

Europe Shows its True Colors

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Report

Israel tries hacking Robert Malley's mobile amid Vienna talks

TEHRAN— According to various reports, an Israeli company named NSO has hacked into the iPhones of at least 9 employees of the U.S. State Department officials using a spyware, as well as attempting to hack the U.S. Special Envoy on Iran, Robert Malley's mobile phone.

Four informed individuals stated that the iPhones of at least 9 U.S. State Department officials had been hacked by anonymous hackers using the advanced spyware of the controversial Israeli company NSO.

According to Reuters, two informed sources said that the hackings had taken place in the past few months and targeted U.S. State Department staffers based in Uganda or focusing on issues related to the East African country.

The hacks, first reported by Reuters, represent the largest-scale hacking operation against U.S. officials using the Israeli NSO technology.

According to the Pegasus Project, a top U.S. diplomat, Robert Malley, who presently works as the Biden administration's envoy to Iran and was one of the key negotiators of the Obama administration's Iran deal, appears to have been picked as a person of interest by an NSO customer. ▶ Page 2

Report

U.S. probes new "civilian fatalities" in Syria

TEHRAN – The United States has triggered further controversy after acknowledging an airstrike it launched on Friday may have led to more civilian casualties in Syria.

The U.S. Central Command has launched an investigation after the attack carried out with an American MQ-9 Reaper drone against an alleged al-Qaeda member in Syria's northwest "may have killed civilians." That's according to a spokesman for Central Command.

Recently, Washington has been announcing more investigations into civilian casualties as a result of its airstrikes over fears the news will be reported by the media or even leaked to the media. As it happens a local news network reported casualties in Southern Idlib from an air raid just hours prior to the U.S. announcement. The speed of the American acknowledgment of possible civilian fatalities suggests a strong link to the news report and that civilian fatality are indeed more than likely to have occurred.

Moreover, the fact that the Pentagon has refused to publish the name of the alleged terrorist individual it claims to have targeted also speaks volumes and indicates Washington is offering a different narrative to what it had reported. It may also suggest the intended target, who might or might not have been a terrorist, has not neutralized as claimed. Washington says the target was supposedly an al-Qaeda terrorist leader whose death will "disrupt the group's operations and their ability to plan attacks." Critics argue that all the indications are this was a botched operation as the U.S. rarely intervenes in Idlib where terrorists have been holed up in the only province that is not under Syrian government control. On the contrary, the U.S., along with Israel, has been accused of helping the terrorist militants operating in the North-Western province. The U.S. presence in Syria itself is illegal as it has not received a mandate from the UN to operate militarily in the country nor an invitation from the Syrian government. ▶ Page 5

EXCLUSIVE: Unraveling the truth behind the NRF failure in Panjshir: Ahmad Massoud had resorted to American militia!



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TEHRAN— An informed source confided to Tehran Times in exclusivity that Ahmad Massoud has met with Erik Prince, founder and head of the Blackwater private militia group in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Political pundits consider this the primary reason of the failure of the National Resist-

ance Front in Afghanistan.

Blackwater is a privately owned American militia group that gained notoriety in 2007, when a gang of its employees killed 17 Iraqi citizens and injured 20 others in Baghdad's Nisour Square, for which four guards were imprisoned in the United States but later

Bank loans to economic sectors increase nearly 65%

TEHRAN – The Iranian banking system has paid 12.41 quadrillion rials (over \$295 billion) in loans to domestic economic sectors in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), registering a 64.8-percent rise from the same period in the previous year, IRNA reported.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, the

country's service sector received over 6.41 quadrillion rials (about \$152 billion) of the loans, accounting for 43.2 percent of the total facilities.

The industry and mining sector received 4.397 quadrillion rials (about \$104 billion) to have a 29.7-percent share in the total facilities, followed by the business sector with 2.232 quadrillion rials (about \$53 billion)

pardoned by former U.S. President Donald Trump on December 22, 2020.

On a contract basis, the organization provides security services to the federal government of the United States. The firm has been providing services to the CIA since 2003. ▶ Page 2

equaling 15.1 percent share.

The agriculture, the housing, and the construction sectors, also received 1.03 quadrillion rials (\$24 billion), 757.4 trillion rials (about \$18 billion), and 5.1 percent of the total facilities, respectively.

Based on the mentioned data, the facilities paid by the banks and credit institutions to the industry and mining sector ▶ Page 4

Iranian knowledge-based goods to be produced in 7 countries

TEHRAN – Iran will launch production lines of knowledge-based products in seven countries, namely Turkey, Armenia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria, Iraq, and Kenya, Marzieh Shaverdi, the manager of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund, has said.

The export support package for knowledge-based companies includes empowering, networking, and financing, IRNA quoted Shaverdi as saying on Saturday.

Export empowerment includes training and consulting, providing export standards and licenses, and intellectual property, she explained.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology will provide special support to facilitate export for knowledge-based companies with quality products over the next 6 months. ▶ Page 7

Iraqi travel insiders visit Golestan, discuss ways to deepen ties

TEHRAN – On Thursday a panel of Iraqi tour operators arrived in Gorgan, the capital of Golestan province, to exchange views with local officials on deepening tourism ties.

Golestan considers Iraq as one of its target countries for its tourism development, the provincial tourism chief Ahmad Tajari said during the meeting with Iraqi visitors, CHTN reported.

He also expressed hope that by holding specialized meetings and signing bilateral agreements between the tourism agencies of Golestan and Iraq, the tourism between the two regions will grow and prosper.

Reminding the key role of direct flights, one of the Iraqi visitors said that direct flights between Iraq and Iran would benefit the growth of tourism in both countries.

The Iraqi expert also noted that the issuance of land visas has an immediate effect on the growth of tourism between Iraq and Iran.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Tajari noted the organization of fam tours for Iraqi travel marketers is a sign of Iran's determination to boost its tourism relationship with the neighboring country, the official added. ▶ Page 6

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Interview

Iran's goals cannot be met by revival of the 2015 pact: researcher

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A senior research fellow at the Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore says the 2015 nuclear deal won't bring economic benefits for Iran.

"Since the JCPOA in its best times could not do that, Iran's objectives cannot be met by even the full revival of the 2015 pact," Asif Shuja tells the Tehran Times.

The remaining parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal are trying to revive the pact which was annulled by U.S. former president Donald Trump.

However, the European parties (Britain, France, and Germany) said on Friday that the new government in Iran is proposing unacceptable changes to the existing draft agreement, even as it is proceeding apace with its nuclear program.

Given the Western rigidity when it comes to giving a guarantee the U.S. will not abandon the deal again, political observers have warned after five days of meetings in Vienna, there is little possibility of a successful negotiation. The talks were suspended for consultations with governments and may resume next week.

"Clearly a new agreement is required, which could be built on the JCPOA by adding the additional mechanism to implement the Iranian demand of verification of lifting of sanctions," Shuja notes.

"Call it a revised JCPOA, or give it a new name, but it is obvious that any such revision would also involve reciprocal additional demands by the other parties." ▶ Page 5

Shanghai exhibit of Persian paintings celebrates 50 years of Iran-China diplomatic ties

TEHRAN – An exhibition of Persian paintings opened on Saturday at the Shanghai Art Collection Museum to celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iran and China.

The exhibition entitled "Persian Treasures – Iranian Miniature Exhibition" is showcasing a rich collection loaned by the Malek National Library and Museum and Reza Abbasi Museum, two major Tehran-based art centers which preserve rich collections of Persian paintings.

A number of the works have also been loaned by the Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art and Chehel Sotun Palace Museum in Isfahan.

The exhibition, which will run until February 27, 2022, is being organized with contributions from the Consulate General of Iran in Shanghai and the Bordbar Collection in Isfahan.

The exhibition is divided into four sections, Royal Glimpse, Book of Kings, Dynamic Folklore and Melody of Poetry. ▶ Page 8

Top negotiator: Vienna talks were held in a friendly atmosphere



TEHRAN- Stating that the talks in Vienna were held in a friendly atmosphere, the Deputy Foreign Minister said that the European parties were not very satisfied with parts of Iran's proposals, but neither of them stated that Iran's proposals don't provide legal basis accepted by two sides.

Ali Bagheri, chief negotiator of Iran in talks with the P4+1 in Vienna told reporters on Friday, "In this round of talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran entered the talks with a new delegation, but a delegation with the presence of multiple experts in charge of economic, financial and banking issues."

The top negotiator added that this indicates the serious determination of Iran to enter the negotiations with the aim of reaching an agreement.

Bagheri noted, "This point had its effect on the other side, and some opposing parties in the talks pointed out that this composition of the delegation shows the determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to enter into serious negotiations."

Bagheri added that in this round of talks, because new administration and the new negotiating team in Iran were formed, the delegation presented its views on paper regarding the issues on the agenda of the talks to the other side.

The head of the Iranian delegation to the Vienna talks noted, "In two areas, namely the lifting of illegal and oppressive sanctions, as well as on the nuclear issue, we presented the views of the Iranian negotiating team in a reasoned and documented manner in the form of two documents to the other side. Naturally, when this is presented to the other party, it is a basis for negotiation, and as a rule, the other party must provide a reasoned, documented, and logical response to these proposals."

The top negotiator stated that since the other side needed to consult with their capitals to provide a reasoned and documented response

to these proposals, they proposed that the talks be suspended for a few days so that they could go to the capitals and receive instructions for a reasoned response to the Iran and return to Vienna next week.

Bagheri pointed out, "In this round of talks and even in Friday's meeting, we stated several times that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Iranian negotiating team are ready to continue the talks at the this time, but because they wanted to respond to Iran, they made this request and we also agreed with their request that they go to the capitals to prepare those answers for the coming week, and that providing answers to the Iranian side would be the basis for negotiations between the two sides."

About the next meeting, the deputy foreign minister said that this meeting will be next week.

"The date of that meeting has been set, but it has been agreed that it will not be announced yet," he noted.

The senior Iranian diplomat also commented on the remarks of some European diplomatic sources that Iran's demands in the proposals were unacceptable, saying that it is true that the European parties were not very satisfied with some parts of our proposals, but these proposals have been drafted based on common ground between the two sides.

"Therefore, they did not object to the fact that these proposals were relevant, but said that they did not correspond to their views," he noted.

Bagheri called the return of the European delegations to their capitals normal, saying, "We are not going to make statements or suggestions in negotiations that are in line with the Europeans' views. We say things based on our own views, interests and policies, but the important thing is that these suggestions are based on one basis and that basis is accepted by the other party."

When asked if he thought the European side would present a new draft and proposal to Iran after its return, Bagheri stated, "There is no problem. If the European side submits a draft proposal, that draft is also negotiable, but the condition for submitting a draft is that the draft must be based on the common principles of the two sides. If it is not based on common ground, then it is not a proposal to negotiate an agreement. This is for a talks where it is not clear what the outcome will be."

VP: Report on 100-day performance of administration will be published soon

TEHRAN— In a meeting on Saturday morning with Hassan Alidadi Soleimani, representative of the Leader in Kerman, Vice President Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini stated that the capacities of the provinces have been included in this Iranian year's budget, noting there was an effort that budget distribution should be based on justice.

Hosseini stressed that the Supreme Leader of the Revolution's serious demand was for

a change in the administration and went on to say that there was a good opportunity for the three branches of the government to cooperate even in any area that needs fundamental change.

Regarding the 100 day report of the new administration, Hosseini added that the 100-day report on the administration's performance will be published soon and the ministries are concluding their own reports.

Iran delivers 4th gas condensate to Venezuela

Iran delivered the fourth shipment of its gas condensate to Venezuela in line with concluding a contract with Venezuela for exporting gas condensate and importing crude oil in return.

Iran has delivered the fourth cargo of crude oil condensate to Venezuela since the start of this year, citing a Venezuelan member of parliament.

Condensate is vital for Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA as it has virtually no other

options of importing it amid US sanctions.

The superlight crude is used to blend into PDVSA's superheavy crude to make it more liquid and therefore easier to export, Reuters reported.

The two countries earlier this year formalized a swap deal under which Iran would continue supplying condensate to Caracas and received Venezuelan crude in return.

Raisi presses vaccination for foreigners

Unlike certain European states, Iran began to inoculate foreign nationals against the coronavirus since the outbreak of the pandemic and will keep on doing so vigorously, President Ebrahim Raisi said.

Addressing a Saturday meeting of the Coronavirus Fight National Headquarters, Raisi highlighted his administration's resolve to vaccinate foreign nationals and refugees against the coronavirus on humanitarian grounds, Tasnim reported.

"A number of European countries have just recently come up with a plan to do so (vaccinate foreigners), while the Islamic

Republic of Iran had begun the vaccination of all foreign nationals since the very beginning considering the humanitarian issues, and will press ahead with it seriously," he added.

The president further called for strict control over the border travels to avert the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, stressing the need to prevent a shortage of vaccine as people are getting the booster shots.

The daily death toll from the coronavirus in Iran has reached the lowest rates over the past eight months, as over 106 million doses of vaccine have been injected across the country.

Israel tries hacking Robert Malley's mobile amid Vienna talks

From page 1 ▶ There is no proof that Malley was hacked, and NSO has categorically denied that the disclosed database at the center of the Pegasus Project had anything to do with the company or its clients.

According to NSO, its government clients are unable to deploy its software against U.S. numbers because it has been made "technically impossible."

When asked by the Guardian to name the clients who had been disconnected, an NSO spokeswoman said the corporation would not reveal information about its customers.

Reuters wrote in its report that it has not yet been able to identify the perpetrators of these attacks on employees.

The NSO group said in a statement issued on Thursday that it had no indication of any use of the company's spyware, yet, it had denied access to customers and said it would investigate at Reuters' request.

A NSO spokesman said, "If our investigation shows that these actions took place with NSO tools, the account associated with these cyber-attacks will be blocked and legal action will be taken in this regard."

"NSO cooperates with any relevant government authority and we provide the complete information we obtain," the spokesman added.

Officials at the Ugandan embassy in Washington, as well as Apple spokesperson declined to comment.

Researchers at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab recently identified the code behind an NSO attack that was allegedly used to infect iPhones as recently as July. The hack, which was quickly patched by Apple, took advantage of a flaw in the company's iMessage function, which is available on all Apple devices.

NSO has indicated that it will



attempt to persuade the Biden administration to remove its name off the blacklist. However, the most recent disclosure casts major question on whether this will happen anytime soon.

A State Department spokesperson declined to comment on the hacking, citing a recent Commerce Department decision to include the controversial Israeli NSO on the list of companies banned from trading.

The U.S. Department of Commerce last month sanctioned the NSO group and another spyware company based on the decision that these companies produce and supply spyware to foreign governments in order to maliciously target government officials, journalists, businessmen, activists, academics and embassy staff.

The spyware released by NSO is not only able to capture encrypted messages, photos and other sensitive encrypted information from spyware-infected phones, but also turn the hacked phones into recording tools to track and monitor the hacked person, according to the Reuters report.

According to the report, Apple filed a lawsuit against NSO in the U.S. court last week, and at the same time said that it would inform the owners of iPhone phones in reference to the company's spying.

According to the report, the victims of the latest attack related to the Israeli company NSO, which Apple informed them about, included American citizens and were easily identified as U.S. government employees as their email addresses were linked to their Apple IDs.

Informed sources said that they and other targets that Apple has informed about in several countries have been infected with the same GPU vulnerability that Apple was unaware of and did not fix until September.

Researchers investigating the spy campaign say that, at least since February, the software flaw has allowed some NSO users to simply control iPhones by sending infected iMessages to infected devices, and copies of the NSO spyware known as Pegasus can then be installed on the hacked phones.

This is not the first time that Pegasus's spyware scandals have been exposed, and despite the company's repeated scandals, Israeli officials are trying to persuade U.S. officials to refrain from punishing NSO.

Last month, there were reports that the traces of Pegasus spyware, a product of the Israeli company NSO, had been found on the mobile phones of six Palestinian human rights activists.

Pegasus spyware was a product of NSO company.

Traces of Pegasus spyware were found on the cell phones of six Palestinian rights activists.

In mid-July, 17 media outlets reported that Pegasus had been used to successfully hack 37 smartphones belonging to journalists, government officials and human rights activists from around the world.

Various media outlets, including the Washington Post, Le Monde, the Guardian, and several other sources, revealed that the Israeli spyware had been sold to some countries, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to hack into the personal information of several important personalities worldwide.

However, recently, the Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid denied that the NSO cyber company was involved with the regime, and in a recent case of hacking into the phones of the U.S. State Department staff, the Israeli embassy in Washington said that targeting U.S. officials are in serious violation of Tel Aviv laws.

A spokesman for the Israeli embassy said in justifying NSO espionage that products such as spywares were designed in strict accordance only with governments to combat terrorism and organized crime, and if the State Department staffers' phones was true, it is a clear violation of the laws of Israel.

According to a senior Biden administration source who spoke to Reuters on the condition of anonymity, the threat to U.S. soldiers abroad was one of the reasons the administration was tightening down on corporations like NSO and pursuing new worldwide discussions about espionage limitations. According to the official, there has been "systematic exploitation" of NSO's Pegasus malware in many nations.

EXCLUSIVE: Unraveling the truth behind the NRF failure in Panjshir: Ahmad Massoud had resorted to American militia!

From page 1 ▶ On Saturday, the state-run news agency Bakhtar revealed that Afghan security forces have discovered and seized a variety of weapons from eastern Panjshir province.

"Security forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan during several military operations have collected 74 rounds of different types of weapons in Abshar district of Panjshir province," the report said.

The seized weapons have been submitted to relevant organs, Xinhua reported quoting Bakhtar.

Panjshir, 200 kilometers north of Kabul, with Bazarak as its provincial seat, was the final region to witness isolated violent opposition to the Taliban-led administration following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in mid-August.

Despite the Taliban-led caretaker government's capture of Panjshir in September, opponents led by former Vice President Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud, the son of veteran anti-Taliban leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, spoke of resistance in the valley province on occasion.

On Saturday, Amrullah Saleh, ousted Vice President of the previous Afghanistan regime and a supporter of the NRF welcomed the UN Credentials Committee move not to recognize Taliban's nominee

as Permanent representative in the global body.

"The Afghan seat in the UN stays with the legitimate and constitutionally mandated representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," tweeted Saleh.

He further wrote, "We applaud and welcome the decision of the UN's Credentials Committee and see it as a step for healing the massive wounds inflicted upon the Afghan".

The key United Nations panel has decided to defer its decision on requests by the Taliban caretaker administration in Afghanistan and Myanmar's military junta to take their countries' seats at the UN.

The permanent representative of the 'democratically-elected' erstwhile government of Afghanistan Ghulam Isaccai has received a sort of temporary reprieve.

"Resistance in various forms & ways continues throughout the country in which the Afghan women have been most vocal and in forefront. Talibs not only haven't changed but have become more arrogant and brutal in dealing with wider Afghan society," Saleh wrote in another tweet.

Saleh still calls himself Vice President of the

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

By September 6-7, Saleh left Afghanistan and initially moved to Tajikistan.

Following the fall of Kabul on August 15, 2021, and after then-President Ashraf Ghani fled the nation, Saleh retreated to the Panjshir Valley. He declared the formation of the National Opposition Front in order to provide last-ditch resistance to the Taliban.

Both Kyaw and former Afghan regime nominee Ghulam Isaccai have requested accreditation 'renewal'.

The committee's chairman, Sweden's Permanent Representative Anna Karin Enestrom, informed reporters that the committee decided to "defer its decision on the credentials" of the two countries.

Ghulam Isaccai, the ambassador of the old Afghan government, is being sought by the Taliban.

Mohammad Suhail Shaheen, a former Taliban spokesman, has been nominated to the UN Security Council by the new leadership.

In August, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. Even Taliban-friendly countries such as China and Pakistan have yet to publicly recognize the Taliban authority in a diplomatic sense.

Members of anti-Iran MKO terror group arrested for drug smuggling, human trafficking

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

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

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

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

American, European and Saudi officials.

Former U.S. vice president Mike Pence, former US Senator John McCain, former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, former U.S. national security advisor John Bolton, former U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman, and former director of Saudi spy chief Prince Turki al-Faisal, among others, have attended the MKO's meetings.

The cultish terrorist group was on the US government's list of terrorist organizations until 2012. The European Union (EU) also removed the MKO from its list of terrorist organizations in 2009, seven years after blacklisting the outfit.

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

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

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

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

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

After it was founded more than 50 years ago, the MKO launched a campaign of bombings and

assassinations in Iran. Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist attacks over the past four decades, about 12,000 have fallen victim to the group's acts of terror.

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

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

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

Iran, P1+4 negotiators wrap up Vienna talks

TEHRAN – After a week of intensive negotiations, diplomats from Iran and major world powers finished the current round of talks and decided on a return to Vienna next week.

The Joint Commission of the Iran nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), convened a session on Friday afternoon at Vienna's Coburg Hotel.

Enrique Mora, the EU Deputy Director General for External Action Service, and Iran's top negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani presided over the session.

At the meeting which was held with the delegations of Iran and P4+1 group (Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany) and the European Union in attendance, the participants reviewed the results and progress made during this round of talks in light of the draft documents presented by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Some delegations asked for returning to their respective capitals for consultations and receiving new instructions. Hence, the negotiating teams agreed to a hiatus in talks so that discussions will resume next week after delegations return to Vienna from their countries, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

During the current round of talks, Iranian negotiators presented two



draft proposals regarding sanctions- and nuclear-related steps to be taken if talks were to lead to an agreement. In a bid to push the talks forward, Iran drafted the proposals in strict accordance with the terms of a 2015 nuclear deal officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), according to Press TV.

The state-run news television, quoting a source with knowledge of the Vienna talks, said the Iranian-drafted proposals are “in full conformity with the 2015 nuclear agreement and the principles contained therein.”

The source lamented a lack of seriousness on the European side. “Regrettably, some European parties have mistaken the negotiating table for a platform to dictate their positions

and demands,” the source said, adding, “Some parties have not come to the diplomatic maturity that the survival and endurance of the JCPOA depend on the commitment of all parties to their obligations, and some parties’ refusal to implement their commitments indicates that they are not serious in the negotiations.”

Iran also prepared a third proposal but it has not put it on the table yet. It seems that putting forth this proposal is dependent on the West's response to the previous proposals.

Bagheri Kani has said that Iran gave time to the P4+1 group of countries to provide reasonable and documented responses to Tehran's proposed drafts. “It was emphasized that the proposals of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the

removal of illegal and oppressive sanctions and the nuclear issue are on the table,” he said before leaving Vienna for Tehran.

The lead Iranian negotiator added, “Since the opposite side needed to consult with their capitals to provide a documented and reasonable response to these proposals, it suggested that the talks be suspended for a few days.”

Baqeri Kani announced Thursday that Iran has submitted two proposed drafts to the other parties concerning the removal of sanctions and Tehran's nuclear commitments, and is about to put forward a third draft.

The website of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said on Friday that the Europeans’ lack of initiative in the face of the Iranian team's “groundbreaking” proposals is dragging down negotiations in Vienna.

“The first document sums up the Islamic Republic's point of view concerning the removal of sanctions, while the second is about Iran's nuclear actions,” Iran's top security body quoted Baqeri Kani as saying.

“In the third document to be presented to the other parties, Iran will state its views and proposals with regard to the verification period of removing sanctions,” he added, according to Fars News.

Europe shows its true colors

TEHRAN – The European parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have launched a full-on assault on Iran in the wake of the last round of Vienna talks, accusing it of presenting unrealistic and maximalist demands.

The last round of Vienna talks was concluded on Friday noon after long days of intensive, and in some cases stressful, negotiations between senior diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 group of world powers – France, Britain, Russia, and China plus Germany.

The talks were resumed last week after a five-month hiatus during which Iran prepared detailed draft proposals regarding nuclear- and sanctions-related measures to be taken by Iran and the other sides.

During the talks, Iranian negotiators presented two of these proposals. The total number of Iranian drafts is three, with the third proposal is to be presented after receiving the European response.

But instead of reviewing and then providing a detailed, fact-based response to the Iranian proposals, the Europeans, together with their American allies, chose to shorten the talks and launch a cognitive media warfare against Iran by labeling it as the culprit for the alleged failure of the talks.

The Europeans trotted out the same positions they voiced before the resumption of the talks: that Iran pursues maximalist demands and is not serious about the talks.

They said the Iranian negotiators staked out positions that are incompatible with the 2015 deal,

also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), according to the New York Times.

This while Iran's lead negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, told Al-Jazeera that Iran's “proposals to world powers cannot be rejected and based on the terms of the 2015 agreement.”

Also, a source familiar with the talks, told Press TV that the Iranian-drafted proposals are “in full conformity with the 2015 nuclear agreement and the principles contained therein.”

“Regrettably, some European parties have mistaken the negotiating table for a platform to dictate their positions and demands,” the source added.

But while Iran kept lamenting the lack of seriousness on the European side, the Europeans were busy feeding western media with quotations putting the blame on Iran.

Western diplomats told Politico that Iran had put forth new proposals during the week of talks that left almost no basis for further conversations about returning to the agreement that limited Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

“Tehran is walking back almost all of the difficult compromises crafted after many months of hard work, and demands major changes to the text,” senior European diplomats from Britain, France, and Germany said after the talks broke up on Friday, according to Politico.

The E3 – France, Germany, and the UK- reiterated this in a joint statement. “This week, it [Iran] has backtracked on diplomatic progress

made. Iran is breaking with almost all of the difficult compromises crafted in months of tough negotiations and is demanding substantial changes to the text” that undermine the draft, which was between 70 and 80 percent finished, they said, according to the New York Times.

The statement added, “Some proposals by Iran are inconsistent with the JCPOA and some go beyond the provisions of the JCPOA.”

The European kerfuffle over the Iranian proposals came at a time that Iran is logically using its right to submit draft proposals. But the European fuss over the proposals creates the impression that Iran should have not presented proposals in the first place. This is a non-starter because Iran as a vital negotiating partner has the right to propose changes to any draft agreement.

By fostering a one-sided negotiating atmosphere, the Europeans returned to their old habit of adopting dubious positions. On the one hand, they pretend to be keen to salvage the JCPOA. On the other, they reject any constructive move that may pave the way for a negotiated agreement.

At any rate, the Europeans are the last to question Iran's positions in Vienna. Over the past few years since the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018, the Europeans did nothing to save the deal. They only put the onus on Iran to protect it. And Iran worked patiently to preserve the deal while chafing under U.S. blanket sanctions. Now, instead of rewarding Iran, the Europeans want more concessions from Iran.

with the great Islamic Revolution [of Iran in 1979],” she added.

It is noteworthy that present at the meeting were the wives of ambassadors from different Asian, Latin American and European countries along with a host of wives of Iranian ambassadors and diplomats not to mention the director general for women and human rights affairs at the foreign ministry.

While introducing themselves, the ladies expounded on their experience of, and very good feelings associated with living in Iran.

They also presented a brief report on the DSG's activities.

went on to say that Hamas also calls on the governments that have signed an agreement to normalize relations with the Zionist regime to consider this action. “These governments must come to their senses politically,” he reiterated.

The Hamas leader elsewhere highlighted that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan is the prelude to the U.S. withdrawal from other West Asia regions and will ultimately weaken Washington's allies, including the Zionist regime.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

IRAN IN FOCUS

DECEMBER 5, 2021

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Brazilian rowing coach Pedro Sena arrives in Tehran

TEHRAN – Brazilian rowing coach Pedro Sena arrived in Tehran Saturday morning to finalize his deal with Iran's Rowing Federation.



He has reached an agreement with the Iranian federation to lead the country's men and women rowers in the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou and 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Sena has previously worked as coach in Brazil and Japan rowing teams.

He has participated in Beijing 2008, London 2012, Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Iran fall short against Romania at 2021 World Women's Handball

TEHRAN – Iran were defeated by Romania 39-11 in their opening match of the 2021 World Women's Handball Championship Friday night.

In the match held at the Pabellón Ciutat de Castelló in Castelló, Romania cruised to their largest win at the World Championship since the 47-14 drubbing of Puerto Rico in their opening match at Denmark 2015, when they went on to win the bronze medal.

Norway also defeated Kazakhstan 46-18 in Group C.

Iran must face Norway on Sunday, before taking on Kazakhstan on Tuesday.

The Iranian side won their berth for the first time in the 2021 AHF Asian Women's Handball Championship in Jordan in September where the Persians came fourth after South Korea, Japan and Kazakhstan.

The tournament is being held in four Spanish cities namely, Llíria, Torrevieja, Castelló and Granollers from Dec. 1 to 19.

Everton join race for Zenit star Sardar Azmoun

TEHRAN – Everton are set to join the battle to land Zenit St Petersburg forward Sardar Azmoun, 90min understands.

The prolific Iranian is set to be available for nothing next summer when his contract in Russia expires, and he is inevitably attracting plenty of interest from across Europe having scored nine times in 19 games so far in 2021/22.

Clubs in Italy, Spain, France and Germany have all made contact with the 26-year-old's agents, but there is also strong interest from England.

West Ham, Tottenham and Arsenal have previously been linked with the striker, and 90min understands Everton are now ready to mount a strong bid too.

Azmoun confirmed Spurs' summer bid in September, as well as offers from Lyon, Bayer Leverkusen and Roma, but Zenit refused to let him leave while he was under contract and still so important to the team.

Foolad Sirjan to open 2021 Volleyball Club World C'ship on Tuesday

TEHRAN – Iran's Foolad Sirjan volleyball club left Tehran Saturday night to participate at the 2021 Volleyball Club World Championship.

Foolad are pitted against Italian club Itas Trentino and Sada Cruzeiro of Brazil in Pool B.

The Iranian representative will meet Sada Cruzeiro on Tuesday.

Italy's Cucine Lube Civitanova, Argentina's UPCN Vóley Club and Brazilian Funvic Natal are drawn in Pool A.

The current champions are Italy's Lube Civitanova, who defeated Brazilian club Sada Cruzeiro 3–1 in the final of the 2019 edition, to win its first title in the competition.

Italian teams have been the most successful with nine titles.

The FIVB Volleyball Men's Club World Championship is an international men's club volleyball competition organized by the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), the sport's global governing body.

The competition was first contested in 1989 in Italy. It was not held between 1993 and 2008, but since 2009, the competition has been held every year, and has been hosted by Qatar and Brazil.

Karim Ansarifard tests positive for COVID-19

TEHRAN – Iranian international forward Karim Ansarifard has isolated himself after testing positive for the coronavirus.

He has tested positive for the virus in the last tests performed at AEK.

The player announced it himself through social media. “I must inform you that I was diagnosed positive for coronavirus. I will be out of action for 10 days but I will do everything I can to recover as soon as possible and return to training,” Ansarifard wrote.

He scored a goal on Wednesday in the match against Kifisia in Matchweek 11 of Super League Greece.

Lackluster Tehran derby finish in goalless stalemate

From Page 1 ▶ In the second half, Persepolis had a better start and created two goalscoring chances by Vahid Amiri lacked the cutting edge and two teams controlled the middle of the field until the end.

Esteghlal and Persepolis have played each other 97 times with Esteghlal narrowly lead the encounters by 26 wins to 25 with 46 draws.

Earlier in the day, Gol Gohar earned a big 4-2 win over IPL leaders Sepahan in Sirjan.

Armin Sohrabian opened the scoring just two minutes into the match for Gol Gohar and Mehdi Tikdari made the scoreboard 2-0 five minutes before the interval.

Tikdari completed his brace in the 54th minute but Danial Esmailifar pulled a goal back two minutes later.

With Two minutes remaining, Saeid Sadeghi scored Gol Gohar's fourth goal and Esmailifar scored a consolation goal in the injury time.

Havadar and Naft Masjed Soleyman played out a goalless draw in Tehran.

Sanat Naft and Paykan also shared the spoils in a goalless draw.

On Sunday, Nassaji will host Padideh in Sari, Zob Ahan play Mes in Isfahan, Fajr Sepasi face Foolad in Shiraz and Tractor meet Aluminum in Tabriz.

Gol Gohar moved up top with 16 points due to superior goal difference than Sepahan.

Persepolis and Esteghlal are third and fourth with 15 and 14 points, respectively.

Iran FM's wife meets foreign ambassadors' wives residing in Iran

TEHRAN – The wife of Iran's foreign minister had a second meeting with wives of foreign ambassadors to Tehran on Thursday, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

The session was held at the Institute for Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It was held in order for the wives of ambassadors and top diplomats of different countries to meet the new head of the Ambassador's Wives and Iranian Foreign Ministry's Diplomats Association, also known as the DLA.

In the meeting, Mrs Amir Abdollahian welcomed the guests

and elaborated on some areas of joint cooperation.

She highlighted the significance of convergence and cooperation between the DLA and the Ambassador's Wives and Foreign Diplomats Residing in Iran Association, known as the DSG, saying such a relationship contributes heavily to the enhancement and promotion of cordial ties as well as the sharing of constructive experience between countries.

She enumerated the extensive programs already in the offing, and said, “On the back of all-out efforts by the new [Iranian] administration

relations with the Zionists must be stopped as soon as possible, because this policy is pure malice.

“It is obvious that the normalization of relations with the Zionists only serves Tel Aviv,” he added.

Haniyeh stated, “The normalization of relations with the Zionists calls into question the greatness of the Islamic Ummah and destroys its history. Therefore, we call on the Islamic Ummah to take action and work to stop the policy of normalizing relations with the occupying Zionist regime.”

The Hamas top official elsewhere in his remarks

Bank loans to economic sectors increase nearly 65%

From page 1 ► in the mentioned seven months grew by 67.2 percent compared to the previous year's same period, while the figure also increased by 66.6 percent for the agriculture sector, 58 percent for the housing and construction sector, and finally by 30.1 percent for the commercial sector.

In recent years, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has defined supporting production as one of its major plans.

In May 2019, former CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati, outlined plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's economy and mentioned providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production as one of those



plans.

CBI's plans take two major approaches, one of which is to secure funds for production activities and also to provide the working capital needed for such activities.

U.S. extends Iraq's waiver to import gas, electricity from Iran



TEHRAN - The Biden administration has once again waived sanctions on Iran to allow the Islamic Republic to export electricity to Iraq for another 120 days, the Washington Free Beacon reported on Friday.

The waiver notification was signed on November 19 and transmitted to congress 10 days later as nuclear negotiations resumed.

According to the report, the timing of the transmission suggests that the Biden administration is offering concessions to Tehran to show goodwill as talks aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal restart following a months-long standoff.

The United States had granted another waiver from sanctions to Iraq back in March to let the Arab country import electricity and gas from neighboring

Iran and pay for electricity purchases within a four-month period.

Washington has repeatedly extended the waiver for Baghdad to import Iranian gas and electricity and use the crucial energy supplies for its struggling power grid.

Iraq relies heavily on Iranian gas to feed several power plants across the country, while Iranian electricity exports also account for a major part of the country's power supply.

Gas imports from Iran generate as much as 45 percent of Iraq's 14,000 megawatts of electricity consumed daily.

Besides importing 38 million cubic meters of Iran's natural gas to power its electricity generation, Iraq buys 1200-1500 megawatts a day of electricity from the Islamic Republic.

In addition to natural gas and electricity, Iraq imports a wide range of goods from Iran including food, agricultural products, home appliances, and air conditioners.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump's administration blacklisted Iran's energy industry in late 2018 following its unilateral withdrawal from a multilateral nuclear deal over the Iranian nuclear program.

Private sector to help govt. build 1 million affordable houses

TEHRAN - Mass construction companies of the private sector are going to sign deals with the government with the aim of building one million affordable houses within the framework of the National Housing Action Plan.

The companies will submit a proposed plan in this regard to Transport and Urban Development Ministry to be reviewed within a week, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Last week, Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi held a meeting with representatives of mass construction companies to discuss details of future cooperation. During the meeting, he announced the government's support for the private sector investors who intend to enter the construction market.

Back in August, the deputy head of Mass Construction Association Iraj Rahbar said the country's contractors are capable of



constructing one million housing units a year if the necessary funding and land is provided.

Mentioning a plan for the construction of one million affordable housing units per year by the government, Rahbar said: "Allocating land and financing are two important factors for the successful implementation of any housing project, and if these two are provided, building one

million housing units per year will be easily possible."

Commenced in winter 2018, the National Housing Action Plan aims to construct 400,000 small and medium-size apartments (70-100 square meters in size) across the country and particularly in Tehran, where housing prices have risen most sharply.

Nearly half of the total number of the said houses will be con-

structed in Tehran's suburban "new towns" such as Parand and Pardis, respectively located in the west and east of the city.

Back in March, former Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami had announced that 510,000 residential units will be provided for the applicants within the framework of the National Housing Action Plan during the current year.

In September 2019, the registration of the National Housing Action Plan was started from Kerman Province. The second round of registration began in ten other provinces in November that year.

Applicants in Sistan-Baluchestan, Qom, North Khorasan, and South Khorasan provinces registered first and those from Kordestan, Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-Ahmad, and Golestan came in the second stage, while from Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Hamedan, and Yazd provinces came in the third stage.

Passenger car production up 1.4% in 7 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - Manufacturing of passenger cars in Iran rose 1.4 percent during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The production of buses, minibuses, and vans also increased by 12.5 percent, while manufacturing of trucks and heavy vehicles rose 64.4 percent, Mehr News Agency reported, citing data released by the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade.

Some 507,300 passenger cars were manufactured during the seven-month period of this year, compared with 500,000 in the previous year.

Meanwhile, 1,136 buses, minibuses and



vans were manufactured, while the figure was 1,010 last year.

Iran currently stands in 20th place among the world's top automobile manufacturers producing 821,060 vehicles by the end of 2019, according to the Organisation Inter-

nationale des Constructeurs d'Automobiles (OICA).

The country has been following a program for supporting the auto industry as domestic automakers have been facing some problems in supplying their needed parts and equipment due to the U.S. sanctions.

According to the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), exports of automobiles and auto parts reached \$58,407 million in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year.

Ruhollah Latifi said that \$7.217 million worth of cars were exported to 12 countries, mainly to Azerbaijan, China, Spain, Russia, Senegal, Ukraine, Iraq, and Turkey.

Iron ore concentrate output hits 30m tons

TEHRAN- Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran stood at 29.950 million tons in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), a four-percent rise year on year.

Also, iron ore concentrate output rose five percent in the seventh month of this year, from that of the previous year, as 4,432 million tons of the product produced in the seventh month of the present year.

Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran during the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20) reached 49.714 million

tons, registering a five-percent rise compared to the preceding year.

According to the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry data, of the mentioned figure 3.533 million tons was produced in the last month of the previous year (February 19-March 20).

The country's major iron ore concentrate producers had managed to produce about 47,306 million tons of the mentioned product in the Iranian calendar year 1398.

In its outlook plan for the Iranian calendar year 1404 (2025-2026) Iran has envisaged production of 55 million tons of steel per an-

num, and to achieve this target the country requires to extract 160 million tons of iron ore.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value-added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since September 2019.

The duty is aimed at encouraging the production of more processed minerals such as pellets and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

Export from Markazi province rises 67%

TEHRAN - The value of exports from the central province of Markazi rose 67 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, a provincial official announced.

Esmail Hosseini, the director-general of the province's customs department, put the worth of eight-month export from the province at over 1.37 trillion rials (about \$32.6 million).

He named steel ingots, rebars, glass, crystals, light, and heavy polyethylene, aluminum ingots, steel sections, food, tiles, and ceramics as the main exported items and Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, UAE, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Bulgaria as the main export destinations.

The official further announced that the value of imports to the province has also risen 28 percent during the first eight months of this year, from that of the previous year.

The director-general of the province's customs department named production lines machinery and raw materials as the main imported items, and China, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Czech Republic,

India, and Germany as the major sources of imports during the said time span of the present year.

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

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi has said that Iran traded over 110.3 million tons of non-oil products worth \$63.1 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

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.

Mir-Ashrafi noted that petrochemical products accounted for 43 percent of the total value of the exports in the said time span, with 39.8 million tons worth \$13.3 billion of the said products being exported to foreign markets.

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 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 oilseeds, wheat, and raw oil as the major imported items.

TEDPIX drops 5,337 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 5,337 points to 1.334 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

Over 4.311 billion securities worth 90.917 trillion rials (about \$736 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index lost 5,105 points, and the second market's index dropped 6,984 points.

Over the past 15 months, continuous fluctuations in the Iranian stock market have led shareholders, experts, and scholars to believe that the government should not interfere in the stock market, saying the government's pre-ordered and unrealistic pricing of some state-owned shares is the main reason for the capital market's current downward trend.

In this regard, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (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.

According to the official, supply and demand should be the only determining factor for setting the price for a share.

"We need to move away from imperative



policies so that companies can be profitable in the long-term," he said.

Over the past 15 months, continuous fluctuations in the Iranian stock market have led shareholders, experts, and scholars to believe that the government should not interfere in the stock market, saying the government's pre-ordered and unrealistic pricing of some state-owned shares is the main reason for the capital market's current downward trend.

The government has been claiming that the decisions made for this market are not aimed at interfering in stock exchange transactions or directing the market, but are efforts for reducing the bubble created in the market and to prevent further decline of the stock market index.

Despite the skepticism, after the supportive measures taken by the government, the stock market has been gradually getting back on track and experts believe that the market is regaining people's trust.

Iran's goals cannot be met by revival of the 2015 pact: researcher

From page 1 ► Following is the text of the interview.

How do you assess the resumption of Vienna talks? Are you optimistic about the results?

The fact that the Vienna talks have been resumed after the assumption of office by a new president in Iran, illustrates Iran's commitments to international agreements despite domestic differences. This is especially so as the new President Ebrahim Raisi, as well as his higher officials, are widely known to hold different views on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed by the administration of the former President Hassan Rouhani. This is quite in contrast to the U.S. position, where a sitting President, Donald Trump, annulled an international commitment agreed by his predecessor purely on partisan lines. This makes Iran look better than the U.S. on the turf of international diplomacy.

The start of Iran-U.S. engagement, even though through indirect talks, should already be considered as a success of the EU's coordination efforts to revive the JCPOA. When the stalemate is broken and all parties are involved in talks, there is no reason not to be optimistic. However, in terms of the definition of success, one must be realistic, including in terms of the benefits of the revival of the JCPOA. This is because even in JCPOA's best of times, when its primary sponsor Barack Obama was the president, Iran could not receive the economic benefits promised by the deal despite Iran's fulfillment of its nuclear commitments. Importantly, the U.S. had also fulfilled its legal commitments of that deal, but it was the failure of its commitment to the "spirit" of the deal that created bottlenecks in the success of the JCPOA's implementation. That is the most critical part of the success of any deal.

What solutions are on the table? Reviving fully the 2015 pact or a new agreement? What about less for less?

The new administration of President Ebrahim Raisi appears to have no objections in terming the current Vienna Talks as the continuation of the ones started on 6th April 2021 by his predecessor Hassan Rouhani. Effectively, it would be the 7th round, in which the new administration is understood to have submitted its own proposals. So far, we neither have the full details of these proposals, nor the full reactions of other parties. However, Iran's position in this matter is well known, through the oft-repeated statements of Ayatollah Khamenei. Iran's redline is the "verification of sanctions removal". Now that Iran has come out with a detailed document on how that could be achieved, a more meaningful engagement could be expected amongst the parties involved.

It is notable that the redline that Ayatollah Khamenei has drawn concerns the commitments of the other side, which is the "verification of sanctions removal". There doesn't appear to be as rigid a stand in terms of Iran's own reciprocal commitments. In effect, Iran's expectations from the agreement are clear, and that is to get the real economic benefits through the lifting of sanctions. Since the JCPOA in its best times could not do that, Iran's objectives cannot be met by even the full revival of the



2015 pact. Clearly, a new agreement is required, which could be built on the JCPOA by adding the additional mechanism to implement the Iranian demand of verification of lifting of sanctions. Call it a revised JCPOA, or give it a new name, but it is obvious that any such revision would also involve reciprocal additional demands by the other parties. Effectively, what appears to be the solution here is "more for more" rather than "less for less."

Do you think the "less for less" initiative can help to advance the talks in the future while some critics say this is a fruitless effort that only prolongs the negotiations?

It may be reiterated that when the full implementation of the JCPOA did not translate into economic benefits to Iran, it would be impractical to imagine that any less will do. In other words, if Iran slows down its nuclear enrichment even by a nanosecond, then also the objective of the JCPOA is served for other parties, even if in nano terms – Iran's nuclear advancement is slowed down, even if in nano terms! However, for the JCPOA's benefits to reach Iran, what is required is more than what is enshrined in that document, not any less. Lifting of all sanctions, plus a positive enabler's role played by the U.S., either by adhering to the spirit of the JCPOA or by adhering to the new terms added to its revised version. Only then those, ever wary of being caught in the Iran-U.S. crossfire, would have enough assurance to do business with Iran in a carefree manner.

How can Iran and the U.S. reach a common language? Is there any ground in this regard?

The core of the problem is the enmity between Iran and the U.S., and the reason behind that is the decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran not to bow down to any outside power. When the U.S. stops endeavoring on subduing Iran, overtly or covertly, the two will start understanding each other. But one can't clap with one hand. Iran also has responsibilities in this regard. For instance, when the Biden administration is not lifting the U.S. sanctions, causing the failure of the JCPOA's revival, the officials of Iran's foreign ministry release statements mentioning that the "window of opportunity" is

closing. One can ask, what does the word "opportunity" mean here? If the U.S. lifts sanctions, how does it become an opportunity for the U.S., rather than Iran? What is obvious is that lifting of sanctions becomes an "opportunity" for the U.S. only if it stops Iran from making a nuclear bomb, because that is the stated objective of the U.S. Such language simply strengthens the common fear associated with the Iranian nuclear program. Similar is the case of Iranian usage of the term 'fatwa' to support its case internationally. These efforts create more doubts than reassurance.

The JCPOA could not translate into economic benefits because apart from the explicit mention of legal commitments, it presupposed the U.S. acting as an enabler to help the Iranian economy break its shackles caused by years of economic sanctions. However, the role of such an enabler can only be played by someone who is from a friendly country. Despite the nuclear deal, Iran and the U.S. remained enemies as the Obama administration did not annul the two U.S. Executive Orders 12170 (1979) and 12957 (1995), dealing with the 'National Emergency with respect to Iran'. It is the review of these provisions that will solve the current Iran-U.S. impasse; not the review of JCPOA or UNSC Resolution 2231 (2015). But for that to happen, a fundamental shift in the Iran-U.S. relationship is needed, which is contingent on first and foremost U.S.' will to recognize Iran as a regional power. Now that the U.S. is receding from the Middle East (West Asia), there is a high possibility for the change of the four-decade policy of the U.S. towards Iran. Iran may look for novel ways to grab that opportunity.

How may U.S. domestic competitions ruin any chance of reaching a good nuclear pact?

This is an illusion. In its national interest, the U.S. citizens of all hues think alike. Just look at Afghanistan as an example. The agreement that was signed by a Republican was implemented by a Democrat. Similar is the case with Iran, the sanctions that were imposed by Republican Trump are continued by Democrat Biden. In fact, the U.S. policy in the Middle East (West Asia), including on Iran, has been the same for decades, regardless of a Republican or Democrat president sitting in the Oval Office.

However, this policy is bound to change now as the U.S. national interest is no more dependent on the Middle East (West Asia) region the way it was before the U.S. became independent in oil. This is the new reality that should be understood by Iran as well – the U.S. is no more after its oil, as it did during 1953. Clearly, the U.S. is no less or more saint now, but its priorities in the Middle East (West Asia) have changed, and it can entertain only those policies which offer fewer conflicting engagements in the Middle East (West Asia). A deal with Iran will have bipartisan support in the U.S., as that is good for the U.S. national interest under the new realities. Some obstacles that the Biden administration may face could be linked to the domestic power struggle between the U.S. Congress and the President's office – between the Legislature and the Executive – but a way could be found to overcome that as it was successfully done during the 2015 nuclear deal by President Obama.

European countries seeking diplomatic representation in Afghanistan

Several European countries are considering opening a common site for diplomatic representation in Afghanistan following Kabul's fall to the Taliban in August, says French President Emmanuel Macron.

Macron made the remarks on Saturday in the Qatari capital of Doha at the beginning of his two-day visit to the Persian Gulf region, Press TV reported.

"We are thinking of an organization between several European countries... a common location for several Europeans, which would allow our ambassadors to be present," Macron told reporters.

Western countries have been trying to find ways to engage with the Taliban after the group took over Afghanistan in a lightning advance in August as the US-led forces were completing their pullout.

The United States and European countries closed their embassies and withdrew their diplomats as the Taliban seized Kabul. Evacuees also included Afghans who were at risk such as journalists as well as people with links to France including civil-

ian workers who were employed by the French army.

France has carried out an evacuation mission in Afghanistan, taking 258 Afghans as well as 11 French, some 60 Dutch nationals and an unspecified number of people linked to them out of the country.

"This is a different demarche than a political recognition or political dialogue with the Taliban ... we will have a representation as soon as we can open," Macron said, adding that security issues still need to be addressed.

In a statement late on November 28, following talks with the Taliban, the European Union suggested it could open a mission soon.

"The EU delegation underlined that the possibility of establishing a minimal presence on the ground in Kabul, which would not entail recognition, will directly depend on the security situation, as well as on effective decisions by the de facto authorities to allow the EU to ensure adequate protection of its staff and premises," it said.



The Taliban, who had previously ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, took power again on August 15 as the US was in the middle of a chaotic troop withdrawal. The group announced the formation of a caretaker government on September 7. No country has yet recognized their rule. Since then, the Taliban have been struggling to contain a deepening economic crisis.

Most of the international forums stopped their aid and assistance to

Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power. Besides, the United States seized nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank. The Taliban have repeatedly called for the release of the assets, but Washington has rebuffed the call, saying the new government in Kabul must "earn" international legitimacy first.

The United Nations says Afghanistan is facing "one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters."

U.S. probes new "civilian fatalities" in Syria



From page 1 ► In a statement, U.S. central command said an initial review of the strike indicated the possibility of civilian casualties. A spokesman claimed "we abhor the loss of innocent life and take all possible measures to prevent them, the possibility of a civilian casualty was immediately self-reported to U.S. Central Command. We are initiating a full investigation of the allegations and will release the results when appropriate."

The administration of Joe Biden has been suffering some major PR setbacks over the past few months leading to a sharp decline in the U.S. President's popularity.

The attack on Syria's North-Western Idlib province has some similarities to previous American operations. It's not the first time Central Command has used alleged terror targets as an excuse after killing civilians; as the U.S. military has lately come under increasing sharp scrutiny.

For example, in late August, as the U.S. chaotically withdrew from Afghanistan, an airstrike killed at least 10 civilians, including seven children. The American military's handling of the drone strike in the Afghan capital Kabul led to widespread condemnation. It did not acknowledge that any civilians had been

been described as terror attacks. How many other airstrikes have been covered up because of multiple civilian casualties? Is it the case that only after media reports and media investigations are published that the U.S. launches an internal probe? Austin says he is "committed to adjusting our policies and our procedures to make sure that we improve" and that "leaders in this department should be held to account for high standards of conduct and leadership."

But Austin is the Secretary of Defense; he is that leadership, which raises another important matter. The Pentagon says reviews are being held into the New York Times investigation which was later acknowledged by the Pentagon. Experts argue that the problem lies with Washington conducting its own internal investigations. If there is to be serious accountability into what is more than likely war crimes then they must be investigated by a foreign investigative committee. In an ideal world that would involve something like a team of experts arriving from The Hague. The chances of that happening are not slim; they are close to zero and critics would argue that is because America sees itself as above the law.

Critics argue that all the indications are this was a botched operation as the U.S. rarely intervenes in Idlib.

It's one rule for the United States and another for the rest of the world. This imperialistic view of the world that Washington sees itself must end. U.S. airstrikes in West Asia and Africa must be done in a transparent manner among the international community because the harm they are causing strongly outweigh any good. The Pentagon claims it has conducted tens of thousands of airstrikes over the past few years, but that number could range into the hundreds of thousands because

nobody is exactly counting. Even with a single casualty, from drones or from warplanes targeting a member of a single-family, it is the easiest and fastest method that turns ordinary people into extremists who later go on to join terror groups.

Washington claims to be fighting terrorism, but its campaign of airstrikes in West Asia and beyond is having the opposite effect. Some analysts have argued that is actually the desired goal that the Pentagon is trying to achieve.

And that would explain the rise in terrorist groups in West Asia. More terrorism means more instability in the region and that benefits the U.S. in more ways than one. From maintaining a military presence in the region by ironically and allegedly fighting terrorism all the way to selling weapons and making a considerable amount of profit for the industrial-military complex.

This American air campaign, which was never rubber-stamped for approval by any UN resolution, saw an uptick during the era of former President Barack Obama. During his tenure drones were increasingly relied upon (instead of warplanes or ground troops) to quietly enter a country, attack, and depart without leaving any traces of evidence of the perpetrators.

Iraqi travel insiders visit Golestan, discuss ways to deepen ties



From page 1 ► Back in November, several Iraqi travel insiders and tour operators requested Iran to waive visa requirements for Iraqi nationals who want to enter the Islamic Republic via land borders.

Earlier this year the two neighbors agreed to abolish visa requirements for air travelers.

The announcement came after Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi met in Tehran, discussing various issues including visa waiver, a joint railway project, and increasing the level of trade.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, Iraqi constituted Iran's largest source of tourists. In return, hundreds of thousands of Iranian pilgrims head for the holy Iraqi cit-

ies of Najaf and Karbala each year to attend the Arbæen pilgrimage, aka the Arbæen trek, to mark an end to the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous. Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Vintage Volkswagens stage rally in support of responsible tourism

TEHRAN – On Thursday, a total of 24 vintage Volkswagens from across Iran started to join a car rally towards Kashan in support of responsible tourism during the COVID era.

Attendees drove Volkswagen Transporters from their native provinces of Bushehr, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Yazd, Kerman, Alborz, and Tehran, CHTN reported on Saturday.

The voyagers came together on Friday in Kashan during the event, which was organized by the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TACI).

Many travelers opt to pass Kashan on their journeys between Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Yazd, because this delightful oasis city on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir, is one of Iran's most alluring destinations. Kashan not only boasts a cluster of architectural wonders, an atmospheric-covered bazaar, and a UNESCO-recognized garden, but it also offers some of central Iran's best traditional hotels.

The term “responsible tourism” is used by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts as a “workable solution” for holidaymakers to get assured of safe traveling during the pandemic.

Tourism principal contributor to rural prosperity, governor says

TEHRAN – Tourism is the most important component of rural development in north-central Semnan province, Semnan's Governor has announced.

In the province, tourism is considered an important priority of rural development, with villages being encouraged to utilize their existing resources, CHTN quoted Seyyed Mohamadreza Hashemi as saying on Saturday.

Villages in the province can have a decisive role in the development of tourism destinations and the increase of visitor stay and economic prosperity, he added.

In addition to paying attention to tourism infrastructure in rural areas, it is important to achieve wealth production and to take special care of the villages in the region, he noted.

Among the effective strategies for attracting and retain-

ing tourists and developing tourism in Semnan is to introduce existing capacities in this field into the province's cities and villages, which need a complete action plan, the governor mentioned.

He also emphasized that the promotion of tourism is a way for cities and villages in the province to play a part in economic development.

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 farmstays 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.

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 activi-

Persepolis stone fragments being documented, preserved for future generations

TEHRAN – The second phase of a massive documentation project has commenced in the UNESCO-registered Persepolis to collect, classify, restore and preserve stone fragments scattered across the once ceremonial capital of Achaemenid kings for future generations.

“These stone fragments, which are scattered in the open air, have been detached over time from gates, columns, and other stone monuments inside Persepolis,” the World Heritage director, Hamid Fadaei, said on Saturday.

The official said the number of those fragments is very high, adding “Because the fragments are situated directly on the surface, coldness, rain and plant growth cause a lot of damage to them.”

“Therefore, we decided to collect, document, and classify each piece of stone and then transfer them to covered reservoirs inside Persepolis.”

The first phase of this project started in early 2019... and about 3600 pieces of stones have been recorded and documented and transferred to the warehouse spaces so far, he explained.

Furthermore, the project is a great help for the restoration of the main structures of the World Heritage site. “By transferring the pieces of stone separated from the buildings and palaces into warehouses, it is possible to document, classify and organize the pieces of stone and thus create a database to install the pieces to their original places.”

The royal city of Persepolis ranks among the archaeological sites which have no equivalent,



A view of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis (credit: Ekkachai Pholrojpanya/Getty Images)

considering its unique architecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art. Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy) is situated 60 kilometers north-east of the city of Shiraz in Fars province.

Archeologist Yousef Zare', who

is in charge of the project said: “In the process of organizing the stone pieces, their location and presence will be determined before moving. These descriptions along with specifications such as dimensions and size, the weight of the piece of stone, descriptions of the role, etc. are completed in the relevant tables and images of different aspects of the stone are added to each identity card.”

Another expert, Fahimeh Homayoun explained, “Normally on each piece of stone is surveyed to determine its original including the base of a column, column

head, stairs, and other possible components.”

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites.

The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall (“Hundred-Column Hall”).

The site is marked by a large terrace with its east side abutting the Kuh-e Rahmat (“Mount of Mercy”). The other three sides are formed by a retaining wall, varying in height with the slope of the ground from 13 to 41 feet (4 to 12 meters); on the west side, a magnificent double stair in two flights of 111 short stone

steps leads to the top. On the terrace are the ruins of several colossal buildings, all constructed of a dark gray stone (often polished to a marble-like surface) from the adjacent mountain.

According to Britannica, the stone was cut with the utmost precision into blocks of great size, which were laid without mortar; many of them are still in place. Especially striking are the huge columns, 13 of which still stand in the audience hall of Darius I (the Great; reigned 522–486 BC), known as the Apadana, the name given to a similar hall built by Darius at Susa. There are two more columns still standing in the entrance hall of the Gate of Xerxes, and a third has been assembled there from its broken pieces.

In 1933 two sets of gold and silver plates recording in the three forms of cuneiform—ancient Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian—the boundaries of the Persian empire were discovered in the foundations of Darius's hall of audience. Several inscriptions, cut in stone, of Darius I, Xerxes I, and Artaxerxes III indicate to which monarch the various buildings were attributed.

Persepolis was the seat of the government of the Achaemenid Empire, though it was designed primarily to be a showplace and spectacular center for the receptions and festivals of the kings and their empire. It was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

Discover subterranean watermills in oasis city

TEHRAN – On the margins of a harsh desert in central Iran, lies the ancient city of Meybod, which has long been home to underground watermills.

According to available data, Meybod embraces 22 historical watermills some of which have been or are to be restored while some are forgotten over time.

The double stone watermill of Mohammad-Abad is an exemplar hydraulic structure created at a depth of 40 meters on a qanat corridor. It used to supply all flour requirements of the neighboring villages. The mill nears a village of the same name, some 50 km away from Yazd.

The watermills as their names imply were connected to river flows, springs, qanats, or other water sources usually through man-made ditched canals.

They were typically constructed following the then design requirements for instance they featured dome-shaped roofs



with high-enough vestibules to allow camels or other livestock to move back and forth with ease to convey grains or flour.

Iran is situated in an arid and semi-arid region where, due to the inequitable distribution of surface water, its people have been enduring extreme hardship to meet water demands for millennia.

Construction of dams, qanats (under-

ground aqueducts), cisterns, and yakhchals (ice houses) date back to the ancient times in Iran to counter fluctuation of yearly seasonal streams and ensure to have better conditions for utilization of water.

According to UNESCO, Meybod is a remarkable example of the viability and transmission of human beings' collective thoughts from different generations to the present one.

“What is significant in the city of Meybod is the regularity in city planning. The anatomy and spatial structure of the city show original plans which conform with the old Iranian city planning.”

A couple of years ago, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization commenced documentation of an ancient chain of vertical-axis windmills, which can be found in various corners of the country.

Handicrafts workshop to be established in western Iran

TEHRAN – A handicrafts workshop is planned to be set up in the western province of Lorestan, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Cutting precious and semi-precious stones and making ornaments out of them will be the focus of the workshop, Seyyed Amin Qasemi said on Thursday.

Due to the high costs of training in this field, the province's cultural heritage department intends to work with the private sector to make sure those interested can obtain training at a lower cost and with higher quality, the official added.

In the world handicraft market, cutting precious and semi-precious stones is one of the most important fields that can play a significant role in job creation and income generation, he explained.

Lorestan is one of the lesser-known travel destinations in Iran and mainly acts as a gateway to the neighboring Khuzestan province which hosts UNESCO sites of Susa, Tchogha Zanbil, and Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System.

Lorestan is also a region of raw beauty that an avid nature lover could spend weeks exploring,



living with a nomad or rural family.

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.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports 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 a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

8 new accelerators to develop biotechnology

TEHRAN – The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology aims to help large companies and startups develop markets for products by launching eight new biotechnology accelerators.

Since 2016, the process of creating bio-accelerators started to pace up with the support of the Biotechnology Development Headquarters of the Vice President for Science and Technology, and there are currently 23 accelerators operating nationwide.

These accelerators operate in technological fields such as pharmaceutical raw materials, biological and advanced medicine, vaccines, agriculture, food industry, cosmetics, probiotics, and medical equipment and have a high share in promoting the production of these materials in the country.

Accelerators are centers that sit next to startups and acquire a percentage of ownership by focusing and investing in viable ideas. Instead, they provide project managers with the training they need to succeed.

One of those who benefit from the services of these accelerators are activists in various fields of biotechnology who offer their ideas in the fields of medicine, vaccine, agriculture, and food industry to the accelerators.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, with a special focus on these centers, intends to increase the



number of accelerators from 23 centers to 31, so that their distribution and dispersion in the country will be better and more accessible.

The development of accelerators and innovation centers over the last five years has led to a rapid increase in startups and knowledge-based companies.

The report states that innovation in Iran has developed rapidly over the past five years, and by the end of last year, 49 accelerators and 113 innovation centers had provided services to start-ups with the participation of the private sector.

Biotechnology development

Biotechnology today is widespread in all fields and is no longer limited to biomedical drugs; So that it has re-

placed the injured limbs.

Nearly 800 knowledge-based companies in the country are currently operating in the field of biotechnology and supplying their products and services to the domestic market

Earlier in May, the Biotechnology Development Council launched 129 production projects with the aim of saving up to \$1.44 billion of foreign currency.

Iran is ranked 12th in the world and first in West Asia in terms of biotechnology, as 9.5 percent of the income of knowledge-based companies and more than 60 percent of their exports are related to biotechnology.

Foreign exchange savings of \$1 billion per year by producing 22 biopharmaceuticals, gaining the first rank in

biotechnology products and vaccines in West Asia, and the presence among the top five biotechnology producers in Asia are among the country's achievements, Mostafa Ghanei, secretary of the biotechnology development office of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, said in October 2020.

So far, 27 biotechnology medicines, 12 vaccine projects, 90 pharmaceutical raw materials, and 55 projects in agriculture and food security have been implemented in order to gain a 3 percent market share and biotechnology assistance to the development of the economy, he explained.

Some 8 major companies are responsible for managing the country's 117 priority products in the fields of biopharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical raw materials, vaccines, probiotics, equipment, and chemical drugs, he emphasized.

Nearly 800 knowledge-based companies are operating in the field of biotechnology.

Some \$3.7b earmarked for school building

TEHRAN – A total of 158 trillion rials (nearly \$3.7 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) allocated from the national budget to school construction, Mehroollah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment has announced.

Last year, school building benefactors have allocated a sum of 33 trillion rials (around \$781 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to construct educational spaces across the country, IRNA reported on Monday.

“Brick-by-brick” national plan started early last year (March 2020 – March 2021), aiming to attract public participation for school construction in deprived areas even by buying a brick.

Iran has many school-building benefactors amounting to 650,000 people inside and 1,000

people outside the country.

A total of 36 trillion rials (nearly \$857 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to renovate the schools nationwide over the past 8 years, Seyed Mohammad-Ali Afshani, former head of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said.

According to Nasser Ghofli, the director of the School-Building Donors Association, 400 school-building charities have been registered in the country so far.

107,000 schools need renovation nationwide

There are some 107,000 schools nationwide with 530,000 classes, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards, accounting for 30 percent of the schools nationwide.

Rakhshanimehr said in August 2020 that some 30 percent of the country's schools have been constructed by school-building benefactors and there are 450 school-building charities in Iran.

Iran has many school-building benefactors amounting to 650,000 people inside and 1,000 people outside the country.

About 10 percent of charitable schools are built with the participation of charities abroad. This is a valuable asset, which should be promoted.

The Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools started operating in the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), which received a budget of 8.5 trillion rials (about \$200 million).

Iranian knowledge-based goods to be produced in 7 countries

From page 1 ▶ Due to the necessity of Iran's presence in the global technology markets and the high capability of knowledge-based and creative companies, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology stepped into the field to pave the way for the presence in the global market, Mehdi Ghalehnoei, an official with the Vice Presidency, said in October.

To this end, it has developed and implemented programs, policies, and support packages related to the development of export, planning to attract foreign investment, eliciting the participation of Iranians abroad, and connecting domestic capabilities to the global market are

among the actions taken in this regard.

Exporting technological products of Iranian knowledge-based companies is one of the important and key programs of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, and in this regard, three houses of innovation and technology were inaugurated in Kenya, China and Syria.

And countries like Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are set to host the innovation houses in the near future.

Ghalehnoei said in February that last year, knowledge-based companies gained about \$800 million in revenue from export, and this year it seems to reach

up to \$2 billion.

“Africa, neighboring countries, Southeast Asia and Eurasia are our export target priorities, and we hope to create Iranian innovation and technology in all these areas,” he added.

Iranian knowledge-based firms

The Innovation and Prosperity Fund affiliated with the Vice Presidency of Science and Technology has earmarked a sum of 170 trillion rials (nearly \$4 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to support knowledge-based companies over the past 4 years.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has paved

the way for research and production of technological products by supporting 7,000 projects over the past 8 years.

There are currently 6,263 knowledge-based companies operating in the country, offering advanced products and services in various fields of technology to domestic and foreign markets, and some of them have entered international markets, Siavash Maleki, deputy head of the Fund stated.

The fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, oil, and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in, leading to import reduction.

Plan to revive native medicinal plants on agenda

TEHRAN – A national plan will be implemented by the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology to develop botanical gardens in order to revive native medicinal plants, IRNA reported on Saturday.

By identifying native and unique medicinal plants in different regions of the country, the ground for the development and revival of these products is provided.

In this regard, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology seeks to develop and revive botanical gardens and medicinal plants native to different parts of the country.

Protecting these valuable biological resources in the country can help the economic prosperity of the cities and villages, as well as create local and sustainable businesses in these areas.

Development and revitalization of botanical gardens and five development projects will be piloted in the cities of Mashhad, Gonabad, and Alamut, as well as the provinces of Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-ahmad and Lorestan.

In the next stage, a plan for the collection of native and endangered medicinal plants will be implemented in Kerman province.

In October, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology registered 120 national standards for medicinal herbs and traditional medicine to improve the quality of products.

In September, ten national plans were defined to promote the culture of production and consumption of medicinal plants by the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

Iranian traditional medicine is one of the most ancient forms of traditional medicine. It is grounded in the concept of four senses



of humor: phlegm (Balgham), blood (Dam), yellow bile (Safra'), and black bile (Sauda'). The concept of four senses of humor is based on the teachings of Rhazes and Avicenna into an elaborate medical system.

Iranian traditional medicine strongly focuses on prioritizing health maintenance and disease prevention over treatment.

8,000 herbal species grow in Iran

So far, about 30,000 plant species are identified in the world, with Iran's share of about 8,000 species that its plant diversity is more than the whole of Europe.

Currently, about 2,300 species of medicinal plants have been identified in the country, accounting for one-third of the medicines used in human societies, the share of

world trade in these products is about \$124 billion and Iran's share is \$570 million, which is only 0.5 percent of the total.

The per capita consumption of medicinal plants in Iran is about one kilogram of dried plants, in other words, 83,000 tons of medicinal plants worth 1.2 trillion rials (around \$29 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are consumed in the country, while in Europe this amount is 900 grams and in the United States is 2.5 kilograms.

Satellite image shows how vital ocean current is affected by climate crisis

A satellite image shows a major ocean current that is speeding up due to climate change, the Guardian reported.

The Antarctic Circumpolar Current (ACC), which sweeps around the abyss off Antarctica, is the only ocean current that circumnavigates the planet.

Researchers used satellite measurements of sea-surface height and data collected by the global network of ocean floats called Argo to detect a trend in Southern Ocean upper layer velocity that had been hidden to scientists until now.

The researchers found that prevailing westerly winds have sped up as the climate warms. Models show that the wind speedup does not change the ocean currents much. Rather, it energises ocean eddies, which are circular movements of water running counter to main currents.

“From both observations and models, we find that the ocean heat change is causing the significant ocean current acceleration detected during recent decades,” said Jiarui Shi, formerly a PhD student at Scripps Oceanography and currently a postdoctoral researcher at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

“This speedup of the ACC, especially its jet centred on the Subantarctic Front, facilitates property exchange, such as of heat or carbon, between ocean basins and creates the opportunity for these properties to increase in subsurface subtropical regions.”

The ACC encircles Antarctica and separates cold water in the south from warmer subtropical water just to its north. This warmer part of the Southern Ocean takes up a lot of the heat that human activities are adding to Earth's atmosphere.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 4

New cases	2,157
New deaths	58
Total cases	6,131,356
Total deaths	130,124
New hospitalized patients	649
Patients in critical condition	3,278
Total recovered patients	5,916,199
Diagnostic tests conducted	38,201,601
Doses of vaccine injected	107,143,157

ENGLISH IN USE

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Marine species population increased in protected areas

According to the annual census, the population of marine species in habitats under the Department of Environment (DOE) supervision has increased, Ahmad Lahijan-zadeh, head of marine environment affairs at the DOE has said.

The annual Census is the authoritative source of data determining the population and distribution of animal or marine species through counting them yearly.

Protecting marine habitats and listing them as protected areas are among the most important priorities of the DOE, he said, adding, all of the areas have been identified through environmental assessment and field surveys.

The reproduction time is important, and the DOE forces stand guard and constantly supervise the area during this period, he noted.

افزایش گونه‌های دریایی مناطق تحت حفاظت سازمان محیط زیست

لاهیجان زاده گفت: براساس سرشماری سالانه تعداد گونه‌های موجود در زیستگاه‌های دریایی تحت حفاظت روبه افزایش است.

احمد لاهیجان زاده معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، در رابطه با اهمیت حفاظت از زیستگاه‌های دریایی اظهار کرد: حفاظت از زیستگاه‌های دریایی و شناسایی این مناطق در اولویت سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست قرار دارد و تمام این زیستگاه‌ها در قالب مطالعات جامع و تعقیب میدانی شناسایی شده‌اند. وی با بیان اینکه در بسیاری از این زیستگاه‌ها زادآوری صورت می‌گیرد، افزود: زمان این زادآوری‌ها با شناسایی زیستگاه‌ها مشخص است و سازمان محیط زیست در این بازه زمانی حفاظت فیزیکی را انجام می‌دهد.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who is greedy is disgraced; he who discloses his hardship will always be humiliated; he who has no control over his tongue will often have to face discomfort.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:55 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:31 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:00 (tomorrow)

Iran: Persian literature

Part 4

Eastern Iranian literature

For the sake of completeness, Bactrian, Sogdian, Chorasmian, and Khotanese literatures are also rapidly dealt with here, although they mostly exceed the chronological limit of the pre-Islamic period.

Apart from the short legends on coins and seals, as well as the inscriptions already known from the mid-1950s onward, Bactrian epigraphy was enriched about a decade ago by the discovery in 1993 of an important inscription of 23 lines in the Rabatak region, on the western border of the modern Afghan province of Baghlan.

Like the previously known monumental inscription from Sorkh Kotal of comparable length, the new inscription makes mention of the Kushan King Kanishka I and his official Nukunzuk. It is of the utmost importance from a historical point of view, in that it led to a fundamental reassessment of early Kushan chronology and because of the remarkable similarity of some expressions in it to formulas known from Achaemenid and Sassanid inscriptions.

An even more sensational discovery concerns a series of over 100 documents on leather, cloth, and wooden slips found in northern Afghanistan. They include letters (some of them still sealed at the time of their discovery), lists, and accounts, as well as legal documents such as marriage and sale/purchase/loan contracts, deeds of gift or manumission, and receipts.

Many of them are dated after a Bactrian era perhaps starting in 233 CE and thus seem to belong to a period between 342 and 781 CE. Special mention must be made of a still partially unpublished single leaf of a manuscript in Manichean script in the Berlin Turfan Collection, which contains a fragment of a homily in Bactrian or in a language closely related to it.

Sogdian literature is comparatively rich and includes—apart from a limited number of secular texts—an important quantity of Buddhist, Manichean, and Christian texts (on the whereabouts of Sogdian manuscripts and the state of publication of Sogdian literature in general, see the most recent and detailed survey by Tremblay).

The earliest written documents are coin legends from the 2nd century CE, but the first longer texts are the so-called Ancient Letters, discovered in the Chinese frontier wall between Dunhuang and Loulan, and they are assumed to have been written in the early 4th century.

The Sogdian graffiti discovered about a decade ago in northern Pakistan and written in a ductus similar to that of the Ancient Letters are scarcely later in date. More Sogdian inscriptions have been found as far as Kirgizia, Mongolia, and Ladakh.

Together with the Ancient Letters, the documents from Mount Mugh, including letters, administrative, economic, and legal documents, are among the most important secular writings; they were saved from the Arabs by Dewashtich, the last ruler of Panjikant, around 722 CE.

Other texts of non-religious nature comprise a few medical fragments and especially a fragment of 44 lines of the Rustam epic cycle. A unique Mazdean fragment contains an Old Sogdian version of the Ashem vohu prayer.

Few Buddhist texts are complete, but some of the writings found at Dunhuang extend to several hundred lines. Most of them were translated from Chinese, more rarely from Indian originals.

From a literary point of view, the Vessantara Jataka is stylistically the most developed and may be one of the few original Buddhist Sogdian compositions; although based on a Chinese model, it is rather a retelling than a mere translation.

With the exception of some twenty fragments, the majority of Manichean texts (for the most part extremely fragmentary) are in the German Turfan Collection in Berlin. Many works are in fact translations from Parthian and Middle Persian hymns, though there also exists a considerable number of original Sogdian prose texts.

Subjects cover a wide range and encompass church history, cosmology, stories and parables, confessional texts, calendar tables, letters, lists, and glossaries.

Christian literature comes almost exclusively from the site of the Nestorian monastery of Bulayiq, north of Turfan, and all manuscripts with very few exceptions are in the German Turfan Collection in Berlin.

Christian Sogdian texts are usually translations of known Syriac originals, a fact that often allows the identification of even small fragments. In addition to biblical texts, the literary genres represented vary from homilies, hagiographic literature, apophthegmata, and commentaries to poems.

Old Chorasmian material from the pre-Islamic period consists of coin legends, short inscriptions on vessels and ossuaries, as well as mostly unpublished documents on wood and leather dated after an unknown era, all of which have historical and linguistic, but no literary, value.

Late Chorasmian is known primarily from the interlinear glosses in al-Zamakhshari's (1075-1144) encyclopedia Moqaddemat al-adab written in a manuscript of the 12th century from Konya, and also from quotations from the 13th-century lawbooks Qonyat al-monya by al-Zahedi and the slightly older Yatimat al-dahr by at-Tarjomani, as well as from the Resala, a glossary of the words occurring in those works as well as some other material.

Khotanese literature dates from the 7th to 10th centuries and is extremely rich, while Tumshuqese remains—the oldest document being the so-called Karmavacana text—are more scanty.

The Khotanese documents were found mainly at the sites of Buddhist monasteries within the former kingdom of Khotan as well as in the caves of Dunhuang.

Khotanese texts are almost exclusively of Buddhist nature, mostly translations from Sanskrit. Moreover, many works have a Chinese, Tibetan, or Sanskrit parallel text. One of the oldest texts and the longest single Khotanese poem extant is a didactic poem dealing with various aspects of Buddhism, called the "Book of Zambasta" after the official who ordered it to be written.

Other works include medical treatises, letters, jatakas and avadanas, secular lyric poems, etc. There are also a few inscriptions on wood as well as some legends on wall paintings.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

To be continued

Shanghai exhibit of Persian paintings celebrates 50 years of Iran-China diplomatic ties

From Page 1 ▶ Earlier in August, the Powerlong Art Center in Shanghai also organized an exhibition of traditional and modern Persian artworks to mark 50 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and China.

The exhibition titled "Dialogue beyond Time & Space – 2021 the Legend of Persia Art" was organized to introduce Persian civilization, allow Chinese viewers to feel contemporary Iranian culture, and extend friendship between the two nations.

Paintings, sculptures and art installations created by 43 contemporary Iranian artists presenting a combination of Persian classic and modern art can be seen by Chinese viewers for the first time.

Noting that art is the essential way of communication and understanding between nations, curator Hossein Bordbar said that the exhibition vows to present the contemporary Iranian arts which demonstrate the actual trends in the minds of Iranian artists to the Chinese people, bringing the two civilizations together in the modern era.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the exhibition, Ramezan Parvaz, consul general of Iran in Shanghai, said that Iran and China have a friendship dating back to the ancient Silk Road era, and the profound interaction between the two countries in trade and culture has been extended to the present, with their cultures enjoying a vast range of areas in common.

Visitors take photos of a Persian painting on display at the Persian Treasures – Iranian Miniature Exhibition at the Shanghai Art Collection Museum on December 4, 2021. (Global Times/Chen Xia)

University of Tokyo publishes book on Qajar-era bazaars, caravanserais

Cover of the book "Bazaars, Stores, and Caravanserais in the Documents from Qajar Iran" authored by Tokyo-based Iranian scholar Hashem Rajabzadeh.

TEHRAN – The Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tokyo has recently published a book on Iranian bazaars, stores and caravanserais dating back to the Qajar period (1789-1925).

The book entitled "Bazaars, Stores, and Caravanserais in the Documents from Qajar Iran" has been authored by Tokyo-based

Iranian scholar Hashem Rajabzadeh with contributions from the Japanese expert of Iranian studies, Kinji Eura, the Iranian Cultural Center in Tokyo has announced.

Kazuo Morimoto, an associate professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, has also written a preface to the book, which is the No. 8 from the Persian Documents Series.

The book has been published in 188 pages and two parts, "Stores and Commercial Offices, and Professions and Businesses" and "Taking Possession and Renting Caravanserais".

Legal topics such as conveyance and transfer of ownership, renting stores and caravanserais have been discussed in some chapters.

Rajabzadeh, a retired professor of Osaka University, has provided detailed information produced based on reliable documents about the different aspects of Iran's economy and society under the Qajar dynasty.

"So far, a collection of confidential documents on Iran's history and society in different periods has been published by this institute and other Japanese academic centers

as Dr. Rajabzadeh has played a key role in this field. He has introduced Iran to Japanese scholars and the academic community of the country by his works," Iranian cultural attaché Hossein Divsalar said.

"One of his great endeavors and achievements in introducing the history and culture of Iran and Japan is the translations of Japanese adventurers' travelogues of Iran and other West Asian countries," he noted.

"These travelogues provided a deep insight into the Japanese adventurers' knowledge of Iranian history during the Constitutional Movement and afterwards," he added.

80-year-old Rajabzadeh was a professor of Persian language and literature in the Department of Foreign Studies at Osaka University.

On 23 May 2009 during a ceremony, he received the Order of the Sacred Treasure, awarded by the Emperor of Japan for his efforts over 27 years to introduce Iranian culture and civilization to Japan and to introduce Japanese culture and literature to Iranians.

"Ballad of a White Cow" wins Student Jury Award at Crime and Punishment Film Festival

TEHRAN – "Ballad of a White Cow", a co-production between Iran and France, has won the Student Jury Award at the 11th edition of the International Crime and Punishment Film Festival in Istanbul, Turkey.

Directed by Behtash Sanaeiha and Maryam Moqaddam, the film received the award in the Golden Scale Feature Film Competition judged by a jury headed by Iranian director and actress Niki Karimi.

The film follows Mina, a woman whose life is turned upside down when she learns that her husband Babak was innocent of the crime for which he was executed.

The authorities apologize for the mistake and offer the prospect of financial compensation. Mina starts a silent battle against a cynical system for her own and her

"Ballad of a White Cow" by Behtash Sanaeiha and Maryam Moqaddam.

daughter's sake. Just as her money is running out, a stranger named Reza knocks at her door, saying he has come to repay a debt he owed to Babak. Mina is guarded at first, but increasingly lets Reza into her life, unaware of the secret that ties them to one another.

The film has previously won awards at several festivals, including the Pilar Miró Prize for the

best new director at the SEMINCI – Valladolid International Film Festival in Spain and the award for best narrative feature at the Der Neue Heimatfilm Festival in Austria.

The Crime and Punishment Film Festival ended last Thursday by awarding "107 Mothers" as best film.

Directed by Peter Kerekes, the film is a co-production of Slovak,

Atiq Rahimi's "Water Carriers" at Persian bookstores

TEHRAN – French-Afghan writer and filmmaker Atiq Rahimi's latest novel "Les porteurs d'eau" ("The Water Bearers" or "The Water Carriers") has appeared in Persian.

The novel Cheshmeh has been translated into Persian by Banafsheh Farisabadi and is the publisher of the book.

"The Water Carriers" is a refined and powerful novel that sets two Afghan stories side by side. One takes place in Kabul, the other in exile between Paris and Amsterdam.

The two protagonists, Tom – or Tamim – and Yussef, linked by subtle differences and deep similarities, are both lovesick. The fate of the gigantic statues of the Buddha in the Bamiyan Valley, which the Taliban destroyed on March 11, 2001, looms over everything. In fact, the two stories coincide with that event, which deeply shocked the world.

Tom fled his homeland when he was only 20 years old, and now, at 45, after many years of marriage and a young daughter, he decides to run away, to join Nuria, whom he met by chance and who has become first a lover and then a reason to escape from his life as an uprooted exile. Without being fully aware of it, he wishes to return to his origins, which he rejected when he arrived in France as a young man.

Yussef, on the other hand, lives in Kabul. His job is to bring water to those who need it. As months of drought that have hit the city hard drag on, he has become ever more important.

He alone knows the secret of how to descend into the depths of the mountain caves and draw the water that everyone lacks. According to the Islamic law of levirate, he is obliged to take care of his sister-in-law, Shirin, whom his brother, fleeing abroad, has abandoned. Yussef is secretly in love with her and is struggling with himself and his beliefs.

Front cover of the Persian translation of Atiq Rahimi's novel "The Water Carriers".