no superpower would dare to threaten Iranian lands like those days that Saddam Hussein’s army invaded Iran in September 1980.

The Navy commander, for his part, praised the great efforts of Air Force personnel during the imposed war against Iran in the 1980s, saying, “Certainly, the heavy defeat and collapse of the Ba’athist regime’s navy, with all the support by great powers during the war, took place with the support of the pilots and the sacrifices of the Air Force, which, along with the Navy, were able to humiliate the arrogant superpowers.”



U.S. faces a diminishing range of choices in Vienna

TEHRAN – After long months of patience, diplomats from Iran and world powers will reconvene in Vienna again on Monday to redress the situation resulting from the 2018 U.S. withdrawal from a 2015 nuclear agreement.

The agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was thought to be rendered moot by dint of former U.S. President Donald Trump. But the U.S.'s dire need for an agreement with Iran and its diminishing space of options led the Biden administration to lick its wounds and seek a return to the tattered deal.

The problem, however, lies with the Biden administration's renewed efforts to rewrite the recent history of the JCPOA and achieve a return to the deal without addressing the underlying reasons that created the current situation in the first place.

It goes without saying that the current state of play between Iran and the West is the direct result of the previous U.S. administration's ill-fated withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal while Iran was in full compliance with its strict terms.

Iran waited for a full year after Trump's jettisoning of the deal in the hope that the European parties to it would fulfill their commitments. But since they failed to honor their



commitments, Tehran gradually started its remedial measures that resulted in further development of Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

Now, two years later, Washington and its European allies are complaining that Iran's nuclear program has made "permanent" progress on nuclear development.

In a recent joint statement to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UK, France and Germany – collectively known as the E3 – complained about Iran "permanently and irreversibly upgrading its nuclear capabilities."

"Iran's R&D on, and extensive use of, advanced centrifuges have permanently improved its enrichment capabilities," the joint statement said.

The wording of the statement put

the blame on Iran for this progress as if Iran withdrew from the JCPOA first. In fact, Iran, quite on the contrary, is still honoring the key commitments it made in the JCPOA.

At any rate, the U.S. now faces a problem of its own making. It quit the deal and it's up to it to make up for its fault. Judging from American and European statements on the JCPOA, time doesn't seem on the U.S. side.

On the contrary, Iran seems to be patient and in no rush to make a deal at any cost.

Overall, two options have been floated as diplomats from Iran and its negotiating partners descended on Vienna on Monday. First, reviving the original deal. Second, hammering out an interim agreement. The Americans, going into the Vienna talks, raised the issue of hashing out the interim

agreement if reviving the JCPOA was to fail. But Iran doesn't seem to be open to such a deal given the U.S. track record in renegeing on its long-term obligations, let alone interim ones.

Thus, the only viable option for the U.S. is to revive the original pact and redress its past blunder in abandoning the deal. Of course, this needs to be done in a new spirit. Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, outlined the requirements of this spirit. In an opinion piece for the Financial Times, he wrote, "In order to secure the rights and interests of our nation, we are ready for a fair and careful discussion, based on the principles of 'guarantee' and 'verification'. This must prioritize compensation for the violation of the deal, which includes the removal of all post-JCPOA sanctions. In return, Iran is ready to voluntarily fulfill its nuclear commitments in accordance with the agreement."

Nour News, a news website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, also echoed the same agenda. It summed up the agenda as follows: "Effective and verifiable lifting of all sanctions, along with a guarantee that the past situation will not be repeated in exchange for Iran's implementation of the remaining, time-framed commitments under the JCPOA."

President Raisi meets Iranian expatriates, businesspersons in Turkmenistan

TEHRAN – During his trip to Ashgabat to participate in a regional summit, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi met with a number of Iranian businesspersons and expatriates in Turkmenistan.

In the meeting with the businesspersons on Sunday morning, Ayatollah Raisi hailed Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as providing a good platform for regional development, underlining that a gas deal with Turkmenistan will be revived.

Emphasizing the need to facilitate the activities of the country's traders and exporters in order to boost and develop exports, the president said, "By visiting Tajikistan and attending the Shanghai summit, a suitable platform has been created for the development of the country's regional relations."

Ayatollah Raisi called for transformation in all areas, especially the economic and commercial sectors, as one of the government's economic priorities. "Increasing exports means that the current situation is well studied and appropriate solutions are adopted to remove obstacles and problems."

Emphasizing his government's approach to developing cooperation with neighboring countries and the region, the president said, "There is a suitable economic and trade infrastructure to develop and enhance the level of bilateral and regional cooperation in our country."

Ayatollah Raisi noted, "By attending the Shanghai summit in Tajikistan, a suitable platform has been created for the development of regional relations in the country, and we are witnessing good opportunities in the field of improving the level of relations between Tehran and Dushanbe."

He said, "There is no serious and special problem in the development of relations with neighboring countries and the region, and by interacting with each other and mutual understanding, while solving existing problems, effective steps can be taken to strengthen and consolidate relations."

Referring to talks with his Turkmen counterpart on the development of bilateral relations in various sectors, including gas and transit, the president said, "Today, Turkmenistan is confident that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to solve the problems and remove the existing obstacles."

The president stated, "The gas agreement between Iran and Turkmenistan will definitely be revived."

Iran to issue verdict against assassination of nuclear scientists soon

TERAN- Kazem Gharibabadi, the Iranian deputy judiciary chief for international affairs and the secretary of the High Council for Human Rights, said on Sunday that the Tehran Justice Department has completed its legal investigation into assassination of four Iranian nuclear scientists and it will soon issue verdicts in these regards, the Mizan news agency reported.

"The Tehran Justice Department has completed the legal investigation into four cases of assassination of nuclear scientists and the relevant verdict will be announced soon," Gharibabadi said while speaking on the occasion of the first anniversary of the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

"On the other hand, criminal investigation into these assassinations is also on the agenda of the Tehran

Prosecutor's Office, and a case has been filed in this regard, and other cases will be filed soon," the human rights chief stated.

He added, "We expect that with the coordination and cooperation of other relevant agencies, we will pursue and investigate these crimes in the international arena as well."

Gharibabadi said the assassination of Fakhrizadeh, like the assassination

of other nuclear scientists, is a "crime against humanity" and a violation of "international law and human rights".

He also said, "Martyr Fakhrizadeh was an unknown scientist who only after his martyrdom people became acquainted with some of his services. The services of martyr Fakhrizadeh, especially in the field of nuclear knowledge and experience, will be long-lasting."

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

3

SPORTS

Ganjzadeh elected head of Iran Athletes' Commission

TEHRAN – Olympic gold medal winner Sajad Ganjzadeh was chosen as chairperson of Iran Athletes' Commission.

In the election held in Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC)'s headquarters on Sunday, Ganjzadeh was voted as the chairperson in the election which was attended by 17 members of the commission.

Iran's NOC president Reza Salehi Amiri also participated in the election.

Ganjzadeh claimed a gold medal in Tokyo 2020 in the men's karate kumite competition in the +75kg category after emerging victorious over his Saudi Arabian rival Tariq Hamed.

Woman shooter Najmeh Khedmati was also elected as the commission's deputy chairperson.

The mission of the Athletes' Commission is to represent the views of the whole Iranian athlete community and making sure that athletes' voices are heard within the Iran's sports organizers.

Akhbari shortlisted for best 2021 ACL Goalkeeper

TEHRAN – Tractor goalkeeper Mohammad Reza Akhbari has been shortlisted for the best goalkeeper of the 2021 AFC Champions League team.

After Al-Hilal SFC defeated Pohang Steelers to be crowned kings of the continent once more, the-AFC.com looks back on some of the standout displays in order to find out the Best XI from the 2021 AFC Champions League.

As ever, it begins with the goalkeepers and ask the fans, to review our five nominees from the last line of defense.

Five successive clean sheets in the group stage after a 3-3 opening-day draw with Pakhtakor was a fantastic return from Akhbari as Tractor FC qualified for the knockout rounds for the first time since 2016.

The 28-year-old produced two excellent shutouts against Group B winner Sharjah as he thwarted the Emiratis time and again with a string of excellent saves that ultimately helped the Iranian side advance.

Abdullah Al Mayouf (Al-Hilal SFC), Jo Hyeon-woo (Ulsan Hyundai), Mitch Langerak (Nagoya Grampus) and Dheeraj Singh (FC Goa) are also shortlisted for best goalkeeper of the 2021 AFC Champions League Team.

Iranian Para athletes depart Tehran for 2021 Asian Youth Para Games

TEHRAN – Iran delegation traveled to Bahrain Sunday morning to participate at the fourth edition of the Asian Youth Para Games.

A total of 165 athletes will represent Iran in the Games.

The Games will bring 750 Para athletes from 29 countries together in Manama.

Iran finished second in the previous edition held in the UAE.

The first Asian Youth Para Games were held in Tokyo, Japan in 2009 and Kuala Lumpur hosted the second edition four years later.

The Asian Para Youth Games is a quadrennial sports event for the continent's athletes with disabilities aged 12 to 20 years old.

The competition will be held from December 2 to 6 in nine sports.

Iran 3rd at World Taekwondo Women's Open

TEHRAN – Iranian women taekwondo team finished in third place at the first edition of the World Taekwondo Women's Open Championships in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

With Russia topping the medal table of the historic Women's Open Championships in Riyadh, second place went to Great Britain.

Iranian players won three medals in the competition. Zahra Sheidaei won a gold medal in the in the under-57kg final after defeating Russia's Margarita Blizniakova in the golden point period.

Kosar Asaseh and Melika Mirhosseini also won two bronze medals in the under -62kg and under-73kg respectively.

The tournament brought 171 athletes from 36 countries together in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from November 25 to 27

Winning athletes secured 40.0 ranking points with second and third place took 24 and 14.4 ranking points respectively.

Athletes competed in eight weight categories in matches comprising three two-minute rounds at the Green Halls.

Guinness Book records Iranian disabled athlete

TEHRAN – The farthest basketball shot hit from the floor with the hand is 15 m (49 ft 2.5 in) and was achieved by Iran's Alireza Sadeghi Barzani, in Dubai, UAE.

Barzani is an athlete from Iran known for his remarkable skills in using crutches while playing sports.

The disabled athlete from Isfahan, who has been practicing throwing a b-ball into the basket with his hand for 11 years, was once again able to do it in the UAE with the presence of a Guinness representative, from a distance of 15 meters.

This is unique globally, and so far, no athlete has managed to register the record. At the same time, this throw has been nominated by Guinness for the best skill of the year.

Sadeghi has a disability in both legs, and his talent in football is excellent. He has been playing football with sticks for many years and has unique moves.

Beijing 2022 celebrates 100 days to Paralympic Winter Games

TEHRAN – The Paralympic Winter Games 100 Days to Go celebration was staged at the stunning National Aquatics Centre on 24 November. Cai Qi, Secretary of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee and President of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (Beijing 2022), attended the event.

Qi expressed gratitude in his speech to everyone for their continued support for the preparations of the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games, Paralympic.org reported.

"With the strong support of the Chinese government, we have fully implemented a green, inclusive, open and clean approach to hosting the Games and adhered to the simultaneous preparation for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games," said Qi.

Beijing 2022 has integrated the preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, cooperated cordially with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) to press ahead with various preparatory tasks in an orderly manner, and made positive progress.

Iran eyes boosting oil production capacity to pre-sanction level by next March



TEHRAN – Head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr has said his company is planning to boost the country's oil production capacity to the pre-sanction levels or four million barrels by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022), Shana reported.

“Based on our plans, we need \$90 billion of investment in the oil sector, while \$70 billion is also needed to develop gas fields,” Khojasteh-Mehr said in a press conference on Saturday.

The official noted that the Oil Ministry has defined different investment packages and considered a big share of contribution for foreign investment.

“In this regard, we welcome foreign investment, but if it is not materialized, we have other options and scenarios and we will not waste our time,” he said, adding that Iran has one of the safest energy supply corridors in the world and numerous negotiations have been held with foreign companies in this regard.

Tehran hosts Iran-Zimbabwe business forum

TEHRAN – Iran and Zimbabwe explored ways of expanding economic cooperation in a business forum held in Tehran on Sunday, IRIB reported.

The forum was attended by senior officials from both sides including the Director-General of International Affairs at the Iranian Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare Hamed Forouzan, and Zimbabwe's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade David Musabayana.

During the event, the two sides emphasized the expansion of relations in trade and economic fields with a focus on neutralizing the U.S. sanctions and preparing for the 9th meeting of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee.

Speaking in the meeting, Forouzan pointed to the long and deep political and economic cooperation between Iran and Zimbabwe and noted that Iran has always been a strong supporter of anti-colonialism in African countries.

He placed special emphasis on the capacities and potentials of Iran's Social Security Investment Company, affiliated with the Ministry of Labor and Cooperatives, and said that

Free Zones High Council looking for establishment of international bourse in FTZs

TEHRAN- The secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council said, “We are looking for the establishment of international bourse in the free trade zones (FTZs) of the country to help the stock exchange market”.

Although, Saeed Mohammad mentioned the problems existing in these zones and said, “Our free zones have a lot of problems, the first of which is infrastructure. After 39 years, Kish Free Zone still does not have enough electricity supply; we have 22,000 vacant units in Kish, and if they live in them, we will face a big electrical problem.”

Just two percent of the country's export is from the free zones, they account for only one percent of the country's production, and seven percent of investment, the official further lamented.

The establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote the non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first

Khojasteh-Mehr further stated that considering the increase in the oil and gas production and the country's refining capacity, NIOC is also planning to boost the oil and gas industry's export capacity to reach 1.5 times more than the pre-sanction levels over the next 10 years.

“The manpower working in the Iranian oil industry's upstream sector is among the world's most qualified, and the geography of the oil industry has enabled us to have energy security,” he stressed.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the NIOC head mentioned the country's current crude oil and gas condensate exports, saying: “Exports of crude oil and gas condensate have increased and we are using all our capacities to maximize exports because the sustainability of crude oil exports is our policy.”

According to him, NIOC is looking for new and safe markets for exports to continue selling oil.

“The National Iranian Oil Company is one of the 10 largest companies in the world and we have a wealth of about 1,200 billion barrels of crude oil. Few countries in the world have this privilege, and we rank first in terms of oil and gas reserves,” the official stressed.

He pointed out that NIOC is currently operating 400 oil and gas fields, adding: “We can extract 340 billion barrels of our current resources with basic and conventional methods and without the need for advanced technologies.”

the presence of senior managers of the company in the joint meeting shows Iran's serious determination to develop economic and trade cooperation with Zimbabwe in order to neutralize oppressive sanctions imposed against both countries.

The subsidiaries of the Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives, and Social Welfare are ready to expand and develop their cooperation with Zimbabwe in the field of technical-engineering services, solar energy, pharmaceutical, and petrochemical industries, Forouzan said.

Musabayana, for his part, pointed to the serious will and interest of his country to increase economic cooperation with Iran, and said, “Today's meeting with the managers of the Social Security Investment Company and holding talks with them shows the Islamic Republic of Iran's trust in Zimbabwe. We also are interested in cooperation of two countries of Iran and Zimbabwe in trade and economic relations.”

Referring to the long-standing relationship between the two countries, the official said: “We will soon work together to neutralize the U.S. sanctions.”

one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azərbaycan Province, and Maku in West-Azərbaycan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

While near three decades have passed since the start of free trade zones activity in Iran, their planned objectives have not been fully achieved and their development is still facing some impediments.

Lack of proportion between the facilities and the objectives, lack of a national definition for free trade zones' performance, limited resources for establishment and completion of infrastructures, no comprehensive management between the zones, and not complete implementation of zones management law are some of the barriers in the way of free trade zones' activity and development in the country.

Non-oil trade rises 40% in 8 months yr/yr

From page 1 ► He said major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were China, Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Afghanistan.

The official further announced that the Islamic Republic imported 26.5 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$32 billion in the first eight months of the present year, with a 38-percent growth in value and a 21-percent rise in weight year on year.

The United Arab Emirates was the top exporter to Iran in the said period, followed by China, Turkey, Germany and

Switzerland, he stated.

According to the IRICA head, out of the total non-oil goods imported into the country in the first eight months of this year, 20.3 million tons worth \$12.4 billion were basic goods, which accounted for 38 percent of the total value of the imports.

Mir-Ashrafi has previously announced that the value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

He has put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons, and said that the figure shows a 25-million-ton annual decline,



which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

Iran's non-oil export was 112 million tons valued at \$34.5 billion, and that of import was 34.4 million tons worth \$38.5 billion in the past year, the official added.

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the

fifth with importing \$2.2 billion, Mir-Ashrafi announced, and named gasoline, natural gas, polyethylene, propane, and pistachio as Iran's major exported products during the past year.

He further named Iran's top sources of non-oil imports in the said time, as China with exporting \$9.7 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic, the UAE with \$9.6 billion, Turkey with \$4.3 billion, India with \$2.1 billion, and Germany with \$1.8 billion, respectively, and mentioned corn, cellphone, rice, oil meal and oil seeds, wheat, and raw oil as the major imported items.

Iran, Turkmenistan stress development of transport infrastructure to boost trade

TEHRAN – Representatives of the private sectors of Iran and Turkmenistan have stressed the need for developing transportation and transit infrastructure at common borders as the prerequisite for the expansion of trade ties.

In a meeting between the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie and the chairman of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan, Shafeie said the growth of economic cooperation between the two countries depends on the development of such infrastructure.

As reported by the ICCIMA, the officials met on the sidelines of the meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states in Ashgabat.

Speaking in this meeting, the Turkmen side emphasized that Turkmenistan is completely neutral in its relations with other countries and does not place any restrictions on the development of mutual cooperation.



“Iran is a large country with a long history of cooperation in various fields, and we would like to cooperate with the Iranian side in various fields of agriculture, industry, mining, and services,” he said.

The official stressed the need for the development of relations between the two countries in various economic and trade sectors, saying that the private sectors of the two countries have the ability to develop various activities and this capacity can be used.

“Unfortunately, despite our interest in developing relationships, the outbreak of coro-

navirus has overshadowed some of these activities and we have not been able to make good use of our common capacities, which we hope will be remedied in the near future,” he said.

Shafeie for his part referred to the significant growth of privatization in Turkmenistan in recent years and noted that the friendly relations between the two countries could be the pillar of economic and trade relations between the two sides.

Criticizing the non-implementation of the agreements reached within the ECO framework, including the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), the Visa Facilitation Agreement, the ECO Transport and Transit Framework Agreement, etc., Shafeie said: “I hope all countries will cooperate in the ECO trade forum so that the effective interaction of the private sectors and governments of the ECO members can pave the way for the development of cooperation within the region.”

IME's value of weekly trades hits \$669m



TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), two million tons of commodities worth \$669 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), indicating 12 percent rise in the value and four percent growth in the weight of trades as compared to its preceding week.

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange experienced trade of 1.718 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$476 million on its metals and mineral trading floor.

On this floor, the IME witnessed trade of 1,000,042 tons of cement, 558,496 tons of steel, 51,000 tons of iron ore, 49,500 tons of sponge iron, 10,400 tons of aluminum, 7,290 tons of copper, 1,930 tons of zinc, 21 tons of precious metals

concentrate and 11 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME saw - during the same week - on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor trade of 310,230 tons of commodities valued at more than \$189 million.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 84,380 tons of bitumen, 77,363 tons of polymeric products, 74,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 35,000 tons of lube cut, 31,178 tons of chemicals, 4,718 tons of base oil, 720 tons of sulfur and 50 tons of argon.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 4,720 tons of commodities traded on it.

As previously reported, during the past Iranian calendar month (ended on November 21), 8.961 million tons of commodities worth \$2.357 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange, indicating 18 percent rise in the value and 24 percent growth in the weight of trades as compared to its preceding month.

The exchange sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 7,387 million tons of commodities val-

ued at more than \$142 billion.

Items traded on this floor included 5.176 million tons of cement, 1,452 million tons of steel, 521,000 tons of iron ore, 172,000 tons of sponge iron (DRI), 31,445 tons of aluminum, 30,535 of zinc, 29,100 tons of copper, 560 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 200 tons of metallurgical coke, 81 tons of precious metals concentrate and 63 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the exchange saw trade of more than 1.53 million tons of commodities worth almost \$907 million on its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 447,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 441,510 tons of bitumen, 324,851 tons of polymeric products, 150,081 tons of chemicals, 135,000 tons of lube cut, 15,682 tons of oil, 13,850 tons of sulfur, 546 tons of insulation and 50 tons of argon.

It's worth noting that the IME's agricultural trading floor played host to trading one ton of saffron

in this month.

Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 42,795 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities.

The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) rose 108 percent compared to the preceding year.

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of commodities were

traded at the mentioned market.

In the past year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IREN-EX).

IME's worth of trades up 18% in past Iranian month

TEDPIX gains 1,300 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 1,316 points to 1.368 million on Sunday.

As reported, over 4.365 billion securities worth 33.601 trillion rials (about \$800 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index gained 236 points and the second market's index rose 4,943 points.

TEDPIX lost 16,000 points (1.1 percent) to 1.394 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Isfahan Refining Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Social Security Investment Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Or-

ganization (SEO) has said the government is following new strategies to avoid pre-ordered pricing in the stock market in the long term.

“The government's policy, in the long run, is to avoid pre-ordered pricing. This policy has been repeatedly stressed by the president and the government's economic team and has been placed on the government's agenda,” Majid Eshqi said on November 14.

Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem live under the Zionist threat: Hamas representative



From page 1 ► Today, the U.S. administration is continuing this course by the deal of the century, moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognizing Jerusalem as the eternal united capital of the Zionist regime.

Unfortunately, Britain has always been the main pivot in creating humanitarian disasters for the Palestinian people by implanting the Zionist entity in the body of Islamic Ummah.

The primary and essential responsibility lies with the arrogant powers led by Britain at that time and now.

Unfortunately, this scenario is continuing to establish the Zionist entity and depriving us from our rights by planting this criminal terrorist regime in the Palestinian lands.

The second title is the position of the British government, in particular the position of Priti Patel as home secretary who has a dark history in meeting with the Israeli extremists and her support for the Zionist regime.

But at the same time, we do not want to absolve the British government of responsibility for this issue.

The decision is now under study in the British Parliament and House of Lords while it had been announced and approved by the British home secretary.

Therefore, the government's position now is not isolated from the minister's position, because the head of the Defense Committee in the British parliament says that Hamas is a terrorist organization and urges Hamas to enter a political process.

So, everybody knows that the main reason for this move is political and that the decision is politicized while it has nothing to do with the nature of Hamas, whether it is a terrorist or a non-terrorist organization.

It is political blackmail. And political pressure is exercised by this government and its terrorist minister, who has a preconceived and biased position against Palestine.

Neither the world, nor British people, can accept dragging the government to such a wrong decision by a criminal terrorist figure like the home secretary.

As for the third title, I should say that this move is intended to put pressure on the resistance axis and the Palestinian people in order to force them to succumb to the settlement projects, and perhaps the deal of the century. Such a step comes in this context, and therefore these reasons are complementary elements, since Britain is primarily responsible for the humanitarian catastrophe that happened to our Palestinian people.

Priti Patel is notorious for her preconceived attitudes against Palestine and she doesn't care about terrorism at all.

Therefore, the decision is a politicized step par excellence, and they want to use the

livelihood of people to pressure and blackmail them.

That is violating all the democratic rules that govern the world and govern humanity in the twenty-first century, a century of dialogue.

With such a decision, they are returning to the age of stone and the era of terrorism led by the Zionist movement, which arose on the "chest of our Arab and Islamic Ummah".

They have taken a condemnable and censurable move that has no basis other than making false claims that have nothing to do with facts; it is an attempt to falsify reality by political pressure.

The Palestinian people know how to respond to these steps. Our people -with all their political and intellectual groups- have rejected these steps, as we have witnessed the positions of Palestinian movements and organizations, regardless of their affiliations.

We appreciate and thank these noble stances.

What are the steps and reactions of Hamas to confront the recent British move?

We took comprehensive moves, just like our political and diplomatic resistance, besides steps to activate the resistance against the occupying regime whose prime minister expressed his welcome for such a decision (by the British home secretary) because it supports his criminal acts.

We have communicated with all the concerned authorities in the Arab-Islamic community at the official and popular levels, as well as with activities in Europe and all around the world, to confront such a decision that will undermine Palestinians' rights.

Britain's move is in fact honoring the executioner instead of condemning him.

Even human rights organizations and their reports denounce the Zionists' crimes and acknowledge that Hamas is a national liberation movement that is established to manage daily, crucial and strategic issues in Gaza.

Therefore, this move was carried out within the political and diplomatic framework through communication with some governments, and here the Iranian reaction stands as an advanced model.

The official and popular activities in Iran represented in the statement and position of Dr. Amir Abdollahian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, when he rejected this step and expressed his support for the Palestinian people are appreciable.

And also the positions of the Parliament's committees and media outlets that joined hands to reject this decision were considerable. Thanks are also directed to them, as well as to the non-governmental organizations working in Palestine and some popular groups that organized

intellectual activities and movements in rejecting this step as an anti-democratic step. Hamas is a democratically elected movement by its people to defend the Palestinians' rights.

The other point is that the Palestinian people, who always take the initiative, carried out heroic operations like the Bab al-Silsilah operations; this great operation is done by martyr Fadi Abu Shkhaydam, whose name will remain immortal in history.

This heroic Mujahid carried out this operation in Bab al-Silsilah on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Izz al-Din al-Qassam, the faithful Syrian fighter who came out of the mosque, moved towards the battlefield with his knowledge and will to confront the Zionist regime and to respond to everyone who says that the Palestinians are terrorist.

Martyr Fadi confronted an Israeli soldier and proved that we care about the rights of the Palestinians and know how to defend ourselves.

This right (self-defense) is guaranteed by all the international laws and divine books, as this brave martyr used to repeat it when the world was negligent.

This is the message of the martyr, who always said that heroism is to stand in face of the criminals and to confront the oppressors.

The question is that why the British government, which supplies the Zionist regime with weapons to kill our children, is not ashamed of all these crimes. Does it think that the world is blind or deaf?

They contribute to the crimes exercised against the Palestinian people and accuse us of terrorism, but they are the real terrorists. We are a national liberation movement, a movement that set an example in defending the Palestinian rights by its commitment to national democracy; our weapon is against the Zionist regime, and we adhere to national consensus.

How do you see the reaction of the Arab-Islamic world to this decision?

In fact, we see a diversity of reactions from the official and popular sides; there are praiseworthy reactions that accompanied this step, while there is a model that I talked about in the previous question, which is the Iranian model. Iranians at official and popular levels rejected and condemned this decision, stressing that Hamas is a liberation movement and a national resistance organization.

There were also other popular activities at the level of Arab and Islamic world. For example, by Tunisia, Kuwait, Malaysia and Pakistan. They organized cross-border academic forums and activities from Europe to the (Persian) Gulf, which condemned this decision and even accused the British government of sponsoring terrorism.

We thank these responses and consider them fundamental and solid positions.

Everyone who has a sense of humanity and patriotism is required to rationally condemn this decision.

Hamas is a resistance movement against the occupation and a usurping regime, which all international institutions recognize as colonialism, and the United Nations commented on this decision that it would not change its formula the dealings with Hamas.

What are the latest violations against Islamic sanctities by the Zionists in the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque and other places?

The Zionists desecrate sanctities in Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque in a non-stop course, and there are issues that must be taken in account at the level of the Arab and Islamic elites: the acts of right-wing Zionist extremism in Netanyahu's government, and then the government of his extremist right-wing successor, Naftali Bennett.

These extremist groups, such as "Women for the Temple" group, which calls for limiting Muslims entrance into Al-Aqsa Mosque, have an official presence in the Zionist government, as well as their lobbies in the Zionist Knesset.

A few days ago they had a meeting with the minister of Israeli religious affairs in an effort to take official measures to open the doors of Al-Aqsa Mosque in front of the Jewish settlers so that they can enter it without any permission.

They want to open the doors of al-Aqsa Mosque for the settlers during the month of Ramadan so that they can celebrate the Hebrew Passover, which takes place in the third week of Ramadan, and they want that to be done officially.

In the past, I mean, in the mid-1900s, the Israeli government was trying to prevent settlers under the pretext that this is a mosque that has nothing to do with Judaism, but today the situation has changed and they want to officially violate the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Zionist soldiers and their laws.

This is the biggest problem.

For example, "Women for the Temple" group wants to completely close the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims on Jewish holidays.

The other issue is that these groups want to violate the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the ministers in the government of the Zionist regime welcome and promote such decisions. They want to change the demography of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque by increasing the number of Jews in the city and the neighborhood of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

During the first week of November, the Education Committee of the Israeli Knesset issued a decision obligating Hebrew students to enter Al-Aqsa. Imagine they want to compel their religious Hebrew students to participate in these incursions.

The official, political and military welcome for such steps indicates the right-wing extremism adopted by this government, which does not want the British government to see such measures and moves.

The Muslims and Christians of Jerusalem live under the Zionist threat through the annexation of spaces, the Judaization of the Islamic places, and changing some places, whether Christian or Islamic, into a Jewish identity.

Saudis wage huge bombing campaign

From page 1 ► The Saudi Arabian military has called on people to stay away from the sites that are being targeted, without identifying which targets the Kingdom's fighter jets are bombing. Rights groups have criticized Riyadh for targeting civilian sites and most of the airstrikes tend to land on residential neighborhoods so calling on residents to leave their homes is not really the most useful method of saving lives because where exactly are they supposed to escape to when they don't know what locations are going to be struck.

The attacks all come amid heavy fighting around the city of Marib especially after Saudi backed forces fled from areas around the key port city of Hodeida and Yemeni forces are making major advances against the Saudi military and Riyadh backed fighters in what is the Kingdom's last stronghold in Northern Yemen. In Marib, Saudi Arabia launched ten raids in the districts of al-Juba and Serwah.

In al-Jawf province, the "American-Saudi aggression" launched two raids on the Khanjar area in the Khub Wal Sha'af district. Yemeni media also say the "Saudi-American aggression" launched a raid on Haradh district, in Hajjah province and two air raids on the al-Amsheya area in Harf Sufyan, Amran province.

In Hodeidah, a child has been seriously injured after Saudi backed mercenaries fired mortar shells that struck a house in the al-Murir area



of the Hays district. The Yemeni Liaison and Coordination Officers Room has registered 98 breaches (of the 2018 Stockholm agreement) by Saudi-led coalition forces in Hodeidah during a span of 24 hours.

The reports indicate that the violations included the flight of 12 warplanes in the airspace of al-Fazah, al-Jabaliya and Hays, 13 reconnaissance spy planes in the airspace of Hays and al-Jabaliya, 18 missiles fired and artillery bombardment, as well as 48 breaches with various small to medium arms. On an almost daily basis, Saudi Arabia violates the UN-backed agreement, reached between the warring sides during a round of UN-sponsored peace negotiations in Sweden in December 2018.

The Stockholm agreement committed the parties to an immediate ceasefire in the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa, redeployment of forces, securing the ports, the establishment of the joint Redeployment Coordination Committee chaired by the United Nations, and the use of the revenues of the ports to support civil service salary payments. Yemenis say instead of bringing peace, the agreement has instead seen an uptick in violence and attacks by the Saudi-led coalition.

The United Nations has called on all sides for a resumption of the Stockholm agreement; something that has been met with suspicion by Yemeni officials because the announcement was made only after Saudi backed forces fled the area to Marib.

This comes as the spokesman for the Saudi coalition commented on the withdrawal of its forces in Aden calling it "a redeployment" instead. The reality is Riyadh is facing a bit of a dilemma in Hodeidah where Saudi backed forces fled to Marib and in Aden, Southern Yemen where infighting has been on and off between Saudi backed forces and Emirati backed forces. This is while the victory laps of the Yemeni Army and Popular Committees in the Battle of Marib has shown a clear determination and willpower by the revolutionary forces to liberate their land and regain the sovereignty of their country with a strategic victory whose repercussions could

potentially extend to the region and perhaps beyond in determining the future balance of power in West Asia.

Meanwhile, an extensive meeting has been held in Damt, al-Dhalea province with the attendance of a number of senior Yemeni officials, dignitaries, social figures and tribal leaders to discuss what Yemeni media described as different ways to confront the latest "American Saudi escalation"

During the meeting, members of the Shura Council, Nayef Haidan and Abdullah al-Farah affirmed that the escalation "through which America seeks to cause more destruction and devastation and occupy more Yemeni areas must be confronted with cohesion and the solidarity of all the free people of this country; to confront it and confront it and thwart it." During the meeting it was pointed out that the enemies' goal to mobilize the al-Dhalea fronts from the south will require all the liberated areas in al-Dhalea, in addition to the northern areas of Ibb province, to be fully prepared and ready to confront a possible new "enemy" operation from the South. Calls have been raised for strengthening mobilization efforts in the surrounding areas and supplementing the battlefronts with a possible new wide-scale Yemeni operation to fend off fresh enemy plots.

Provincial head, Musharraf al-Dhalea also delivered a speech in which he called on everyone



to shoulder responsibility, both within the scope of the work required, saying that this is a time for action and effective action in various fields, especially the military field. He pointed out that "America's efforts to escalate violence in Yemen are aimed at helping and saving the countries of aggression", which have reached a very critical level after enduring "defeat after defeat" on the battlefield. Also present were other officials of al-Dhalea, who stressed that the "miserable" attempts of the Americans to escalate the battle will be doomed to failure thanks to the vigilance and forward thinking of the freedom seeking people of Yemen. For his part, the Director-General of al-Nadra province Abdul Jalil Al-Shami affirmed the readiness of the "sons of al-Nadra" to confront any movements or attempts to escalate the situation.

This as the UN's migration agency, the International Organisation for Migration has raised concerns over the worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen's Marib province, where the armed conflict is having a devastating impact on displaced people, migrants, and the communities sheltering them.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, the number of people forced to evacuate their homes in Marib has risen to more than 45,000 people since September. Christa Rottensteiner, IOM Yemen's Chief of Mission, said, "IOM is extremely concerned about the prospect that hundreds of thousands of people might be

forced to move again if violence reaches the city, as well as rising civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure."

The war on Yemen began in March 2015, after Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies backed by the United States launched airstrikes to reinstate the country's former President. Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was forced to flee Sanaa following a popular revolution. The revolution was triggered after the former President refused to leave office despite his tenure ending and violating the terms of an agreement that stipulated all Yemeni parties will be included in the next government. At the time, Riyadh declared it would take several weeks for Hadi to return to power, the war now reaching its seventh anniversary.

The escalation in the bombing campaigns can be attributed to Saudi territorial losses on the ground.

Cultivation of tourism in the countryside



From page 1 ► but changes in farming practices, mechanization, and the influences of globalization have deeply affected the fabric of rural communities, which have increasingly shifted from being production spaces to consumption spaces, in which tourism plays an important role.

This way, the prosperity of rural tourism and its breakdown due to overtourism are the two ends of the seesaw. So, tourism resources with local characteristics should be gradually protected, explored, and de-

veloped to preserve tourist villages with their own characteristics.

The World Tourism Organization sees rural tourism as a type of activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle, culture, angling, and sightseeing. Such tourism also possesses characteristics such as low population density, a landscape dominated by agriculture and forestry, as well as traditional social structure and lifestyle.

Needless to say that the growth of the local economy is the ultimate goal of the rise and development of the rural tourism industry, but in the long run, to enable the long-term development of the rural tourism industry, the healthy maintenance and growth of environmental capacity is very important.

Consequently, rural tourism is not a magic solution to the problems faced by many rural areas, but it opens up opportunities for economic progress, social and cultural development, and enhancing people's friendship and togetherness.

Cyclists stage rally to highlight rural tourism

TEHRAN – Some cyclists took part in a rally in rural areas of the western province of Kordestan on Saturday to promote rural tourism in the region, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

In addition to promoting the development of tourism in the province, the rally aimed to highlight the province's attractions and biking culture as well, CHTN quoted Yaqub Guylian as saying on Sunday.

As a result of such programs, tourism is expected to boom in the region after the coronavirus, the official added.

When it comes to rural tourism Iran, which has many pristine yet diverse natural settings, has many to offer to nature lovers. Rural tourism as well as agritourism and farm-stays can be regarded as a win-win both for local communities, and post-modern travelers who are tracing unique experiences.

Sightseers may stay with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

Rural tourism, most of all, sets the



ground for economic development in rural areas by creating additional income and employment. It can also improve the social wellbeing in rural areas, for instance by stimulating improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, and electricity networks.

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Iranian travel insiders, Iraqi fellows ink agreements to boost tourism

TEHRAN – Some 20 contracts have been signed between Iranian and Iraqi tour operators and tourism activists in Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The agreements were finalized on the sidelines of a three-day conference last week, which was conducted to introduce the province's tourism potentials and attractions to the Iraqi travel insiders as well as deepen the ties between the two countries in tourism.

The agreements were signed to enhance the number of Iraqi tourists coming to Iran on organized tours.

Last month, over 30,000 Iraqi pilgrims visited Mashhad, making Iraq Iran's main market for inbound tourism, Mojtaba Ahmadi, a provincial tourism official announced.

There are also Pakistanis who wish to travel to Iran for pilgrimage despite their problems, and Oman and Kuwait are other Iranian market countries, he added.

"So far Iraqi tourists have come to Iran and the city of Mashhad individually, living in unapproved locations, and may experience health problems or security issues," the official explained.

These tourists can now book tours and accommodations in



licensed places at affordable prices with the help of Iraqi travel agencies, he mentioned.

He also noted that the Iraqi side requested Iran to waive visa requirements for Iraqi nationals who want to enter the Islamic Republic via land borders.

It will increase the number of Iraqi pilgrims entering Mashhad, but careful planning is needed, he explained.

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city which embraces the shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.

Before the coronavirus puts almost everything on lockdown, Mashhad, played host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian

cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the holy shrine.

According to official statistics, some 37 million Iranian pilgrims and travelers visited the shrine city of Mashhad during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 21, 2019- March 10, 2020). Of whom some eight million came by road, six million by rail, 3.8 million by air, and 18 million by private cars.

For the time being, some travel experts believe the restoration of tourism flow is of high importance for the Islamic Republic. Iranian Tour Operators Director Ebrahim Pourfaraj said earlier this month that the restoration of tourism flow to the country is very important for Iranian tour operators and trav-

el insiders.

"At the moment, we are not thinking about revenues, but we are looking for the beginning of the tourist flow to the country and renew our links [with international fellows]," Pourfaraj said. His comments came after months of steep recession triggered by massive coronavirus restrictions which led many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators towards bankruptcy, unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level.

As mentioned by Pourfaraj, Iran has made its best to maintain contact with global tourism markets and companies that worked with Iran in the past, especially since virtual communication and meetings have thrived. "Following the resumption of the tourist visa, visitors from Russia and France have traveled to Iran and we are currently expecting a smaller number of tourists in Iran due to the current situation in the world," he explained.

Iran is potentially a booming destination for travelers seeking cultural attractions, breathtaking sceneries, and numerous UNESCO-registered sites. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

18 Iranian handicrafts receive National Seal of Excellence

TEHRAN – The National Seal of Excellence has been awarded to 18 high-quality works handcrafted by the natives of Bushehr province, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

Aba-bafi, traditional musical instruments, Khos-duzi, traditional jewelry, and wickerwork are among the works awarded with the National Seal of Excellence, Leila Rahimi said on Sunday.

The cultural heritage department of the southwestern province has focused on applying production-oriented training in recent years, the official added.

With that, and creative and integrated products, the province's craftsmen have reached a desirable level of quality in production, she noted.

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.



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 Qasemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

The value of Iran's handicrafts ex-

ports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1398. Of the figure, some \$190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

UNWTO conference examines ways to develop sports tourism

TEHRAN – A host of international travel experts have discussed ways to expand sports tourism as one of the emerging propellers of the COVID-battered industry.

Celebrated experts and academics in sports tourism debated on current and future trends in the sector and underlined the key role of sport for the development of more sustainable and inclusive tourism during the two-day World Sports Tourism Congress, which came to an end on November 26 November in Spain.

At the opening ceremony, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili declared that the holding of this Congress, with strong in-person participation, is a clear message that the tourism sector is ready to welcome tourists again, and the recovery of sports tourism plays an important role,

the UN body reported.

Pololikashvili added: "An encouraging example is the gradual return of major sporting events, which is a major driver of the restart of tourism."

Sport events of various kinds and sizes attract tourists as participants or spectators and destinations try to add local flavors to them to distinguish themselves and provide authentic local experiences. Mega sports events such as the Olympics and World Cups can be a catalyst for tourism development if successfully leveraged in terms of destination branding, infrastructure development, and other economic and social benefits.

In addition, sports tourism may provide plenty of opportunities for neighboring countries of a certain state which is set to host a mega-sport event. For example, the Iranian island of Kish in the Persian Gulf has an-



nounced its readiness to host Qatar World Cup spectators.

According to Iran's deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, Iran should benefit from the 2022 World Cup as a considerable opportunity to promote its distinctive travel attractions. "With the World Cup being held in a neighboring country, Iran can benefit from this important event, which if carefully planned, can bring significant wins for various sectors, especially the tourism industry in the country," he noted.

Local officials say, the proximity of Kish to Qatar, and the lower cost of staying on this island make it possible for spectators and teams to stay here during the World Cup, which will be held from November 21 to December 18, 2022.

As mentioned by the UNWTO, sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in tourism. More and more tourists are interested in sports activities during their trips whether sports are the main objective of travel or not.

Kordestan mosque and church to embrace public museums

TEHRAN – Public museums are to be created on the premises of the Jameh Mosque of Sanandaj and a historical church, which stand tall in the capital of Kordestan province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The Jameh Mosque of Sanandaj, along with the church, are among the most important cultural and historical assets of this city, but unfortunately, they have not been able to be utilized for the development of sustainable tourism in religious and cultural fields, Yaqub Guylian said on Sunday.

These important and valuable buildings will be brought to the public's attention when they become museums, the official added.

It will also provide better protection and preservation for these historical monuments as well as opportunities for public tours of these significant structures, he noted.

Also known as Dar ol-Eh-

san Mosque, the Jameh Mosque of Sanandaj dates back to the Qajar-era (1789-1925). Because part of this mosque is devoted to the rooms of religious students, it can be considered a mosque school.

It is an extremely rich, delicate building decorated with seven-color tiles, marble plinths, and glazed brickwork. There are beautiful inscriptions in the mosque engraved on marble, and floral and plant carvings on their edges.

The terms "Jameh Mosque" or "Masjed-e Jameh" or "Friday Mosque" are used in Iran for a grand communal mosque where mandatory Friday prayers are/were performed: the phrase is used in other Muslim countries but only in Iran does it designate this purpose.

Sanandaj's historical church, dating back to the Qajar-era, with its distinctive architectural design, once served as one of the city's major centers.



A water fountain can be seen inside the church's courtyard on the south side and there is an active aqueduct (qanat).

The church was inscribed on the national heritage list in 1999.

A Muslim-majority country, Iran is home to many gorgeous churches and chapels that feature amazing architecture and exquisite ornate works. Peaceful coexistence between Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian communities is a social phenomenon that can be traced in various documents narrated by many travelers to the

country.

The name Kordestan refers to the region's principal inhabitants. After the Turkish invasion of Iran in the 11th century CE (Seljuk period), the name Kurdistan was applied to the region comprising the northwestern Zagros Mountains.

It was during the reign of Abbas I the Great of Iran's Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) that the Kurds rose to prominence, having been enlisted by Abbas I to help stem the attacks of the marauding Uzbeks from the east in the early 17th century.

Committee to be formed for post-corona social rehabilitation

TEHRAN – The post-corona social rehabilitation committee will be set up at the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control with the aim of reviving and rehabilitating the psychological and social problems caused by the pandemic.

The social, economic, and psychological effects of the corona will manifest in the post-corona era. Therefore, the formation of a social committee to study the various effects of this pandemic is necessary, Mohammad Hatami, head of the Psychology and Counseling Organization, said.

This pandemic changed the life pattern. Today, if the epidemic is over, its psychological impact will remain for 20 years, he lamented, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to the committee, psychological services and counseling are provided to the people, he concluded.

Pandemic affects human life psychologically and sociologically

Morteza Pedarian, a sociologist said that unlike other disasters that have affected most devel-



oping countries, COVID-19 has pushed the boundaries of development, and even developed countries have suffered heavy casualties.

In various disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and wars, there is emotional support among different members of human society that increases resilience, but in coronavirus crisis, social gatherings and support are

less employed.

In this case, due to the special conditions of the phenomenon, such as quarantine and the risk of the high prevalence of the disease, it is not possible to approach the infected people and even those around them for sympathy.

All these issues cause the post-corona ecosystem to have certain characteristics and to

show its effect in different sectors, this has greatly affected the resilience and vision of humankind in the areas of economics, beliefs, religions, culture, social relations, and collective action.

The phenomena such as this pandemic affect human life psychologically and sociologically and that behaviors need to be re-read, which is why we should think of long-term life.

Iranian team wins 9 medals in IOAA 2021

TEHRAN – Iranian students grabbed 9 medals in the 14th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA 2021).

The Iranian delegation won 2 gold, 5 silver, and 2 bronze medals and an honorary diploma at the competition, held in Colombia on November 14–21, IRNA reported.

Sepehr Mizanian, Sahand Akramipour were the gold medal winners, Tara Rezaei Kheirkhah, Zahra Maleki, Mohammad Taha Jalali Nadooshan, Sahand Esmailzadeh, Amin Zamani won the silver medals, Seyed Mohammad Mehdi Mousavi, Omid Reza Nazari Bokaei gained the bronze medal and

Yahya Ghasemi Suraki received the honorary diploma.

International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics is an annual event for highly performed high school students from all around the world.

Established in Thailand in 2006, it was initiated by five countries including Thailand, Indonesia, Iran, China and Poland with the aim to proliferate astronomy among high school students, to foster friendship among young astronomers at the international level so as to build cooperation in the field of Astronomy in the future among the



young scholars.

IOAA 2020 was held in Slovakia, where Iranian students grabbed 8 colorful medals.

Tehran to host World Soil Day 2021 celebration

TEHRAN – A ceremony will be held on the occasion of World Soil Day 2021 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground on December 5, with the theme of “Halt soil salinization, boost soil productivity”.

The event will be organized in cooperation with the Department of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, and activists in the field of soil and environmental protection.

Activists in the field of soil protection will be appreciated. And an exhibition will be held to display the latest technologies in this field, IRNA reported on Sunday.

In 2002, the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) made a resolution proposing December 5 to be World Soil Day in order to celebrate the importance of soil as a critical component of the natural system and as a vital contributor to human well-being.

This natural resource hosts



over 25 percent of biodiversity and about 90 percent of living organisms spend part of their life cycle in the soil; it also plays an important role in supporting animal biodiversity above ground, including wildlife and domesticated livestock.

The most widely recognized function of the soil is its support for food production. It is estimated that 95% of our food is directly or indirectly produced on the soil. Healthy soil supplies the essential nutrients, water, and oxygen that our food-producing plants need to grow and flourish.

Soil is also crucial for ensuring the continued growth and maintenance of natural and managed vegetation, including

diverse forests and grasslands and the huge breadth of species and varieties that are cultivated or managed for their food, feed, fuel, fiber, and medicinal products.

Soil erosion 8 times above global average

According to the latest statis-

tics, Iran loses 2 billion tons of soil annually, which according to the 2018 report of the United Nations Development Program, the total amount of global soil erosion is 24 billion tons, so one-twelfth of all global soil erosion occurs in Iran.

This is while, Iran has about one percent of the world's land area, which means that its erosion rate is eight times higher than the global average, so Iran

is suffering from severe degradation and soil erosion.

To understand the importance of soil protection, it should be said that it takes an average of 400 years to form a centimeter of soil on the planet.

In Iran, due to the severe erosion, it takes an estimated 800 years to produce a centimeter of soil, so the attention of the people and the government should be on average twice the global average.

Each ton of soil is valued at \$28 in terms of metal ores, so the loss of two billion tons of soil annually means the annual loss of \$56 billion, which is more than revenues from the sale of oil and agricultural products, gardens, livestock, poultry, and fisheries.

Iran loses 2 billion tons of soil annually, which according to the 2018 report of the UNDP, is one-twelfth of all global soil erosion.

Wildlife population in Golestan National Park increased by 30%

TEHRAN – Some 8,283 urials and deer were identified in Golestan National Park at the end of the autumnal wildlife census focusing on herbivorous species, which is an increase of 30 percent compared to the same period last year.

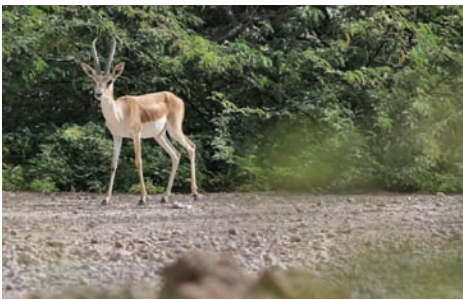
The autumnal census focusing was conducted on November 24–25 by 120 environmentalists and experts from the Department of Environment, and nature lovers, Mehdi Teymouri, head of the Golestan National Park, said, IRNA reported.

Some 8,283 urials and deer were identified in the national park, which, compared to more than 5,000 wildlife species counted last year, shows a 30 percent increase, he added.

Noting that the wildlife population of Golestan National Park in the 1350s (1970s) to be more than 18,000, he expressed hope that the good cooperation between officials, nature lovers, and locals in supporting wildlife will significantly increase the population of animal species in the park over the next years.

The national park is a unique refuge for wildlife that has been facing problems in recent years due to man-made damages.

Stretched to 87,402 hectares, it is home to



one-seventh of Iran's plant species, one-third of all birds, and half of the country's mammals, hosting 1,350 plant species and 302 wildlife species. It has been listed as one of the top fifty ecosystems on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1930.

So far, 150 species of birds have been identified in Golestan National Park. Golden Eagle, eastern imperial eagle, saker falcon, falcon, and bearded vulture are among the endangered birds of the park. Other birds of Golestan National Park include common pheasants, shrikes, griffon vulture, rosy

starling, typical warblers, wheatears, finches, and common blackbirds.

The Golestan park holds a share of 3 species of amphibians and 24 species of reptiles.

Stretched to 87,402 hectares, Golestan National Park is home to half of the country's mammals.

Vaccination of 4m Afghan refugees a great achievement for Iran: WHO

From page 1 ► Iran is one of the leading countries in West Asia for public vaccination coverage, as the country has registered a record 1.5 million doses of vaccines injected in one day, he concluded.

Iran has always been a major supporter of refugees and displaced persons, and the provision of services to asylum seekers for four consecutive decades is a testament to this.

Without any discrimination, Iran has provided various services to a large number of refugees and foreign immigrants in the fields of education, health, treatment, livelihood, vocational training, and employment, with minimal assistance from the international community.

World's fourth-largest refugee community

Iran is hosting the world's fourth-largest refugee community. The country has generously hosted approximately 1 million refugees for the past 30 years. The majority, which mainly came from Afghanistan and Iraq, live in urban areas. Approximately 31,000 of the most vulnerable refugees live in 20 settlements located throughout the country.

Based on the latest statistics, over 3

million Afghans are living in Iran - some 780,000 Afghan refugees, over 2 million undocumented Afghans, and another 600,000 Afghan passport-holders with Iranian visas.

However, in light of the pandemic, all refugees, even those undocumented, benefited from access to free primary health services and free COVID-19 related testing, treatment, and hospitalization, just like Iranian nationals.

The same happened for the vaccination when the country has generously considered refugees over the age of 75 for vaccination against coronavirus.

In order to support the refugees living in the country, the seventh phase of the health insurance plan will cover 120,000 vulnerable refugees through a memorandum of understanding signed between the Health Insurance Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In Iran, UNHCR is seeking \$16.2 million for its COVID-19 emergency, while requires an additional \$98.7 million to support Iran in maintaining and sustaining its commendable inclusive refugee policies, under the umbrella of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR).

Iran is one of the leading countries in West Asia for public vaccination coverage.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON NOVEMBER 28

New cases	3,781
New deaths	80
Total cases	6,108,882
Total deaths	129,629
New hospitalized patients	649
Patients in critical condition	3,347
Total recovered patients	5,863,247
Diagnostic tests conducted	38,547,658
Doses of vaccine injected	104,886,372

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Shiraz University, Chinese Academy of Sciences sign MOU

Shiraz University and Chinese Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences (RCEES) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in scientific and research projects, IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Joint research activities through the Silk Road Research Program, joint publication of articles and books, study opportunities for faculty and doctoral students, use of laboratory facilities, experience exchange workshops especially in the field of natural disasters, droughts, floods, medicinal plants, biodiversity, land degradation and international joint research projects were among the mutually agreed programs.

The MOU provides the opportunity of extensive scientific and research cooperation in a wide range of areas of interest to both natural and agricultural resources.

دانشگاه شیراز و موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی چین تفاهم‌نامه امضا کردند

دانشکده کشاورزی به نمایندگی از دانشگاه شیراز با موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی آکادمی علوم چین سند تفاهم‌نامه همکاری‌های علمی- پژوهشی مشترک امضا کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، زمینه بهره برداری عملیاتی از ظرفیت‌های تفاهم‌نامه حاضر به ویژه در زمینه فعالیت‌های پژوهشی مشترک از طریق برنامه پژوهشی راه ابریشم، نشر مشترک مقالات و کتب، فرصت‌های مطالعاتی اعضای هیأت علمی و دانشجویان دکتری، استفاده از امکانات آزمایشگاهی، برگزاری کارگاه‌های تبادل تجربه به ویژه در حوزه حوادث غیرمترقبه طبیعی، خشکسالی، سیل، گیاهان دارویی، تنوع زیستی، تخریب سرزمین و طرح‌های پژوهشی مشترک بین‌المللی در قالب برنامه‌های مشترک مورد توافق طرفین مورد بحث و بررسی قرار گرفت.

این تفاهم‌نامه مقدمه همکاری‌های گسترده علمی و پژوهشی را در دامنه وسیعی از حوزه‌های مورد علاقه طرفین در زمینه منابع طبیعی و کشاورزی فراهم می‌کند.

