

# TEHRAN TIMES

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# Vienna Talks Inch Forward Despite European Malpractice

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Report 

## Control freak: Israeli hallucination might force Biden to ditch Bennett over Iran

TEHRAN— Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett arrived on Sunday in the UAE, just as Tehran and Abu Dhabi have taken steps to mend ties. What is the message of the visit? Tehran Times explores.

Bennett plans to meet Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan on Monday before returning to Israel.

According to his office, the two plan to discuss "boosting ties between the countries, with an emphasis on economic and regional issues."

His office did not discuss what these economic and regional issues are, but we can break it down. It's very simple.

The story begins with Israel's controlling issues. They have a tendency to have excessive control over the countries they become friends with.

On September 15, 2020, Israel and the UAE signed a "normalization" agreement titled the "Abraham Accord," under which the two would "establish peace, diplomatic and friendly relations, co-operation and full normalization of ties between them and their peoples, in accordance with this Treaty, and to chart together a new path to unlock the vast potential of their countries and of the region." ► Page 2

Report 

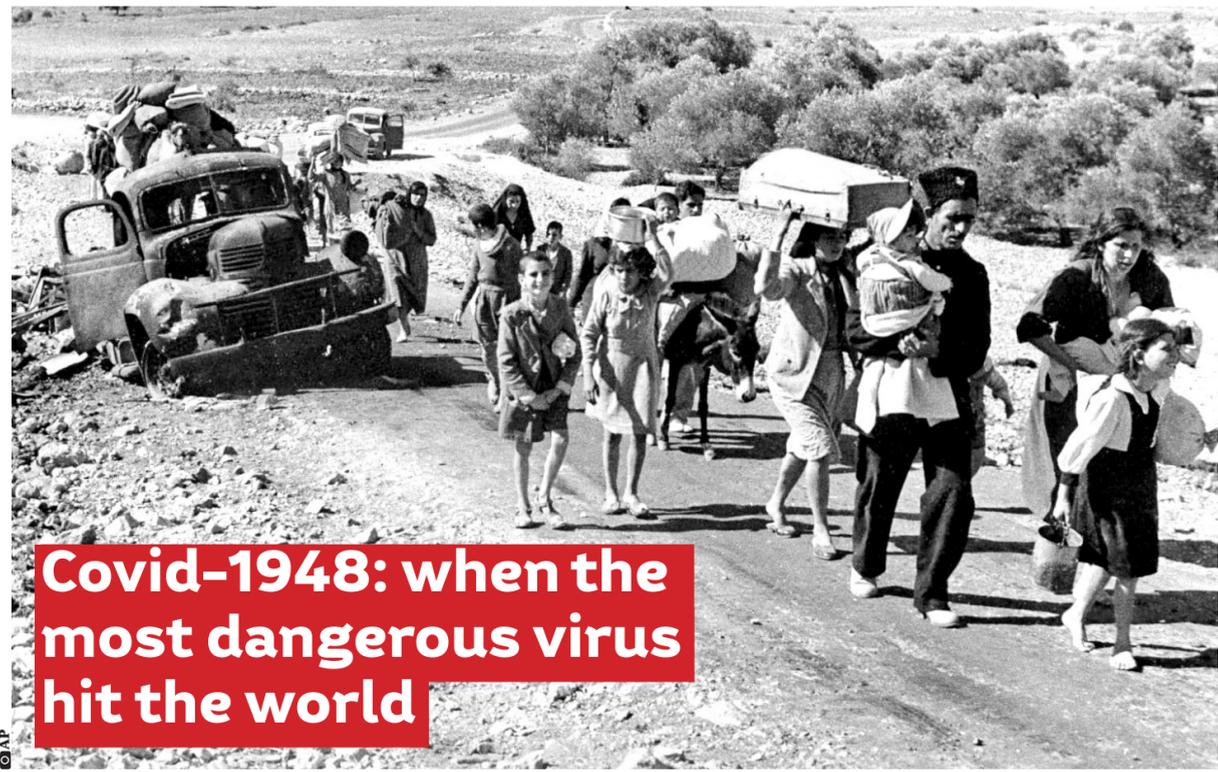
## Biden's democracy summit, PR stunt

TEHRAN - The United States, which has long seen itself as the (self-proclaimed) flag bearer of human rights and democracy in the world has held an online conference with the reported attendance of around 100 countries to preach about democracy and human rights.

According to the U.S. State Department, the goal of this event was to "provide a platform for leaders to announce both individual and collective commitments, reforms, and initiatives to defend democracy and human rights at home and abroad." It added that the virtual forum will call for "bold, practicable ideas" on subjects such as "defending against authoritarianism," "fighting corruption," and "promoting respect for human rights" around the world, but not in the United States its course.

President Joe Biden has repeatedly argued that America and "like-minded allies" need to show the world that democracies are a far better tool for societies than authoritarianism. This is of course America's idea and version of democracy and human rights. This is made in America.

It just coincidentally happens that the event was scheduled as the U.S. won a court ruling appeal to extradite Julian Assange, a journalist who exposed U.S. war crimes. One of the many publications he released shows a U.S. airstrike killing at least a dozen civilians in Iraq including two reporters. America has been after Assange for a long time, despite international condemnation towards the U.S. and its strong ally the UK over his treatment. Washington wants to put Assange on trial for espionage which carries a maximum sentence of 175 years. He is also being extradited to a country that wants to kill him. In 2017, when in hiding at Ecuador's embassy in London, the CIA drew up plans on how to kidnap and kill Assange. According to 30 former American officials, including high ranking intelligence agents, who formed the backbone of a Yahoo News Investigation, senior officials inside the CIA requested "sketches" or "options" on how to assassinate the whistleblower. ► Page 5



## Covid-1948: when the most dangerous virus hit the world

TEHRAN - New documents revealed by the Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research have shed light on the massacres of Palestinians during the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe) of Palestine that led to the creation of the occupying state of Israel.

According to Haaretz, based on the letters

of soldiers, unpublished contemporary memoirs, minutes of political party meetings and other historical records, revealed the details of three massacres committed by Zionist militias in the villages of Reineh, Meron and al-Burj.

The records show that prominent Israeli

leaders "knew in real time about the blood-drenched events that accompanied the conquest of Arab villages."

The Israeli historical records reveal that a massacre of 14 Palestinians took place in September 1948 in the Galilean village of Reineh, near Nazareth. ► Page 5

## Raisi submits \$864b budget bill to Majlis

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1401, which starts on March 21, 2022, to the Majlis on Sunday.

The president mentioned the reform of the budget structure as one of the specifications of the 1401 budget and said, "In next year's budget bill, production and employment are the pivots."

The proposed budget amounted to about 36.31 quadrillion rials (about \$864.523 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

The bill has envisaged public resources and expenditures, the budget of state-owned companies as well as the budget for various government bodies.

Public resources are estimated at 13.72 quadrillion rials (about \$326.666 billion).

The bill has estimated the government's budget at 15,052 quadrillion rials (about \$358.38 billion), with an increase of 9.2 percent compared with the current year.

Revenues from exporting oil, gas and gas condensate are estimated at 3.818 quadrillion rials (about \$90.904 billion), 8.5 percent more than the figure in the current year's budget. ► Page 4



## Ayatollah Khamenei calls for rebuilding health network

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has emphasized the need for rebuilding the country's health network as a prerequisite for reducing treatment costs and improving medical services.

The Leader also called for equitable dispatching of physicians to different parts of the country. ► Page 7

## Iran province seeks to attract medical travelers from Azerbaijan

TEHRAN - Iran's northwestern Ardabil province seeks to become a prime destination for medical travelers from Azerbaijan.

To attract more travelers and tourists to Ardabil, plans and programs are being developed to promote health tourism in the neighboring country of Azerbaijan, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The province is ready to organize cultural pro-

grams in collaboration with Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan in order to create a culture and inform about its tourism capacities, Nader Fallahi said on Sunday.

It is essential for the promotion of this sector of tourism that the Iranian embassy in Azerbaijan participate and cooperate as closely as possible, the official added.

Reopening the border will also benefit citi-

zens of the two countries, as the travel of tourists between the two nations will considerably increase, he noted.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble. ► Page 6

Interview 

## West Asia needs to establish economic bloc to counter U.S. pressure, Turkish attorney says

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - A Turkish lawyer believes West Asia needs regional economic organizations to resist U.S. pressure.

"Our region is under American pressure," Onur Sinan Guzeltan tells the Tehran Times.

"We must think together not only about how to stop this American pressure, but about developing economic organizations and models to resist the American economic campaign."

After the lira crashed against the U.S. dollar in recent days, dozens of people took to the streets in Turkey calling on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government to resign.

Turkey's lira crashed 15 percent against the U.S. dollar on Tuesday. The Turkish currency has shed a staggering 45 percent of its value this year, becoming the worst performing currency in the world in 2021.

The currency crash in Turkey followed the economic crisis in Lebanon. Such developments have raised questions about a possible plot to undermine West Asian countries.

To that end, some political observers point to developing a regional cooperation to counter recent pressures against Turkey, Iran and Lebanon.

"We lack organizations like economic bodies developed in the West like the IMF, etc. We have to think about creating regional organizations," Sinan argues.

"Turkey, Russia and Iran can take steps together to develop an economic resistance bloc to encounter the war launched by the Atlantic axis," the lawyer suggests. ► Page 5

## U.S. seeks sectarian war in the region: IRGC general

TEHRAN — Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force, said on Sunday that the United States seeks to begin a sectarian war in the region.

Hajizadeh made the remarks in the presence of commanders, administrators, professors and students of Imam Hussein University (AS).

The brigadier general also described West Asia as the heart of the world, saying, "There are many wealth and reserves, as well as prominent scientific elites in this region, and therefore greedy enemies want to dominate the region."

Stating that in the past the Americans sought slavery, Hajizadeh said today slavery and their war have been modernized and allow people to move in the direction of tracking down their colonial goals and aspirations. ► Page 3

## Control freak: Israeli hallucination might force Biden to ditch Bennett over Iran

From page 1 ▶ They also committed to “normalize relations and promote stability through diplomatic engagement, increased economic cooperation and other close coordination.”

Since the embarrassing U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. allies in the region felt endangered. The UAE felt that it has to pursue other options as well and cut dependence on the United States as the only ally in the region, hence, they revisited their priorities and began visiting France and the UK to sign lucrative deals.

As for the West Asia region, the mysterious, taciturn man of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Tahnoon Bin Zayed finally visited Iran on December 6 to try to patch up ties with Iran. Diplomatic contacts between Iran and the UAE have never gone down to zero over the past decade. They only decreased at some points due to a number of mainly political disputes. But while diplomatic ties have experienced some ups and downs, economic ties remained up and running.

The visit scared the Israelis, as they now feel that they should freakishly control the behavior of one of their “allies” in the region. Therefore, Bennett decided to pay a visit to Abu Dhabi and remind them of their commitments under the so-called normalization treaty.

Another perfect example is that diplomats from the United States are now present in Vienna negotiating indirectly with Iran to explore ways for a possible lifting of sanctions on Iran. However, according to a New York Times report, the gap between Biden and Bennett’s regime is widening.

The report said that Israeli officials in private have argued that the Iranians are “advancing their nuclear program while betting that the United States, eager to diminish American commitments in the Middle East, will not abandon the Vienna talks for more forceful action.”

According to the report, this is just tip of the iceberg. The disagreement over Iran is just one of several issues troubling the Biden-Bennett

relationship.

The two have clashed for a long time on whether the U.S. should reopen the American consulate to the Palestinians in Jerusalem, which was closed by former U.S. President Donald Trump. Bennett says such a move would undermine Israel’s sovereignty.

There is a growing fear among the Israelis that Biden would ditch them over the Iran case, as it has happened before.

In recent days, some Israeli media outlets have reported that Tel Aviv is concerned that the U.S. government may be trying to exchange messages with Iran through unofficial channels without informing them. The U.S. government has a history of doing so through Oman, Qatar, and other regional mediators.

It is not at all unlikely that Biden would once again seek to circumvent Israel in order to return to the 2015 agreement, away from the pressures of the Israeli lobbies. The need to over-control the United States, the UAE, and other allies may be rooted in these moves.

A possible revival of the 2015 nuclear deal endorsed by the UN Security Council is detrimental to the Israeli regime, as it puts Tel Aviv in a difficult position. U.S. and Israel have a history of bitter disagreements over their approach to limit Iran’s peaceful nuclear program. Former U.S. President Barack Obama signed the nuclear deal in 2015 despite strong opposition by Benjamin Netanyahu, the former Israeli prime minister.

Bennett believes the Israeli sabotages have set back Iran’s peaceful nuclear program, while some in the United States argue that these acts have only encouraged Iran to rebuild the nuclear enrichment facilities with more efficient, up-to-date equipment.

Moreover, Israelis have recently expressed that the military option with regards to Iran is on the table, while the U.S. has indicated that it hopes diplomacy would solve the case.

It’s high time the United States and the UAE put an end to the Israeli OCD to control all their moves.

## Ex-Pakistani diplomat says Iran’s demands in Vienna talks are logical

TEHRAN — Asif Ali Khan Durrani, Pakistan’s former envoy to Tehran, has said that Iran’s demands in the Vienna talks that sanctions must be lifted totally are reasonable, IRNA reported on Sunday.

“The Americans need to change their approach towards Iran for a success of the Vienna talks because they are responsible for sabotaging the nuclear deal, not the Iranian side,” Durrani said.

The former ambassador added that it was Donald Trump who unilaterally pulled the United States out of the internationally recognized nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018.

Durrani, now a senior member of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), said that Iran is a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has a legitimate right to peaceful use of nuclear energy.

At the same time, the former diplomat said, Washington had no justification for quitting the JCPOA, and their excuses are interpreted as false.

He stressed, “Pakistan supports a revival of the JCPOA and has always asked parties to resolve all issues through interaction and diplomacy, and so the parties to the JCPOA must adhere to their commitments and act

within the framework of this agreement.”

Durrani stated that the JCPOA is a complete package and a successful model of diplomacy for resolving disputes, and if one of the parties to the treaty has a problem, it can raise it within the framework of the Joint Commission of the agreement.

He added, “The re-imposition of unilateral sanctions has made things difficult for Iran. These sanctions have created many problems for the Iranian people and their banking system, and we believe that now is the time to lift anti-Iran sanctions urgently.”

Durrani stressed that an acceleration of the Vienna talks and its successful outcome are dependent on a change of tone and approach by the United States, as well as the need to avoid adopting negative policies towards Iran and a fulfillment of the commitments by all parties.

The new round of the Vienna talks began on Thursday, December 9.

In this round of talks, work on texts is not limited to working groups, and the parties are working in different formats and levels in the areas of sanctions lifting and nuclear steps. In addition to the nuclear measures working group, several intensive meetings were held in various formats focusing on the lifting of sanctions.

## Iran: Canada must return looted public property

TEHRAN— Ali Bahador Jahromi, the Iranian government spokesman, said on Sunday that Canada must put an end to shows and extradite Iranian embezzlers and return the stolen public property.

“The Canadian government’s show on International Human Rights Day” are not acceptable, Bahadori Jahromi wrote on his Twitter account.

The government spokesman added, “The Iranian people are waiting for the extradition of Iranian

financial embezzlers living in Canada, as well as the return of the looted public property. However, the end of the play is that the country is the paradise of the embezzlers.”

The Canadian media reported on Saturday that the Canadian Immigration Service had returned a SAVAK (Shah’s Secret Service) employee, who had been living in the country illegally for 24 years, to Iran.

Some convicted economic offenders are currently seeking asylum and living in Canada.

TEHRAN - An Iranian diplomat said on Friday that countries that have been contributing to concentration of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere have “historical responsibility” to compensate related damages.

Zahra Ershadi, deputy permanent representative of Iran to the UN, made the remarks in a statement before the UN General Assembly Plenary.

Ershadi also denounced as “inhumane and illegal” what has been branded as the unilateral coercive measures (UCM) by the U.S. against the Iranian people.

Following is the text of Ershadi’s statement:

The nature and extent of humanitarian situations have changed dramatically, as new dimensions have emerged over the course of decades. As a result, the international community has faced evolving challenges as it works towards addressing these emergencies in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. With an increasing number of people suffering from the impacts of natural disasters, the extent and frequency of such occurrences have – in addition to hindering the development of disaster-stricken countries – eroded the capacity to address events of such nature. Humanitarian emergencies also occur as a result of ever-increasing armed conflicts and targeting of innocent civilians. Hence, we concur with the Secretary-General that “Humanitarian needs soared in 2020, propelled by conflict, climate change and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.”

My delegation acknowledges the leading role of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We are of the view that sustainable tackling of humanitarian situations requires mobilizing resources by taking anticipatory financing approaches in the UN budgetary system. In this regard, those who serve as the main contributors in protracted wars and occupations by their involvement or through provision of sophisticated weapons should shoulder more burden in financing UN humanitarian responses. This also includes those that have historical responsibility due to GHGs emissions that lead to rapid climate change resulting in natural disasters.

This year, we commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of landmark resolution 46/182 as a solid foundation for humanitarian activities and responses. Based on this resolution,

## Tehran says sanctions impeding Iran’s efforts to fight climate change

TEHRAN - Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran’s permanent ambassador to the UN, said on Thursday the unlawful sanctions against Iran by United States have barred Iran’s access to financial resources to tackle climate change.

“The imposition of unlawful sanctions of the United States against Iran, in flagrant infringement of the basic principles of international law, has not only prevented our access to much needed financial resources and technological means to tackle challenges associated with climate change, but has also adversely affected our national capacities to carry out our respective undertakings in this regard,” Takht-Ravanchi told the UN Security Council meeting, according to Press TV.

In May 2018, the U.S. under Donald Trump began to unilaterally target Iran with a so-called “maximum pressure” campaign that includes harsh sanctions tightly restricting Iran’s access to its own funds and preventing the country’s oil sales, a vital lifeline for the Iranian economy.

When Trump officially abandoned the JCPOA, his top diplomat Mike Pompeo said the U.S. will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on Iran.

In his sanctions campaign, Trump even banned cooperation with Iran in areas of environment protection, a move which showed his enmity against humanity.

The sanctions forced Iran to focus on how to meet the basic needs of citizens, leaving no opportunity or money to honor its commitments under the 2015 Paris climate accord, which Trump also quit.

Ali Salajegheh, head of Iran’s Department of Environment, has also said that the Islamic

# Iranian diplomat: Historical polluters have responsibility to finance losses



we believe that all of the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, notably respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, should be strictly observed by all when providing humanitarian assistance. While emphasizing the primary role and responsibility of States in addressing humanitarian emergencies within their territories, national ownership and leadership in coordination of humanitarian assistance to ensure its effective delivery must be acknowledged. In the same vein, any humanitarian crises or emergencies, especially those that have been advertently created under a specific and hidden political agenda, must not lead to any foreign intervention under the pretext of responsibility to protect.

Taking note of the Secretary-General’s calls for a global ceasefire and humanitarian pause as a temporary solution for providing humanitarian assistance to those in dire need, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly believes that addressing the root causes of humanitarian crises and emergencies as well as a greater investment in their prevention are the main sustainable and durable solutions for this global phenomenon. This includes both

natural disasters and man-made crises, including but not limited to occupation, foreign military interventions and the imposition of illegal and inhumane Unilateral Coercive Measures. In this regard, we stress the significance of liability and accountability. Therefore, we express our disappointment with the Human Rights Council’s failure to renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen on 7 October 2021.

While being committed to protection of the United Nations and humanitarian personnel on mission, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes that the sanctity of humanitarian assistance activities, including the credibility of the United Nations humanitarian response system, must be preserved by upholding its purely humanitarian nature through observing the humanitarian principles. Legitimate concerns regarding the deviation of humanitarian aid as well as non-humanitarian activities under the guise of providing humanitarian aid must be met immediately with a thorough and independent investigation.

We strongly condemn situations wherein the humanitarian needs

of populations in dire needs are taken hostage as a political mean or military tool, including by imposing blockades to starve to death civilians. Furthermore, the United Nations must assure that all humanitarian aid should be distributed among all populations in need indiscriminately and without any interference by donors.

There are many humanitarian crises around the world that require our swift attention. Regarding the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, as winter approaches and the situation of the Afghan people continues to deteriorate, the timely provision of humanitarian assistance and the release of Afghanistan’s frozen assets, which are essential for reviving its economy and saving lives, should in no way be politicized or conditional. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure that the countries hosting Afghan refugees, especially its neighbors, have unhindered access to humanitarian goods as well as vaccines.

With regards to Palestine, in particular the besieged Gaza strip, we note with great concern the obstacles and impediments created by the occupier regime in Palestinian territories on the movements, humanitarian access and operational space as contained in the Secretary-General’s report A/76/78. Since 2000, nearly 22-hundred Palestinian children have been killed. During the same period of time, 18-thousand-five-hundred Palestinian children have also been arrested.

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the inhumane and illegal UCMs not only as one of the main obstacles which hinder international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance but also as one of the main sources in creating humanitarian crises and devastating humanitarian principles around the world. The UCMs also undermine the targeted countries’ abilities, including those of mine, to meet their commitments according to relevant treaties and conventions, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. We strongly reject the imposition of UCMs by a number of certain states as a political leverage, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even in times of the deadly coronavirus, the United States’ illegal and inhumane unilateral coercive measures have targeted innocent Iranian citizens by freezing our assets in foreign banks – the assets which we desperately wanted to use for the provision of vaccines and other humanitarian needs.”



Republic’s acceptance of any commitments to the Paris agreement depends on removal of all sanctions. Salajegheh made the remarks in an interview with IRNA on the sidelines of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference, held from October 31 to November 12.

In a statement on “security in the context of terrorism and climate change”, Takht-Ravanchi said that, unlike terrorism, climate change is a development issue, and “there is no scientific evidence establishing a direct link between climate change and international peace and security.”

Accordingly, he continued, the challenges of climate change should be addressed within the context of sustainable development.

Acknowledging that the impacts of climate change might create an environment for terrorist groups to thrive and recruit, the Iranian diplomat said addressing the underlying causes is necessary in order to prevent such challenging situations to grow.

“We reiterate our principled position that the climate change is primarily an issue related to sustainable development, and thus outside the purview of the Security Council. Moreover, engagement of the Security Council, which lacks the requisite expertise and tools in this

sphere, would trespass the mandate of other main organs of the UN, further complicating their work in effectively addressing the challenges of climate change,” Takht-Ravanchi remarked.

### ‘Iran committed to fighting terrorism’

Elsewhere in his statement, Ambassador Takht-Ravanchi stressed that Iran remains committed to its international obligations to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

“Combating terrorism must be carried out in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law, and ensuring full respect for the principles of independence and sovereign equality of states and non-interference in their domestic affairs,” he said.

The ambassador also said that the negative effects of climate change and their consequences on the well-being of nations are undeniable, adding that they become severe when other underlying factors in conflict-ridden countries come into play.

“Addressing such challenges requires a systematic and coordinated response by all member states. We share the views that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the most appropriate platform for such coordinated response,” he added.

Addressing the meeting, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, “We are in a race against the clock and no one is safe from the destructive effects of climate disruption.”

He also said that regions that are most vulnerable to climate change also suffer from insecurity, poverty, weak governance, and the scourge of terrorism.

# Vienna talks inch forward despite European malpractice

TEHRAN – Negotiations in Vienna over the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Iran are up and running and even making progress though only slightly.

But the narrative the Europeans are presenting is entirely different from what is happening at the negotiating table. Over the last few days, the three European parties to the Vienna talks – France, Germany, and Britain (E3) – have sought to project a dim prospect for the path forward.

Since Friday, negotiators from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries – China, Russia, France, Britain plus Germany – have been holding expert sessions to discuss the very proposals the Europeans called unrealistic and maximalist.

With the start of the seventh round of talks in Vienna on Friday, the parties to the negotiations held discussions about the texts of Iran's proposed drafts on sanctions removal and nuclear issues during their sessions at different levels and within different formats, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

In addition to expert sessions, talks and consultations continued at different levels on Saturday.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's envoy to the talks, said on Sunday that the talks are proceeding smoothly. "The Vienna Talks are underway. A number of meetings in various formats are planned for today. Numerous outstanding issues still remain on the agenda but now, after the break last week, they are addressed properly in accordance with norms and rules of multilateral diplomacy," he said on Twitter on Sunday.

Earlier, he had expressed



surprise at the gloomy Western media narratives of the talks.

"To my surprise some analysts and journalists describe the situation at the Vienna Talks as dramatic, 'almost deadlock.' This is not the case in point. After the break the negotiators returned to normal diplomatic business and maintain intensive dialogue. Atmosphere is positive," the Russian diplomat said.

The bleak Western outlook has been decried by observers in Iran and beyond as a negotiating tactic aimed at getting more concessions from Iran, ones that go beyond the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The E3, together with the U.S., started using this tactic even before the seventh round began. According to an Al-Araby Al-Jadeed report, the Americans and the Europeans warned that they would withdraw from the talks if Iran insisted on a new agenda for the talks and backtracked on what was achieved during the past six rounds, which ended

on June 20 amid presidential transition in Iran.

But what the Europeans warn of is nothing other than Iran's insistence on reviving the original JCPOA without any addition. On the other, the E3 is pushing for a revised version of the original JCPOA.

Despite European propaganda about Iran's alleged intransigence at the talks, it came to light that the E3 crusty diplomats have pushed for non-JCPOA issues to be included in the negotiations, something that Iran strongly rejected.

On Sunday, a source in Iran's negotiating team told Al Jazeera that the Vienna negotiations continue in earnest and address the Iranian proposals. "The European trio raises exaggerated points that slow down the negotiation process," the source said, adding, "We strongly reject European pressure to include demands from outside the nuclear agreement."

During the current round, Iran presented two draft proposals regarding the nuclear and

sanctions removal measures that needed to be taken by Washington and Tehran if the JCPOA is to be revived. The Europeans rejected the proposals out of hand before a short break last week. But it seems that they have backed off and started discussing the proposals, though they are still insisting on their maximalist demands that fall beyond the scope of the JCPOA. The E3 position during the talks created fissures and disagreements even among the P4+1.

The E3 is far from being the only party negatively affecting the negotiation process. The U.S., too, did its part to muddy the waters. American officials have sought to coordinate their positions with those of Israel, a move that contradicts Washington's stated desire to revive the JCPOA. Because the Israelis did, and continue to do, everything in their power to derail the talks.

Of course, there have been reports that fissures and disagreements started to come to the surface between the Americans and Israelis regarding the way the Biden administration approaches the Vienna talks. Some even dangled the possibility of the Biden administration secretly exchanging messages with Iran while keeping Israel in the dark. If true, this is nothing new. The U.S. has a history of backchannel diplomacy with Iran.

The U.S. rumored messaging aside, the success of the Vienna talks is predicated on a Western change of approach that would bring a new spirit to the room and be far from bullying and unconstructive demands.

## U.S. seeks sectarian war in the region: IRGC general

From Page 1 ▶ He remarked, "This war has been waged in the form of a sectarian war from within West Asia and parts of Africa. They are waging war at the expense of some countries in the region."

The IRGC general continued by saying that the Westerners have come to the conclusion that they cannot make any mistakes militarily and in the security sphere.

"Their methods of strikes are different from the past," he remarked.

According to Hajizadeh, they seek to instill the idea that a religious establishment cannot meet the needs of the people and run the country.

Therefore, they seek to divide the Iranian



society and disappoint and attract the elites to implement their plans.

He further emphasized that Iran with its huge infrastructure can become the richest country in the world with proper planning.

"According to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, by providing shortcuts, we can prove to everyone that religious and revolutionary management not only meets the needs of the people, but can also serve as a good example for other countries. It's as if our progress in some areas, such as missiles and drones, owes much to this approach," he further noted.

The commander said goal-oriented strategies can serve as "solutions to the country's problems," adding, "We have mastered good technologies and student organizations should each pursue an issue and provide appropriate intellectual assistance to the country's officials."

## SPORTS

### Pourrahnama takes gold at World Para Taekwondo Championships

TEHRAN – Mehdi Pourrahnama from Iran won a gold medal in the -70kg K44 of the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships on Sunday.

The event will offer athletes major rankings points in their bids to qualify for Paris 2024.

The competition brought 264 athletes from 41 nations together in Istanbul, Turkey.

It is the third time Turkey is hosting Para Taekwondo's biggest event, following the Samsun 2015 and Antalya 2019.

Istanbul 2021 has become the second-biggest Para Taekwondo event of all-time. The 2019 World Championships featured 333 athletes from 66 countries, although the event included the Poomsae discipline – which will not be included at Istanbul 2021.

Due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, at least four teams namely, Afghanistan, Ghana, Japan, and Morocco withdrew from the competition.

### Dragan Skocic and Mehdi Taremi bury hatchet

TEHRAN – Iran coach Dragan Skocic and the team's forward Mehdi Taremi finally buried the hatchet. It's never too late to mend.

There is always the opportunity to reconcile after a conflict.

Two months ago, Skocic said the Iranian players need to improve tactically, however they are at a good level technically.

Soon after, Porto forward Taremi published a post on his Twitter account and said the Iranian players are good both tactically and technically but the problem lies elsewhere.

The coaching staff called him to resolve misunderstandings but Taremi didn't pick up.

Skocic, in response, didn't invite him for two important matches against Lebanon and Syria in Group A of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, where Iran emerged victorious.

Skocic had already followed Taremi on twitter and the player has followed him back and it seems they have buried the hatchet.

Iran are scheduled to host Iraq on Jan. 27 in Tehran.

### World Para Taekwondo: Haghshenas takes gold

TEHRAN – Hamed Haghshenas from Iran claimed a gold medal in the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships on Sunday.

He defeated Croatia's Ivan Mikulic in the golden round of the +80kg K44 final match.

Mahtab Nabavi had won Iran's first gold in the competition in Istanbul, Turkey in the women's -57kg K41 category.

The event will offer athletes major rankings points in their bids to qualify for Paris 2024.

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It is the third time Turkey is hosting Para Taekwondo's biggest event, following the Samsun 2015 and Antalya 2019.

Istanbul 2021 has become the second-biggest Para Taekwondo event of all-time. The 2019 World Championships featured 333 athletes from 66 countries, although the event included the Poomsae discipline – which will not be included at Istanbul 2021.

Due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, at least four teams namely, Afghanistan, Ghana, Japan, and Morocco withdrew from the competition.

### Iran's NOC general assembly to be held on March 8

TEHRAN – General Assembly of Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC) will be held on March 8.

The elective assembly will take place in Iran's NOC headquarters.

The General Assembly was supposed to be held on January 20 since the four-year term of current president Reza Salehi Amiri will be finished in that time.

Iran Olympic Committee has announced that the General Assembly will be held in March at the request of the federations.

### Parsons re-elected as IPC President for second term

TEHRAN – Brazilian Andrew Parsons has been re-elected for a second four-year term as President of International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Parsons, who was standing unopposed, received 156 yes votes (98 per cent) of the 159 valid votes at the 20th IPC General Assembly which was held virtually on Sunday 12 December.

Parsons, the former President of the Brazilian Paralympic Committee and Americas Paralympic Committee, has served various roles within the Paralympic Movement over the last 24 years since starting out as an intern at the Brazilian Paralympic Committee. He was elected as IPC President in September 2017, succeeding Sir Philip Craven who stepped down after 16 years.

"I would like to thank the IPC membership for your support, it is an absolute honour to re-elected as President of the International Paralympic Committee," said Parsons. "I started as an intern in the Brazilian Paralympic Committee 24 years ago so to be re-elected after, what I think was a successful first four years, is fantastic, I am so over the moon."

"I also want to congratulate all of the Board members who have been elected, including our Vice President Duane Kale who did a very good job over the last four years chairing the working group on the governance review."

"It's a very interesting and new Board; we have more women than ever before and, with the Chair of the Athletes' Council, we have eight former Para athletes or Paralympians. This will help us a lot over the next four years."

"We are saying goodbye to some Board members who were trying for re-election and I would like to thank them all for the last four years. We have achieved so much together, and it was an honour serving this organization, and the athletes with you."

### Torabi shortlisted for Best 2021 ACL Team midfielder

TEHRAN – Persepolis iconic midfielder Mehdi Torabi has been selected into the best team from the 2021 AFC Champions League.

The goalkeeper and four defenders in the All-Star XI have been decided, so now it's time to turn the focus to the midfielders.

The-afc.com has selected 10 of the standout performers from the continental competition, so review the candidates and vote for the fans' favorite.

#### Mahdi Torabi

- \* 5 assists (#1 by a midfielder)
- \* 22 chances created (Joint #1 by a midfielder)
- \* 3 goals scored

Among the more forward-thinking midfielders in the competition, Torabi again produced the goods for Persepolis, posting more assists and the joint highest number of chances created despite his side falling at the quarter-finals. Torabi also weighed in with three goals in eight games, including a last-minute winner against FC Istiklol that sent the Tehran giants into the last eight for the fourth time in five years.

Mohamed Kanno (Al-Hilal), Shin Jin-ho (Pohang Steelers), Mateus (Nagoya Grampus), Salem Al Dawsari (Al-Hilal), Valeri Qazaishvili (Ulsan Hyundai), Abdulfattah Asiri (Al-Nassr), Paik Seung-ho (Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors), Salman Al Faraj (Al-Hilal) and An Yong-woo (Daegu FC) are the other nominees.

## Up to Its Neck in Debt!

### Major Foreign Holders of U.S. Public Debt

Japan is the largest holder of U.S. debt.

Japan \$1.31T	China \$1.07T
United Kingdom \$539.5B	Ireland \$319.7B
Luxembourg \$291.6B	Cayman Islands \$250.3B
Brazil \$248.5B	Taiwan \$242.3B
France \$236.3B	Hong Kong \$227.2B

## Iraq eyes boosting gas imports from Iran



TEHRAN - Iraq's Ministry of Electricity has expressed willingness for increasing natural gas imports from Iran, IRNA reported on Sunday quoting the ministry spokesperson Ahmed Mousa as saying.

Mousa noted that the ministry is negotiating the increase with Iranian authorities and will dispatch a delegation to Tehran in this regard. He did not give any details about the members of the delegation or the date of their visit to Iran.

The official noted that the ministry is also working with the Iranian Oil Ministry to import liquid fuel in order to make up for shortages and provide alternative fuel to power plants that have been affected by declining gas imports from Iran.

The Islamic Republic has decreased its gas exports to Iraq to nearly five million cubic meters a day (mcm/d), from its previous 50 mcm/d due to the financial issues between the two sides.

Iraq reportedly owes Iran about \$7 billion for previous gas imports from the country.

Iraq supplies more than a third of its energy needs through imports of electricity and gas from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Back in November, Mousa had announced that his country was ready to pay for the gas purchased from Iran to operate power plants.

## Iran to become fully self-sufficient in producing petchem catalysts by 2023

TEHRAN - Managing Director of Iran's Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) has said the country is going to become fully self-sufficient in producing the catalysts used in the petrochemical industry by the Iranian calendar year 1402 (starts in March 2023).

As Shana reported, Majid Daftari has said that out of 40 types of catalyst groups in the petrochemical industry, the knowledge for the production of 20 has been indigenized, adding: "By the end of this year (March 20, 2022), [the knowledge for producing] eight more groups will be indigenized and the remaining 12 groups are being researched or developed."

According to plans, by [the Iranian calendar year] 1402, Iran will not need to import the main catalysts required by the petrochemical industry, he stressed.

Daftari noted that over the past few years, despite the sanctions the PRTC has tried to meet the needs of the domestic com-



panies regarding petrochemical catalysts, in collaboration with other knowledge-based companies.

Back in July, the former Head of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Behzad Mohammadi had announced that Iranian engineers were going to indigenize the knowledge for the production of 72 percent of the catalysts needed in the country's petrochemical industry by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

According to Mohammadi, the

country needs \$275 million worth of catalysts annually, \$200 million of which is domestically supplied.

The domestic production of the mentioned catalysts is going to save the country \$150-\$180 million annually.

Back in March 2020, the former PRTC Head Ali Pajouhan said that NPC had signed 20 contracts with knowledge-based companies for mass production of catalysts and 70 research projects were also underway in this regard.

# Raisi submits \$864b budget bill to Majlis

*Production, employment pivots of next year's budget*

From page 1 ▶ Of the mentioned 3.818 quadrillion rials, the crude oil income is estimated at 3.1 quadrillion rials (about \$73.809 billion).

Oil sales is estimated at 1.2 million barrels per day at an average price of \$60.

In the next year's budget bill, the Oil Ministry is given the permission to build heavy oil refinery with the capacity of 300,000 barrels per day.

Tax and customs incomes are predicted to be 5.62 quadrillion rials (about \$133.809 billion), rising 73 percent from that of the present year's budget.

Of the mentioned figure, 5.27 quadrillion rials (about \$125.476 billion) would be the share of tax income, rising 62

percent year on year.

In the 1401 budget bill, the government has declared free and special economic zones subject to VAT.

Like the current year's budget, the next year's proposed budget requires the government to pay 20 percent of its oil, gas, and gas condensate revenues to National Development Fund (NDF).

As ILNA reported, in the next year's budget, it is not going to allocate preferential foreign currency (at 42,000 rials per dollar) to the import of medicine and other basic goods, and in return, a subsidy of 1.3 quadrillion rials (about \$30.952 billion) in the consumption of these items will replace the 42,000-rial cur-



rency.

Also, the government has reduced customs duties on basic goods and medicines from four percent to one percent.

Contrary to this year's bill, in which the stock exchange had a significant share in government funding, in the next year's budget bill the share has been reduced.

Next year, 880 trillion rials (about \$20.952 billion) of Islamic bonds are to be sold, which is a 33-percent decrease compared to 1400.

The budget for development projects is estimated at 2.51 quadrillion rials (about \$59.761 billion), with 43 percent rise year on year.

In next year's budget bill for

the sustainability of pension funds, the government proposed raising the retirement age for men and women by two years.

The budget bill for the year 1401 is printed and distributed among the members of the parliament after its presentation and they will have 10 days to submit their proposals and reviews on the budget to relevant specialized committees.

Specialized committees will also have 15 days to submit their reviews to the parliament ad hoc budget review committee (known as Talfiq Committee).

Talfiq Committee is a body consisting of MPs from different committees which is established each year to study the national budget bill.

## Gas oil consumption falls 10% following NIOPDC fuel allocation plan

TEHRAN - Deputy head of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) has announced a 10-percent decline in the country's gas oil consumption following the implementation of a program for monitoring the allocation of fuel to various transportation fields.

"Implementation of the fuel allocation survey which was conducted over a smart fuel supply system has led to a reduction of about 10 percent in gas oil consumption in the country's transportation sector," Ali-Akbar Nejad-Ali said.

Emphasizing the reduction of seven to 10 million liters of the country's daily gas oil consumption following the implementation of the mentioned plan, Nejad-Ali said: "The fuel allocation survey plan for the transportation fleet is performance-based, that means, a general gas oil quota and a performance quota are separately allocated to vehicles."

According to the official, the second quota is allocated based on the vehicles' performance (the distance they travel) which is assessed by the NIOPDC based on the information received from the Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization as well as the municipalities across the country.

In this regard, the cars that work more and travel longer distances receive more fuel and vice-versa.

He noted that based on the latest statistics on the daily gas oil supply to the transport fleet including trucks and passenger buses, in the seventh month of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23-October 22) on average about 59 million liters per day of gas oil was distributed across the country.

"The actual amount of daily consumption by these vehicles is about 52 million liters per day on average, which indicates a nine percent increase compared to the last year," Nejad-Ali said.

Regarding the benefits of implementing the fuel allocation survey plan in the country, he said: "Due to the low price of gas oil in the country compared to neighboring countries, the implementation of this survey plan, in addition to a fair distribution of the fuel in the country (based on performance) and systematization of fueling process, will limit the distribution of the mentioned fuel to the official fuel network, so, the exact amount of daily gas oil consumption in the country can be monitored and evaluated."

## IME's weekly worth of trades rises 16%

TEHRAN - The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) rose 16 percent in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, 1.977 million tons of commodities worth \$519 million were traded at the IME, indicating also six percent rise in terms of weight.

The exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 1.693 million tons of commodities valued at almost \$334 million.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,000,275 tons of cement, 345,240 tons of steel, 81,000 tons of iron ore, 35,500 tons of sponge iron, 12,510 tons of copper, 10,275 tons of aluminum, 1,600 tons of zinc and 21 tons of precious metals concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 275,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$181 million.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 86,042 tons of polymeric products, 51,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 51,000 tons of lube cut, 46,980 tons of bitumen, 36,607 tons of chemicals, 3,795 tons of base oil and 1,309 tons of sulfur.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 8,464 tons of commodities traded on it.

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

trades as compared to its preceding month.

The exchange sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 7.387 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$1.42 billion.

Items traded on this floor included 5.176 million tons of cement, 1.452 million tons of steel, 521,000 tons of iron ore, 172,000 tons of sponge iron (DRI), 31,445 tons of aluminum, 30,535 tons of zinc, 29,100 tons of copper, 560 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 200 tons of metallurgical coke, 81 tons of precious metals concentrate and 63 kg of gold bars.

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

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

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

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

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

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of commodities were traded at the mentioned market.

## Iran currently able to exchange electricity with 6 neighbors

TEHRAN - Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian has said the country is currently able to exchange electricity with Afghanistan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, and Turkey, IRNA reported.

As reported, developing energy diplomacy and exchange of electricity with the neighboring countries has been among the top priorities of the energy minister and in this regard, Mehrabian had underlined the synchronization of the country's electricity network with that of Russia as well as joining the power grid with the Persian Gulf Arab nations among the plans during his tenure.

Speaking in a gathering with the representatives of the Foreign Affairs Ministry on Saturday, Mehrabian said Iran has great potential for exporting electricity and power equipment to the countries in the region and the energy ministry has had good success in this area over the years.

### Manufacturing F-class turbines

Referring to the country's ability to produce F-class turbines, Mehrabian said: "The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the few countries in the world that produces electrical equipment, turbines, generators, etc. at the highest level of technology. Today, Iran can produce a variety of turbines, especially class F turbines, which have the highest efficiency in the power plant industry."

According to the energy minister, significant power projects, especially hydropower plants, have been implemented in Iraq, Syria, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Russia, and other countries.

"Iran has a very good position in the world in the field of water projects, including water systems, dams, and hydropower plants," Mehrabian said.

### 99.5% of Iran's rural population enjoys electricity

According to Mehrabian, currently,



100 percent of the country's urban population has access to the electricity network while 99.5 percent of the rural population is also connected to the national power grid.

"Over the past few years, investment in this sector has declined and the supply and demand balance became negative, which resulted in some restrictions and blackouts, but with a precise plan to compensate we are solving problems," Mehrabian said.

The official noted that the energy ministry is planning to add 30,000 megawatts to the country's electricity generation capacity over the next four years.

He stated that one of the energy ministry's concerns is to pass the

next summer's peak consumption period, noting: "We must be able to work in such a way that people see fewer restrictions and if we can use hydropower plants to some extent, hopefully, we will not experience blackouts."

### 6,000 MW to be added to power generation capacity by June 2022

Mehrabian further noted that currently 6,000 megawatts capacity of power plants are under generation across the country and will come on stream by the next summer peak consumption period (summer begins in late June 2021).

"For the summer peak of 1401 [the next Iranian calendar year] it is planned to add 6,000 MW to the country's electricity generation capacity, which will be a record," he said.

Of the mentioned capacity, so far four power plant units have joined the country's power network and the rest will be constructed by the mentioned date.

## TEDPIX falls 23,700 points on Sunday

TEHRAN - TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 23,730 points to 1.32 million on Sunday.

As reported, over 4.452 billion securities worth 23.863 trillion rials (about \$586 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index fell 20,676 points, and the second market's index dropped 37,440 points.

TEDPIX gained 9,000 points (less than one percent) to 1.349 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Isfahan Refining Company, Sabzevar Pars Steel Complex, Social Security Investment Company, and Berekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

In a meeting with the representatives of over 30 major companies active in the capital market, on November 1, to exchange ideas for resolving issues and developing the economy, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said his ministry plans to make the economy more predictable and eliminate pricing systems that are harmful to the capital market and the stock exchange industry.

# Covid-1948: when the most dangerous virus hit the world



From page 1 ▶ According to Haaretz, one of the 14 Palestinians killed was a so-called Land of Israel Workers Alliance member, identified as Yusuf al-Turki.

However, Turki was arrested near Reineh and a Bedouin woman and several others, charged with being a smuggler and then killed.

A document reveals the gruesome death of a Palestinian worker named Hajj Ibrahim, "a sick elderly woman and another elderly man and woman" in the Palestinian village of al-Burj in July 1948. The illegal Modiin settlement now stands in its place.

Israeli soldiers asked Hajj Ibrahim to go and collect vegetables, so he would not witness what was about to happen,

didn't believe the story, and a few hours later he too was put to death, with four bullets."

Further atrocities against Palestinians are revealed in a document written by Shmuel Mikunis, a communist member of the Provisional State Council, which became the Knesset, asking for clarification from Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion about acts committed by Irgun militias.

These included the killing of 35 Palestinians in Mount Meron after they raised a white flag; the arrest of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, who were made to dig a pit, pushed into it, then shot to death; the rape of a girl by Irgun members; and the killing of 13 or 14 Palestinian children who were playing with grenades.

Israel occupied the West Bank and East al-Quds during the Six-Day War in 1967. It later annexed East al-Quds in a move not recognized by the international community.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state, with East al-Quds as its capital.

But Israel's aggressive settlement expansion and annexation plans have dealt a severe blow to any prospects of peace.

The Gaza Strip has also been under an inhumane Israeli land, air and sea siege since 2007 and has witnessed three wars since 2008.

and "the three [Palestinians] were taken to an isolated house."

"Afterward an anti-tank shell was fired [at them]. When the shell missed the target, six hand grenades were thrown into the house. They killed an elderly man and woman, and the elderly woman was put to death with a firearm," the document details.

"Afterward they torched the house and burned the three bodies. When Hajj Ibrahim returned with his guard, he was told that the three others had been sent to the hospital in Ramallah. Apparently, he

**Prominent Israeli leaders "knew in real time about the blood-drenched events that accompanied the conquest of Arab villages."**

## West Asia needs to establish economic bloc to counter U.S. pressure, Turkish attorney says

From page 1 ▶ Following is the text of the interview;

**What are the main reasons for Turkey's lira crash to new low against U.S. dollar?**

There are two main reasons; first, from the 1940s up to now Turkey has been a part of the Western economic model. So our economic and production model is not designed to be in our interest; it follows Western free market model.

I can say that despite some exceptions since the 1940s to nowadays the Turkish economy has failed to help our people.

To be a part of NATO was not just a political choice, but also it was an economic decision that has caused the Turkish currency to lose its value today against the dollar and euro.

The second reason is that the U.S. and the Atlantic powers for a long time have tended to pressurize Ankara and its economy. The Turkish political elite is trying to diversify the ties as we have relations with Russia, Iran and China while the Western powers are not happy with such a political choice. So they are weaponizing the economy to strike and stop Turkey's steps towards the East.

**Erdogan has described the currency crash as an economic war? Do you think this is a war? If so, who wants to undermine Turkey's economy?**

President Erdogan was right when

he described the recent developments as an economic war. As I told you, the Western Atlantic powers are trying to use the economic levers to stop Turkey's rapprochement with Asian powers considering the economy an Achilles' heel for Turkey.

The main problem that Turkey has faced for twenty years is that Erdogan has not tried to abandon Western economic model during his tenure. Erdogan and his government failed to create an alternative for Western-based free market model. Although they tried to approach Asian powers including Iran, Russia and China, the Turkish government failed to develop a kind of resistance economy.

We are paying the price for such a bad choice made by our governments from the 1940s till now.

**Some other countries in the region like Iran and Lebanon have also witnessed a fall in their currencies. What is your opinion?**

I think Iran and Lebanon are different cases. Iran has been living an economic embargo since the 1979 revolution up to now. The difference between Turkey and Iran is that the first possesses natural resources whereas Turkey lacks such an advantage. But the Atlantic powers have targeted both of them (Iran and Turkey), while the blockade against Lebanon is going under challenge of civil war and an economic collapse

that have been threatening the country since the 1970s.

The Lebanese never had a national market up to now, because of that the case of Lebanon is not comparable with Iranian and Turkish cases. They have fallen victims to international dynamics.

**There were protests against Erdogan's policies in recent days. What are the repercussions of these protests in the country? Do you expect any change in Erdogan's policies?**

A: It is true that we are witnessing protests against Erdogan's policies in recent days. These are small protests, but if the government doesn't take the necessary measures in terms of economy to help workers and the middle class generally the problem will exacerbate increasingly.

Historically, Erdogan, his political background and party (AKP) have good relations with financial groups besides being a part of neo-liberal economic model. Although they are trying to change their model, it's not easy to shift to another model of economy.

I am not sure if his politico-economic team is capable enough to make such an alternation.

Turkey needs economic policies that protect the rights of workers rather than financial lobbies. The government must start nationalization steps in the economy. We need to discuss a



certain production and economic model to provide new horizons and opportunities for peasants and workers. The government has to declare an economic mobilization that moves all different classes of the society, but it seems difficult for now.

**How can regional countries join hands to deal with this tough time?**

Our region is under American pressure. We must think together not only about how to stop this American pressure, but about developing economic organizations and models to resist the American economic campaign.

We lack organizations like economic bodies developed in the West like IMF and etc. We have to think about creating regional organizations.

Turkey, Russia and Iran can take steps together to develop an economic resistance bloc to encounter the war launched by the Atlantic axis.

## Trump: Netanyahu never wanted peace with Palestinians

Former US president Donald Trump has launched another verbal attack on his one-time close ally Benjamin Netanyahu, saying the ex-Israeli prime minister did not want to make peace with the Palestinians.

He made the remarks in a series of interviews with Israeli journalist Barak Ravid earlier this year for an upcoming book, whose excerpts were

released on Saturday.

In the taped comments broadcast by Israel's Channel 12, Trump claimed that when he came into office, he had asked Netanyahu for overtures toward the Palestinians, raising the possibility of a settlement construction freeze in the occupied West Bank, but the Israeli premier often demurred.

"Bibi did not want to make a deal," he said, using Netanyahu's nickname. "I don't think Bibi ever wanted to make peace. I think he just tapped us along... 'No, no, we want to, we want to...' But I think Bibi did not want to make peace. Never did."

"Now I don't know if he didn't want to make it for political reasons, or for other reasons. I wish he would have said he didn't want to make a deal, instead of... Because a lot of people devoted a lot of work. But I don't think Bibi would have ever made a deal. That's my opinion," he added.

Meanwhile, the former US president said he

believed that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas "wanted to make a deal more than Netanyahu. And I will be honest, I had a great meeting with him, Abbas, right. I had a great meeting with him. And we spent a lot of time together, talking about many things. And it was almost like a father. I mean, he was so nice, couldn't have been nicer."

Trump recalled he then told Netanyahu that "I had a very good meeting with Abbas. We can definitely do a deal. The Israeli leader's response? 'Well, let's think about it. Let's not move too fast, you know.' After he started talking, I said, wait a minute, you don't want to make a deal."

"And he said, 'Well, uh, uh, uh.' And the fact is I don't think Bibi ever wanted to make a deal. I [had] thought the Palestinians were impossible, and the Israelis would do anything to make peace and a deal. I found that not to be true," he went on to say.

Trump further claimed that he had himself

## Biden's democracy summit, PR stunt



From page 1 ▶ It does sound very "authoritarian" rather than "democratic" coming from the country that just hosted a conference on the two types of governance.

Reporters without borders has called for Assange's immediate release saying "we condemn [the extradition] decision, which will prove historic for all the wrong reasons," says the group's Secretary-General Christophe Deloire. "We fully believe that Julian Assange has been targeted for his contributions to journalism, and we defend this case because of its dangerous implications for the future of journalism and press freedom around the world."

Instead of being praised and awarded for raising human rights violations, Assange has long been targeted and punished by Washington for raising issues ironically related to human rights. The main theme of Biden's conference. The conference also just happens to come on the backdrop of a coup attempt earlier this year on Capitol Hill itself, one of the biggest violent attacks on a transition of power in the United States since 1861.

The former American President told his supporters that the election was rigged, the vote was stolen and called on his large following to march on the capital and demand lawmakers halt the certification process of Biden as the new President. The armed mob stormed the national legislature and attempted what can only be described as a coup attempt. The members of Congress who were inside and former Vice President Mike Pence just narrowly escaped with their lives. During the mayhem that ensued police officers died, others were injured. The putschists searched for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to kill her, as later footage emerged showing the putschists unafraid declaring "we were looking for Nancy to shoot her in the friggin' brain." They constructed gallows on the Capitol steps screaming "hang Mike Pence," while former presidential candidate and Senator Mitt Romney was saved from running into the mob by luckily running into a police officer instead who sent him to a place of safety. The footage of lawmakers under tables or running for safety under the blaze of tear gas is rarely seen in an extremely authoritarian country let alone an "authoritarian" regime, yet it was on full public display in Washington DC.

The problem is half the population still think the election was rigged, votes were stolen and President Biden should not be President.

Since the insurrection, its memory has somewhat kind of faded away in America despite it occurring only this year, perhaps because the implications are so alarming and so embarrassing for America's public image that it has and will continue to be slowly brushed aside. The U.S. mainstream media and government officials would prefer to look past the prospect of the country falling into "authoritarianism," if it has not already done so. If the same events occurred in a nation that strongly opposes American hegemony, then the coup attempt would have ended every

news item in American media reports for decades to come.

Funnily enough, that was another theme during the Biden conference. "Defending against authoritarianism," in favor of (American) democracy.

Meanwhile, as voting laws are being changed, experts say black Americans have worse voting rights now than during the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. This follows violent crackdowns in 2020 by U.S. security forces against anti-racism protesters, as black Americans continue to be fatally shot at by the police in broad daylight.

Then comes the wealth gap of course; analysts argue the U.S. cannot even be considered a democracy when so few have so much and so many have so little. Issues of income, wealth and racial inequalities, wealth gaps are political crises as well as moral ones. According to the Brookings Institution five years ago, a typical white family's net worth was \$171,000, while a black family's net worth was \$17,150. That gap is widely reported to have expanded during the Pandemic. Discriminatory policies make it harder for black families to own a house, get a loan from the bank, create a business and even access decent quality education for their children, let alone earn a decent living wage.

This is not a democracy America is putting forward; it's more like a form of society owned by a bunch of oligarchs. The 50 richest people own more wealth than 165 million people, who are classified as sitting at the bottom end of society. 650 billionaires have seen their wealth increase by more than \$1.3tn and the gap is growing. Homelessness in 2020 was reported at nearly 600,000, while other estimates put people and families with children living rough on the streets at 1.3 million. Inflation has just hit an almost 40 years high, while giant corporations are said to be benefiting from it.

There are arguably different types of authoritarian systems. In the United States, some experts describe the ruling class as an authoritarian regime, others point out that's its competitive authoritarianism, saying it's a system that does hold elections but with just two parties really competing, the process is held under extremely unfair conditions which systematically favor one side over the other.

The irony of Biden's conference is that everything that was spoken about is already being practiced back home inside the United States itself.

It was a virtual event so the routine stand up applause from a few of the other authoritarian rulers (still clinging to Washington's boots for protection) invited was not heard and that kind of affected the whole international public relations aspect of it all. Basically, there was no standing ovation as the White House would have wished. The still unknown Omicron. Not even the closest ally of America was going to get on a plane to attend this busy affair.

Meanwhile, international monitors, rights groups, scholars among others all agree that American military adventurism overseas is the source of global instability and insecurity. The U.S. military invades one country after another, occupies one country after another, interferes in one country after another, steals the wealth of one country after another and it doesn't even bother checking in with the United Nations anymore. The fact of the matter is every time the U.S. military sales abroad, it's not even winning anymore but returns embarrassed. A bit like the Titanic from the outside yet sinking on the inside.

stopped the Israeli plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

"I got angry and I stopped it, because that was really going too far. That was going way too far, you know, when [Netanyahu] did the big 'Let's build. Let's take everything and just start building on it.' We were not happy about that."

Some other excerpts from Trump's interviews were released on Friday by the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

In his comments, Trump spat an expletive about Netanyahu for being quick to congratulate Joe Biden on his victory in last year's election.

"He was very early. Like earlier than most. I haven't spoken to him since," the former US president said.

"Nobody did more for Bibi. And I liked Bibi. I still like Bibi," Trump added. He was "the man that I did more for than any other person I dealt with. But I

also like loyalty. The first person to congratulate Biden was Bibi. And not only did he congratulate him, he did it on tape. And it was on tape."

In response, Netanyahu's office said on Friday he "really appreciates" Trump's backing for Tel Aviv, but "he also really appreciates the importance of the strong alliance between Israel and the US, and it was therefore important for him to congratulate the incoming president."

In a break with the past US policy, Trump recognized occupied al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel and ordered the transfer of the US embassy to the holy city from Tel Aviv.

The former US president also recognized Israel's false claim of sovereignty over the occupied Golan Height during his time in office which marked an unprecedented escalation of Israel's settlement expansion and other aggressive plans.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iran province seeks to attract medical travelers from Azerbaijan



From page 1 ▶ The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

The developing health tourism industry is one of the most important fields of Iran's travel sector, which is trying to prove its capabilities and capacities in attracting medical and health tourists to the country.

Many domestic experts believe that medical tourism in Iran is a win-win opportunity both for the country and foreign patients, as they are offered affordable yet quality treatment services and the country gains considerable foreign currency.

Iran's two most popular medical tourist cities are Tehran and Mashhad, but the coronavirus outbreak has significantly reduced

the number of travelers.

Iran is one of the major destinations for health tourism in the region, and patients with 55 different nationalities, mostly from neighboring countries including Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are seeking to use Iran's services and facilities in this field.

Iranian hospitals admitted nearly 70,000 foreign patients over the Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 2018 – March 2019) and it made an economic contribution of around \$1.2 billion to the country, according to the medical tourism department at the Ministry of Health.

In April 2018, the rotating presidency of the International Health Tourism Conference of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was handed to the Islamic Republic for a three-year term.

Mohammad Jahangiri who presides over a national center for developing health tourism said in May 2018 that Iran can annually earn \$7 billion in medical and health tourism, though the sector now brings in only one-seventh or even lesser of the sum.

The Islamic Republic has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in the Iranian calendar year 1404.

# Tourism ministry budget expected to rise 54%

TEHRAN – The national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21, 2022) has proposed 20.147 trillion rials (around \$511 million at the fixed official rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) for the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

The proposed budget suggests a 54 percent increase compared to the current year's budget, CHTN reported.

On Sunday, President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the year 1401 to the Majlis, saying "In next year's budget bill, production and employment are the pivots".

The proposed budget amounted to about 36.31 quadrillion rials (about \$864.523 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials). The bill has envisaged public resources and expenditures, the budget of state-owned companies as well as the budget for various government bodies.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums,



churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

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. The Islamic

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

When it comes to Medical tourism, many experts believe that it is a win-win opportunity both for the country and foreign patients, as they are offered affordable yet quality treatment services and the country gains considerable foreign currency.

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## Culinary festival marks National Nurses Day

TEHRAN – A one-day culinary festival was held in Velayat Hospital, the northern city of Rasht, Gilan province on Saturday.

Entitled "Healthy Food for Healthy Life", the festival sought to mark National Nurses Day and celebrate the 6th anniversary of Rasht's registration as a Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO, the deputy tourism chief announced on Sunday.

Some 40 nurses participated in the festival, offering a variety of local and indigenous dishes from across the province, CHTN quoted Hamidreza Azarpur as saying.

From the sales of the food, the proceeds will be donated to help needy patients with burn complications, the official added.

Gilan has a significant capacity in the field of food tourism, as 16 local dishes have been registered as national heritage before Rasht was added to the UNESCO



Creative Cities list, he explained.

He also noted that Gilan restaurants are required to offer local dishes on their menus.

Rasht was named a new member of the Creative Cities Network of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2015.

According to UNESCO, Rasht's gastronomy sector benefit from a rich variety of natural resources and rely on the exploitation of

local resources, especially various species of fish and in-season products. Above all, gastronomy in Rasht is synonymous with the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. Throughout generations, Rashti cuisine has not only carried on ancient recipes but also unique cooking utensils and methods.

While gastronomy fosters a sense of community and intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, it is also a key driver for sustainable

urban-rural interconnection and economic prosperity. In addition, Rasht offers a wide range of workshops and vocational training in the fields of gastronomy and agro-food, emphasizing sustainable ways of production and consumption of healthy food.

Iranian cuisine, usually dominated by fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

Experts say that food is not merely an organic product with biochemical compositions. However, for members of each community, food is defined as a cultural element.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is usually set with sabzi khordan, a basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

## Cultural heritage elements added to national list

TEHRAN – Two cultural elements, which are practiced across Iran for centuries, have recently been added to the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Sunday announced the inscriptions in separate letters it submitted to the governors-general of the 31 provinces across the country, IRNA reported.

The skill of making Sour (Torsh) Ash and the ritual of Aqiqeh were added to the prestigious list, the report added.

In Aqiqeh Ritual a newborn's parents sacrifice a sheep and share its meat with others, but they may not consume the meat themselves. Tradition holds that by performing this ritual the baby will not be harmed.

Ash is a thick Persian soup that varies in its ingredients depending on where it is made.

It originated in Persian culinary culture and has always been a popular dish at cultural events and family gatherings.

Preparing this dish in Iran is often associated with special occasions such as the Persian New Year, professional suc-

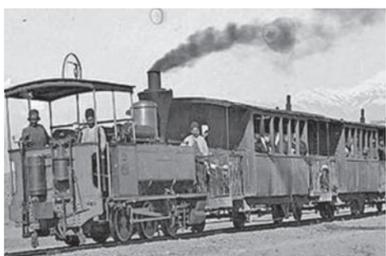


cess, or even mourning for a loved one.

This dish is often eaten during the winter or after a long day of fasting, due to the variety of nutritional components it contains. This is especially true during the winter season. There is no doubt that it is a complete dish and very rich in nutrients and vitamins, such as minerals and proteins.

It is worth mentioning that Ash Reshteh is by far the most popular one and is perhaps known all over the world as a typical sample of Iranian cuisine. It is a soup made with spinach, herbs, legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans, or kidney beans), thick spaghetti-like noodles, onions, dried mint, and kashk (curdled milk).

## 19th-century photos of Rey people, attractions to go on show



TEHRAN – Rey tourism directorate is set to organize a photo exhibition, which features people, monuments, and landscapes of the ancient Iranian city during the 19th-century.

"The exhibit will showcase a selection of 30 photographs and paintings of Cheshmeh-Ali, Tughrul Tower, Borj-e Khamoushan (Tower of Silence), and the holy shrines of Shah Abdol Azim and Bibi Shahr-Banu to name a few," Rey's tourism chief Noruz Taqipour said on Saturday.

The one-week exhibition will commence

on Thursday, the official said.

Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE) and it was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was rivaled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Islamic writers described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience (glazed earthenware). It continued to be an important city and was briefly a capital under the rule of the Seljuqs, but in the 12th century, it was weakened by the fierce quarrels of rival religious sects.

In 1220 the city was almost entirely destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.

## Indigenous relics, historical documents on show in southern Iran

TEHRAN – A cultural heritage exhibition featuring Hormozgan province's indigenous relics, handicrafts, and historical documents is currently underway in southern Iran.

Titled "Hormozgan in the course of history" the three-day event turns the spotlight on various archaeological excavations being conducted across the province as well.

Bordering the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman on the south and bounded by Bushehr and Fars provinces on the west and northwest, Kerman on the east and northeast, and Sistan-Baluchestan on the southeast, Hormozgan is widely renowned for having incredible culture and heritage, stunning sceneries, and above all its warm and hospitable people.

It embraces arrays of islands among which Kish, Hor-



muz, Hengam, and Qeshm are the most popular ones and top tourist destinations in the southernmost parts of the country.

Over the past couple of decades, the coral Kish Island has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop, and sample a laid-back

and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever-growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks, and retail complexes.

Hormuz, which is mostly barren and hilly, is situated some eight kilometers off the coast on the Strait of Hormuz,

which attracts many tourists by its colorful mountains, silver sand shores, and great local people.

Hengam Island has scenery rocky shores, serene sunset, and kind natives, which can attract travelers who enjoy a relaxing trip by spending time on this tranquil island.

Qeshm Island is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. The island also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves, and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a haven for nature-lovers.

The exhibition will be running through December 14 in Bandar Abbas, the provincial capital.

# 51 Iranian universities in ISC world rankings

TEHRAN – A total of 51 universities from Iran have been listed in the Islamic World University Rankings 2021 announced by the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC).

ISC is the third internationally accredited citation center established in Iran based on a resolution adopted in 2008 by the 4th Meeting of the Islamic Ministers of Higher Education (ICMHE) in Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to index, evaluate and publish scientific productions in Islamic countries.

In "ISC world university rankings by subject" includes 4 major criteria of Education, Research, International Activity, and Innovation.

In the 2021 ranking, 2,300 universities from 107 countries and 6 continents are present, of which 51 universities are from Iran. Meanwhile, 46 universities from Iran participated in the ISC 2020 global ranking, ISC head Mohammad Javad Dehqani said.

University of Tehran (401-450) is in the first place, Tehran University of Medical Sciences (451-500) is in the second place, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Sharif University of Technology, and Tarbiat Modares University (601-700) placed jointly in the third place.

Amir Kabir University of Technology, Isfahan University of Technology, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz University, Ferdowsi



University of Mashhad, Iran University of Science, and Technology are among the top universities in this ranking.

In order to rank Islamic World Universities, the most important criteria are research (60 percent), innovation (15 percent), education (10 percent), and international activities (15 percent), he also explained.

Among 57 Islamic countries, a total of 303 universities from 27 are included in the ranking system, he said, noting, Turkey with 82 universities and Iran

with 51 are ranked among the top 10 universities of the list.

Referring to other Islamic countries in terms of the number of universities in the ranking, he stated that Malaysia (26 universities), Egypt and Saudi Arabia (21 universities), Indonesia (20 universities), Pakistan (19 universities), Morocco (9 universities) were in the list.

Among the top universities in Islamic countries, Saudi Arabia got the best rank of 139, followed by Egypt, Malaysia, and Iran.

## Iranian universities making progress

Most recently, fifteen universities from Iran have been listed among the best institutions worldwide, by the U.S. News and World Report Best Global Universities rankings 2022.

Also, the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Graduate Employability Rankings 2022 list has been released, which included three Iranian universities out of a total of 550 institutes worldwide that highlighted graduate employment processes.

Some 41 Iranian universities in engineering sciences and 12 universities in computer sciences have made a place among the top 1,188 universities in the world with the announcement of Higher Education World University Rankings 2022 by subject.

It also has introduced 59 Iranian universities among the top institutions in World University Rankings 2022.

The THE Education Young University Rankings 2021 listed 26 Iranian institutions among the world's best universities that are 50 years old or younger.

Moreover, some 34 Iranian universities and institutions were listed among the top 1,000 in the world, according to Shanghai Ranking's Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2021.

Some 2,300 universities from 107 countries are listed in the ranking, 51 of which are from Iran.

## Zagros forests to be rejuvenated

TEHRAN – A campaign has been launched to attract public participation for planting trees in line with reviving and protecting Zagros forests.

Zagros forests are among the most important natural resources of Iran, as it constitutes 40 percent of the country's forests, and play an important role in the production of a large part of the country's freshwater.

A campaign called "people's movement for a green Iran and each Iranian a tree" began on December 1 to evoke the people's participation in the revival of forests for 14 years, Kamran Pour-Moqaddam, an official with the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, said on Saturday.

In this campaign, the role of people in forest restoration has been identified and cultural issues for the restoration and protection of natural resources are promoted by implementing different projects, he further stated.

Now, the implementation of this project has started in 11 provinces of Zagros and 74 cities, and we hope that it will continue in the whole country. West Azarbaijan, Hamedan, Kordestan, Ilam, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, Fars, and Khuzestan are the main provinces in the Zagros region where the

seeding project has started, he explained.

Reforestation operations are carried out through both seeding and planting, and we use seeds or seedlings depending on the location, tree species, and season of restoration. Now the sowing operation starts from autumn and at the same time with the first rains and continues until the frost season, and we continue to plant trees and seedlings, he further added.

One of the major problems in these forests is the drying up of oak trees and a fungal disease that has infected these trees. The main cause of this disease is the droughts that have occurred in recent years. The areas that were involved in this problem have been partially controlled by watershed management and forestry operations, but we need seeding and rehabilitation operations in this area, he said.

Sowing is done with native species of Zagros and does not require irrigation and is planted naturally and in accordance with the climate of the region. Therefore, we are not worried about using water resources, and rain and snow will cause these seeds to grow, he also noted.

In this popular movement, forest protection and maintenance are supposed to be the people's



responsibility, he concluded.

Zagros forest steppe ecoregion with an area of about 6 million hectares (3.5 percent of Iran) is located primarily in Iran, ranging northwest to southeast and roughly paralleling the country's western border. The forest constitutes 40 percent of the country's forested area. The forest has also been called western oak forest due to the dominance of oak species.

According to Science Direct Western, oak forests are home to many species including, the Persian squirrel which is the indicator species of this region. Persian squirrels and oak trees have symbiotic relationships, in which forests provide ecological requirements of Persian squirrels such as food and shelter and, in return, the Persian squirrel contributes to seed germination and forests' regeneration.

A wide variety of wildlife, including wolves, leopards, and even the Persian fallow deer which was once thought extinct have made their homes in the mountains.

Zagros forest steppe ecoregion with an area of about 6 million hectares (3.5 percent of Iran) is ranging northwest to southeast and western borders.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

#### All-Iranian COVID-19 diagnostic kits to be released within month

Iran will commercialize domestically-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits by the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22), secretary of biotechnology development of Vice Presidency for Science and Technology announced.

Following a call by the headquarters for the production of COVID-19 diagnostic kits, a contract was signed with five knowledge-based companies and manufacturing process began, ISNA quoted Mostafa Qane'ei as saying on Monday.

Diagnosis is the most important part of coronavirus treatment, he highlighted.

Patients suspected to coronavirus are currently being identified by diagnostic kits that have entered Iran in the form of assistance and purchases by the World Health Organization, China and UNICEF, he said.

So, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology decided to manufacture the kits domestically, he noted.

Existing imported kits are sufficient for the next two months but after this period we will be faced with shortages of kits, however, the domestic ones will enter the market, he concluded.

#### کیت‌های ایرانی تشخیص کووید ۱۹ ماه آینده روانه بازار می‌شوند

دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری گفت: کیت‌های تشخیصی کووید ۱۹، فروردین ماه وارد بازار می‌شوند.

مصطفی قانعی، دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، اظهار داشت: به دنبال فراخوان این ستاد برای ساخت کیت‌های آزمایشگاهی تشخیص کووید ۱۹، با پنج شرکت دانش‌بنیان برای ساخت این کیت‌ها قرارداد منعقد شده است.

تشخیص، مهم‌ترین راه‌ورود به درمان بیماری کرونا است. در حال حاضر بیماران مبتلا به کرونا به وسیله کیت‌های تشخیصی که در قالب مساعدت و خرید از طریق سازمان بهداشت جهانی، کشور چین و یونیسف وارد ایران شده‌اند شناسایی می‌شوند؛ اما ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری با انتشار فراخوانی از دانش‌بنیان‌های توانمند دعوت کرد تا به حوزه ساخت این کیت‌ها ورود کنند.

به گزارش از مرکز ارتباطات و اطلاع‌رسانی معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، وی افزود: کیت‌های وارد شده تا دو ماه آینده کافی هستند اما بعد از این مدت با کمبود کیت‌های تشخیص کرونا مواجه خواهیم شد. به همین دلیل با کمک توانمندی‌های داخلی این نیاز را مرتفع می‌کنیم.

## Ayatollah Khamenei calls for rebuilding health network

From page 1 ▶ He made the remarks in a meeting on Sunday with a group of exemplary nurses and families of healthcare workers who lost their lives in the fight against coronavirus.

During the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to a shortage of nurses in the country, saying that special attention should be paid to their job security, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic.

Pointing out to very good achievements of the health sector over the past years, he noted: "Of course, treatment is necessary, but prevention is better. So, the health network should be rebuilt and reinforced in order to improve medical services at lower costs."

"The nursing profession brings security and a feeling of surety. Whose surety? Firstly, the patient's. Secondly, the patient's family. Thirdly, all of the people's. Without nurses, everyone would feel anxious and be

worried."

In April 2020, Ayatollah Khamenei lauded the sacrifices made by health professionals, saying in fighting the coronavirus outbreak they have placed their lives and health at the service of the people.

He praised the Iranian nation's "shining" performance in the fight against the deadly coronavirus pandemic, which he described as a "test" facing the entire world.

"By enduring the hardship of being away from their family, even during the Nowruz holidays, and by tolerating the pressures resulting from treating patients in critical condition, the health professionals of the country placed their lives and their health at the service of the people."

"This very significant matter will leave a good memory in the minds of the people of Iran," added the Leader, according to his official website.

## Coastal species are forming colonies on plastic trash in the ocean, study finds

Masses of ocean plastic are providing artificial habitat for otherwise coastal species, according to a new study published in the peer-reviewed journal, Nature Communications.

The study's authors observed floating water bottles, old toothbrushes and matted fishing nets. The possibility exists that species may be evolving to better adapt to life on plastic, the Guardian reported.

A decade ago, marine researchers believed coastal organisms, which evolved to live along sheltered shorelines, could not survive a trip across the inhospitable open ocean. Yet Japan's 2011 tsunami, which sent some 300 species of Asian marine life riding durable and buoyant plastic garbage onto North American shores, disproved that assumption.

Now, researchers have a term for these drifters: "neopelagic communities", seafaring colonies of anemones, brittle stars, shrimp, barnacles and more, which are thriving on plastic in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and washing up wherever the currents take them.

Ocean plastic is "creating opportunities for coastal species' biogeography to greatly expand beyond what we previously thought was possible", Linsey Haram, a research associate at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and coauthor of the study, said in a release.

The concept of organism-encrusted plastic may sound like the story of ocean species triumphing in spite of human folly. But that's not quite the case, explains Juan José Alava, PhD, an expert in marine ecotoxicology and conservation at the Univer-



sity of British Columbia.

In addition to transporting non-native species to delicate habitats where they may become invasive and destructive, neopelagic communities are "basically an ecological trap" says Alava. That's because the sheer density of plastic in the ocean (researchers expect 600 metric tons of garbage will collect in the ocean by 2040) leads to the creation of permanent floating structures, covered in small species that attract creatures higher up the food chain, such as fish, turtles and mammals. When these creatures enter garbage gyres seeking shelter and food, they run a high risk of eating and/or becoming caught in plastic and dying. "For example, often the calves of whales, they are very curious – but that curiosity could lead them to get entangled and die," says Alava.

While scientists have found some types of bacteria are able to break down hydrocarbons in plastic, thereby cleaning up garbage, it's unlikely that the types of filter-feeding invertebrates thriving in neopelagic communities will have any such effect.

"The 2021 UN report after Cop26 was clear that the scale of rapidly increasing plastic pollution is putting the health of all the world's oceans and seas at risk," says Alava.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 12

New cases	2,289
New deaths	61
Total cases	6,154,813
Total deaths	130,722
New hospitalized patients	357
Patients in critical condition	3,104
Total recovered patients	5,969,591
Diagnostic tests conducted	40,054,772
Doses of vaccine injected	110,578,793



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DECEMBER 13, 2021

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Failures are often the results of timidity and fears; disappointments are the results of bashfulness; hours of leisure pass away like summer-clouds, therefore, do not waste opportunity of doing good.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon: 11:58 Evening: 17:12 Dawn: 5:35 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:05 (tomorrow)

## Iran: Persian literature

Part 11

The poems of two celebrated panegyrist dominated the 12th century and were regarded as the apogee of the form for later generations: the sophisticated odes of Anvari of Avivard (d. 1189), panegyrist at the court of Sultan Sanjar (1084-1157), and those of Khaqani from Shervan (d. 1199) in the Caucasus.

Towering figures in this genre, they both merit the title poeta doctus for being steeped in the sciences of their time. Khaqani was able to use the qasida and its related poetic forms to compose a poem of some 3,000 bays of great complexity.

Remorseful for coveting gold from his patrons, the poet sends the Sun (his alter ego, emblematic of his own vices and virtues) on a pilgrimage to the sacred sites of Islam to sing the praises of the Kaba and the Prophet.

Changes in urban life in the Seljuk period contributed to the evolution of the qasida. They were by then often composed outside the court and for a different audience, tending towards philosophical, mystical, and religious ruminations.

During the 13th century, the panegyric ode was largely supplanted by the ghazal, whose popularity grew rapidly during the Mongol period in Persia.

The divan of Sadi of Shiraz contains a number of accomplished panegyrics, but he also wrote ghazals of great beauty, excelling in this poetical form to such an extent that his successors took him as their model and master.

The ghazal: In Arabic, the word "ghazal" designates the love song of a male lover addressed to a woman.

The word taghazzol, from the same root, refers to the description of the sorrows of love, and the ghazal is thus essentially the elegiac plaint of the poet-lover.

In its form, the ghazal is similar to the qasida, but in content it confines itself to taghazzol, as defined above. In a qasida, the poet cites the name of his patron between the first and the second part of the poem, while in a ghazal, the poet's own name, or pen-name, appears at the end.

This shift in the name of the person addressed points to a fundamental difference between the qasida and the ghazal and their perspectives on the role of the persona of the poet.

As love lyrics, the ghazal often exploits the ambiguities that are born in the blurring of the distinction between sacred and profane love.

In the case of mystical ghazals too, the art of suggestion is often the key to the success of the poem. The ghazal flourished during the time of Rumi and Sadi. Both were indebted to Farid-al-Din Attar of Nishapur and Sanai of Ghazna. In the 14th century, Hafez used the ghazal almost as his sole medium for the manifestation of his poetic genius.

Hafez of Shiraz: As the successor to Sadi in the art of the ghazal, Hafez surpassed his master. He lived, like Sadi, in the courtly world of small principedoms, but in more politically fraught conditions.

He too kept company with several spiritual figures and mentors who have not yet been clearly identified. However, in contrast to Sadi, whose work contains many autobiographical details, combining fact and fiction, Hafez is

more introspective and allusive.

His divan, a monumental collection of poems (nearly five hundred ghazals), is the product of fifty years of intense creativity.

So impassioned is his expressive style that his words at once turn into a captivating song. A virtuoso of analogical language, so typical of Persian lyricism, Hafez followed the path of antinomian mystical poets weary of the false religiosity of many clerics but highly appreciative of those humane archetypes celebrated in the quatrains of Omar Khayyam.

The quatrain: Though unknown in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, the quatrain was already a very popular form of verse in Persian at the time of Rudaki, and there is evidence of its existence even before him.

For example, Ebn Khordadbeh in his Kitab al-masalek wal-mamalek cites an example composed before 844. Both its meter, a re-interpretation of the pre-Islamic accentual stress, and its possible early antecedents, the taraneh, a short sung poem of two lines and the do-bayti (a quatrain of sung poetry often in a dialect form) attest to its pre-Islamic origins.

Over more than ten centuries, most Persian poets tried their hand at composing quatrains. Its very brevity provided the ideal venue for a memorable and pithy statement and explains its wide popularity.

At the time of Abu Sa'id (d. 1049) and the celebrated quatrains attributed to him, another name too is worthy of mention: Baba Taher, who was still alive in 1055 when Toghril Beg entered his home town of Hamedan, according to a moralizing anecdote in Rahat al-sudur.

According to traditional accounts, he lived a solitary life in the mountains in the vicinity of Hamedan. His do-baytis were deemed significant enough to have merited a commentary by the famous spiritual figure from Hamedan, Ayn-al-Qozzat (executed in 1131).

The use of local dialects in his poetry has meant that they fall into the category of fahlaviyyat (poetry written in the old dialects of western and northwestern Persia).

It was the poet and mathematician Omar Khayyam from Nishapur (d. 1123) who made the Persian rubai world famous, particularly through Edward FitzGerald's adaptations into English.

Khayyam's bold spirit of enquiry and his questioning of accepted wisdom had a mixed and often hostile early reception in Persia. The earliest rubais attributed to Khayyam appear in isolated quotations in works by Fakhr ad-Din Razi (before 1210) and Najm ad-Din Razi (1223).

Gradually, a Khayyamian corpus of rubais appears in which the themes of mutability and transience and the need for resigned fortitude in the face of the celestial wheel appear in the foreground. The question of authenticity of the poems and the intrinsic 'wandering' nature of their transmission and authorship remain unresolved, but it is evident that Khayyam was the instigator of a way of thinking and an outlook which profoundly affected the course and content of Persian literature throughout its subsequent history.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

To be continued

# Works by Iranian modernists on display NYUAD Art Gallery

TEHRAN – Works by Iranian modernists created during the 1960s and 1970s are on display in an exhibition at the NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery.

Entitled "Modernisms", the exhibit is organized with Iranian as well as Turkish and Indian highlights from New York University's Abby Weed Grey Collection, the organizers have announced.

One of the Iranian artworks is a bronze sculpture from Parviz Tanavoli's Heech series.

"Mosques of Isfahan", an ink, watercolor, and gold and silver paint on paper by Faramarz Pilaram, is another Iranian artwork selected for the exhibition, which will be running until February 5, 2022.

Another Iranian highlight is "Flowers", an oil painting on canvas by Monir Farmanfarman.

Abby Weed Grey, a North American collector, made multiple trips abroad in the 1960s and early 1970s, to explore and collect modern art from across Asia.

She made eight trips to Iran, and four trips each to India and Turkey, where she bought the

prints, drawings, paintings and sculptures that set up the nucleus of her collection of modern Asian art, housed at New York University's Grey Art Gallery.

The exhibition also showcases the collector's personal letters, journals, invoices, catalogs, invitations and photographs from the Abby Weed Grey Papers in the NYU Archives.

The archives illustrate how these artists drew on their specific heritages while also engaging in global discourses around key issues of modernity.

This is the first physical exhibition in the gallery since it moved to virtual programs in the spring of 2020, the organizers have announced.

"We are excited to welcome the local community back to The NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery with an exhibition of such historical significance and regional relevance," said Maya Allison, chief curator at NYU Abu Dhabi and Executive Director of The NYUAD Art Gallery.

"Abby Weed Grey's goal was to promote international artistic exchange in an academic setting," she stated and added, "NYU's Abby Weed



"Mosques of Isfahan" by Faramarz Pilaram is one of the Iranian artworks on view in "Modernisms" at the NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery.

Grey Collection is a great example of how the act of collecting today becomes part of future art histories, and can make possible true cultural dialogue, through the stories that each of these artworks brings to us."

"Modernisms" was first organized in New York City in 2019, and then traveled to the Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University in the U.S. before making its way to the UAE.

## Iranian films line up for Sofia MENAR festival



Hedyeh Tehrani and Baran Kowsari act in a scene from "Without Anything" directed by Mohsen Qarai.

TEHRAN – Eight movies by Iranian filmmakers will be screening at the 14th Sofia Middle East and North Africa Region Film Festival in Bulgaria.

"Without Anything" by Mohsen Qarai is a highlight of the Iranian lineup.

It is about a rich woman who arrives in her home village, which she has not visited for 20 years. Many

locals have already moved to the city, and the rest are in poverty. Residents hope the newcomer will revive the village and bring back the smiles on their faces. But it has one condition that will become a real challenge for locals.

Directed by Mohsen Rezaei, "The Tortoise & the Snail" is also among the films. It is the story of a clash of generations.

The mother of 10-year-old Pedram will not stop controlling her son. The boy dreams of being independent and often does the exact opposite of what his mother wants. One day, Pedram meets an unknown man, in whose face he sees his savior. Will this meeting change the boy's worldview and how will the new friendship affect him?

Another film is "Atabai" directed by Niki Karimi. It takes us into a world of tradition, hopes and expectations.

Kazem returns from a business trip to discover that his brother-in-law has sold his orchard to a stranger, Shirazi. Kazem finds himself falling in love with Shirazi's daughter but first must face his past.

With its intertwined use of Azerbaijani and Farsi languages, alongside the fabulous landscapes of northwest Iran, this film brings a fresh perspective to Iranian cinema and seeks to build bridges between generations and communities.

The festival also will screen "Crows". Directed by Naqi Nemati, the film follows Yasha, a loner who spends all day wandering in nature looking for birds to hunt and sell. One day the loner comes across a corpse. Yasha recognizes one of the wealthy residents of the city, who has been declared wanted. The man decides to make easy money by blackmailing the victim's family, but his plans go awry.

Also included are "Absence", a co-production from Iran, Slovakia and Czech by Ali Mosaffa, "No Choice" by Reza Dormishian, "Once Upon a Time in Iran", a co-production from Iran and Afghanistan by Gholamreza Jafari, and "When Pomegranates Howl", a co-production from Afghanistan, Iran and Australia by Granaza Musavi.

The Sofia MENAR Film Festival will take place in the Bulgarian capital from January 14 to 30.

## Another Persian rendition of "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" comes to Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – Another Persian translation of Quentin Tarantino's debut novel "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" has recently come to Iranian bookstores.

The book has been published by Saleh with translation by Farshad Sahrai. The first Persian rendition by Alireza Shafinasab was published by Moon a few weeks ago.

"Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" is a novelization of Tarantino's 2019 film of the same name. It debuted at number one on The New York Times fiction bestseller list.

Tarantino has said that the novel is "a complete rethinking of the entire



Front cover of a new Persian translation of Quentin Tarantino's novel "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood".

story" and adds details to various sequences and characters, including multiple chapters dedicated to the backstory of Cliff Booth.

The novel also departs from the

film; the film's finale occurs towards the beginning of the novel, and its aftermath includes Rick Dalton earning newfound fame as a regular on "The Tonight Show Starring

Johnny Carson".

It also focuses on Charles Manson's pursuit of a music career and the "inner worlds" of Sharon Tate and Trudi Frazier.

There is a chapter dedicated to the Manson Family's "creepy crawls". In it, Manson instructs "Pussycat" to break into a wealthy, elderly couple's house while they are sleeping.

Manson encouraged going into wealthy unvacated homes, which the Manson girls would enter and steal valuables. He taught them to wear dark clothing and "crawl" through the house. The term "creepy crawl" was invented by the Manson girls.

## Isaac Asimov's short story series Azazel published in Persian

TEHRAN – American writer Isaac Asimov's series of fantasy short stories "Azazel" has been published in Persian.

Payman Esmaeiliian is the translator of the series published by Peydayesh.

Azazel is a character created by Asimov and featured in the series. Azazel is a two-centimeter-tall demon (or extraterrestrial), named after the Biblical demon.

Some of these stories were collected in Azazel, first published in 1988. The stories take the form of conversations between an unnamed writer (whom Asimov identifies in the collection introduction as himself) and a shiftless friend named George (named in "The Two-Centimeter Demon" as George Bitternut).

At these meetings, George tells how he is able to conjure up Azazel and their adventures together.

George's greatest goal in life is a free lunch (or

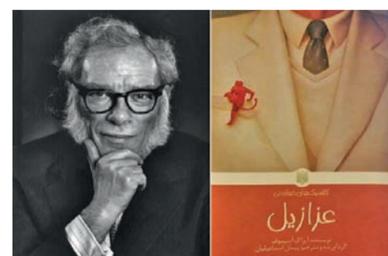
dinner, or ride, etc.), but Azazel is constrained so that he cannot directly benefit George.

George can only call upon Azazel for favors to various friends, which invariably go awry. The stories' theme about a demon or alien that grants wish echoes an earlier work by Lester del Rey, titled "No Strings Attached" from 1954.

"Getting Even" (1980) was the first story featuring Azazel, and was also the first "Union Club Mystery".

Asimov stated that this story was omitted from both "The Union Club Mysteries" (1983) and the Azazel collection because it did not match the later stories in either series. However, it does appear in another anthology, "Tales from the Spaceport Bar".

"Perfectly Formal" (1991) was a story within a story, purportedly written by a robot called Cal. It appeared in a story (also called "Cal") about a robot who learns how to write stories. "Cal" appeared in



This combination photo shows Isaac Asimov and the front cover of the Persian translation of his series "Azazel".

the collection "Gold".

Asimov was a highly successful and prolific writer of science fiction and of science books for the layperson. He wrote or edited about 500 volumes, of which the most famous are those in the Foundation and robot series.