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## U.S. Hostile Maneuvering Impinges on Vienna Talks

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### Report

#### Will Britain's PM resign as scandals rise?

TEHRAN - It's not going too well for the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. According to the latest opinion polls, his popularity has fallen to its lowest level since he took over as the country's leader. A YouGov suggests Johnson's net favorability level stands at -42, down 11 points since mid-November. And it follows a series of what appears like never-ending scandals.

This is while the net favorability of the main opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer is virtually unchanged at -14. This loss for Johnson has taken its toll on his ruling Conservative party which has taken a hit in popularity as well. The opinion polls show the Tories have lost their lead to the main opposition Labour party. In a snap poll for Savanta ComRes, A majority (54%) of British adults questioned after the allegations came to light said Johnson should resign. In 2019, Johnson won a landslide election victory but has is now struggling with scandals, the most recent of which was the emergence of a video showing his colleagues laughing and joking about Christmas Parties they held last year.

When reports emerged that parties were held at Downing Street, the PM's official residence, other government buildings and at the Conservative Party's headquarters at the end of 2020, the UK premier denied any wrongdoing. When video evidence emerged, the headlines took a turn for the worst. Pictures released by a British national newspaper shows Johnson sat without a mask in close proximity with aides playing games for staff during the Covid lockdowns. Meanwhile, footage obtained by British media shows Johnson's now-former spokeswoman laughing and joking during the rehearsal for a press conference when being asked about one of the parties. She later publicly resigned in tears following the leak. ► Page 5

#### Budget bill allocates \$444m to childbearing, family support plans

TEHRAN - The national budget bill for the next [Iranian calendar] calendar year (to begin on March 20, 2022) has proposed 120 trillion rials (nearly \$444 million) to implement childbearing and family support plans in the country.

The budget will be provided to four responsible bodies of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, and the Presidential Office.

The decline in the marriage rate, followed by a dramatic decrease in childbearing, has sounded the alarm of the aging population, an issue that has forced government officials to enact legislation to support the population growth and the youth.

By a decree issued by President Ebrahim Raisi, the "Law on Family and Youth Support" approved by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) was notified to the Ministry of Health and the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs.

The Guardian Council approved the law on November 17 to implement a population growth and family support plan for 7 years to change the declining trend of childbearing.

The plan stipulates health insurance for infertile couples, providing services and facilities to working women, providing health and nutrition support packages to mothers and children, educational opportunities for student mothers, providing livelihood support to families, and ongoing medical services to pregnant women. ► Page 7



#### Israeli PM visit to UAE detrimental to regional peace

TEHRAN — Naftali Bennett is the first Israeli premier to visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He is seeking to strengthen ties with the Emirates at a complicated time.

A year after the ties between Israel and the UAE were normalized, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the

UAE's de facto leader, met with Bennett.

Israel's prime minister stated that he wished to strengthen economic and commercial relations.

He was also anticipated to call on the UAE to adopt a firmer position in response to Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

When Bennett landed in Abu Dhabi on Sunday night, he was greeted by the UAE's foreign minister and an honor guard.

According to the official WAM news agency, Sheikh Mohammed expressed optimism that the visit will "advance the relationship of cooperation towards further good" ► Page 2

#### 4,000 new industrial units established in Iran in 7 months

TEHRAN - As announced by the deputy industry, mining, and trade minister, 4,000 new industrial units have been put into operation in the country during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22).

Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, the deputy minister for the industrial affairs, also noted that the mentioned units have created jobs for

over 90,000 people, indicating a 15-percent growth year on year.

"In spite of all the problems, the industrialists of our country were able to achieve a proper growth in the industrial sector by developing domestic production", the official further underscored.

Referring to the increase in producer inflation, the deputy minister said: "In a situation

where most sectors were struggling with recession, the production in 15 fields out of 25 selected industrial fields has been increasing."

Back in mid-November, the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), had said that more than 887 units had been revived since the beginning of the current Iranian year. ► Page 4



#### Iran's top ritual, traditional plays of the year honored

TEHRAN - Top performances of the 20th Traditional and Ritual Theater Festival were honored on Sunday evening at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

"Jik-o-Buk" by Shapur Turkamani Sarabi, "In mourning for the 1001st Night of the Storyteller Scheherazade" by Shahram Ahmadzadeh and "The Story of the Person Who Showed Patience and Saw the Divine Hikmah and the Sultan's Kindness" by Nima Jahanpur were selected as best plays. ► Page 8

#### Mashhad handicrafts market seen to flourish in post-coronavirus era

TEHRAN - A boom is expected in the handicrafts market of Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, when the coronavirus crisis is finally over, a local tourism official has announced.

Upon the end of the coronavirus outbreak and with the arrival of tourists, the market for handicrafts in Mashhad will flourish, Hossein Amirkalali said on Monday.

Since the handicraft market is dependent on tourists, the increase in tourist arrivals will produce economic indicators, particularly GDP, along with the production and sale of handicraft products, which will be economic results from tourism, he noted.

Handicrafts are close to the field of tourism and can significantly affect the growth of tourism in the province, especially in Mash-

had, the official added.

In addition to its capacity to attract pilgrims and travelers, Mashhad's status as a world city of gemstones means it is able to attract small businesses and small handicraft workshops with a small investment that can create jobs swiftly and profitably for the city and province, he explained. ► Page 6

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#### Chances to restore JCPOA have increased: Ryabkov

TEHRAN - Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has said the chances of reaching an agreement on restoring the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have increased.

"I think that now, the likelihood that we will come to an agreement has increased compared to what it was before the resumption of negotiations. I would rather say that there are reasons to expect some progress, not fast but at least clear, without any kickbacks and additional factors that can complicate [the situation]," Ryabkov told Sputnik.

Aside from this, the proposals put forward by Iran at the Vienna talks on the JCPOA, according to Ryabkov, demonstrate Tehran's utmost seriousness about restoring the nuclear deal.

"There are other proposals presented not only by Iran. Negotiations are for finding a common denominator. It is not hopeless. On the contrary, there is material for consideration. As for the Iranian proposals, I can only say one thing — they have demonstrated the utmost seriousness of their approach to the task," Ryabkov said.

At the same time, the deputy foreign minister noted that it is counterproductive to threaten Iran with sanctions against the backdrop of the nuclear talks in Vienna - something the U.S. is doing.

"This is their usual method — trying to drive someone to heaven with sticks. We constantly explain to the Americans the counterproductivity of this approach," Ryabkov said.

Ali Bagheri Kani, Iran's chief negotiator to the Vienna talks, has said the Iranian side will continue its intensive and serious engagement in negotiations with representatives of the P4+1 group (the current four permanent members of the UN Security Council - Britain, France, Russia, and China - plus Germany) in Vienna in order to work out a good agreement. ► Page 2

#### Japanese artist Jun Matsubara shows his interest in Iran on canvas

TEHRAN - Urban spaces and Iranian historical sites are the subjects of a collection by Japanese painter Jun Matsubara who has never visited the country so far.

A portion of his collection was showcased at the Iran-Japan Cultural Exchange Exhibition organized in Tokyo in July by Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and the Iran Cultural Center in Tokyo.

"Beautiful Iran", which depicts a view of Imam Mosque in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, was one of the works.

In an interview with the Iran Cultural Center, which was published on Monday, 62-year-old Matsubara said, "Organizing the exhibition caused me to find a new perspective on Iran, and my plan to do the painting required more serious study due to the fact that so far I have never visited Iran." ► Page 8



## Chances to restore JCPOA have increased: Ryabkov



From page 1 ▶ “This afternoon I held a constructive & fruitful meeting with Russian & Chinese chief negotiators. We shared ideas about how to proceed & also coordinated our positions about several issues,” Bagheri Kani wrote in a post published on his Twitter page on Sunday evening, according to Press TV.

“We will continue our intensive & serious engagement to reach a good deal,” added Bagheri Kani, who serves as Iran’s deputy foreign minister for political affairs.

Earlier, Bagheri Kani said the general atmosphere in the ongoing Vienna negotiations is very serious, adding that he is optimistic that a final agreement would be reached.

“The atmosphere in the negotiations is very serious and this atmosphere has governed the talks since we arrived here ... but at the same time, there is mutual respect and the overall view is that both sides want to clinch an agreement,” he said in an interview with the Iran’s state TV.

Bagheri Kani added that Iran and the remaining signatories to the JCPOA are holding talks on a host of issues during the seventh round of the negotiations and have reached agreements on some of them, though a comprehensive agreement has not been yet reached on many issues.

The most important points of contention that remain unresolved are removal of “the illegal and cruel” U.S. sanctions and Iran’s nuclear measures, Bagheri Kani stated.

“These differences are clearly visible in the final draft that was achieved following the sixth round of talks in Vienna... The differences, especially on the nuclear issue, are numerous and varied,” he stated.

Bagheri Kani noted that during the past few days, many sessions have been held both at the expert level and among chief negotiators to discuss modifications, viewpoints, and proposals offered by the Iranian side, which

Iranians have “demonstrated the utmost seriousness” in reaching agreement, Russia says

had been applied to the text of drafts drawn up during the sixth round of the talks.

“These talks have been positive and moving forward,” Iran’s top negotiator concluded.

Meanwhile, Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s lead negotiator to the talks, has blasted the distortion of his remarks about the negotiations in the Austrian capital.

“Many diplomats don’t like to give interviews in order to be on the safe side. Probably they are right,” lamented the Russian diplomat in a tweet on Sunday night.

“This evening I was in rush but provided comments to journalists at their request. I was misinterpreted. Be aware that I assessed positively, not negatively the position of Iran,” he clarified.

Ulyanov’s tweet came after a London-based Persian language news network quoted him as saying, “So far, what we have witnessed during the negotiations is a wasting of time by the Iranian side.”

The Persian language network later deleted the tweet that contained Ulyanov’s distorted remarks, but thus far has failed to offer any explanation or apology.

The JCPOA was abandoned by former U.S. president Donald Trump in May 2018. Trump then targeted Iran’s economy with what he called a “maximum pressure” campaign, which failed to compel Iran to negotiate a “new deal.”

Iran and the five remaining parties to the JCPOA began the talks in the Austrian capital in April with the aim of removing the sanctions after the U.S., under President Joe Biden, voiced willingness to return to the agreement.

During the seventh round of the talks, the first under President Ebrahim Raeisi, Iran presented two draft texts which address, separately, the removal of U.S. sanctions and Iran’s return to its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA. Tehran also said it was preparing a third draft text on the verification of the sanctions removal.

Prior to and in the midst of the fresh round of talks, American and European diplomats voiced strong pessimism about the prospects of the talks, claiming Iran was not serious.

The Americans, in the meantime, have said they will not lift all the sanctions that they have slapped on Iran after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA. They have also declined to provide guarantees that Washington will not leave the JCPOA again, once it is accepted back into the deal.

## Iran rejects reopening mission in Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN — Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini, the spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament, has said preliminary talks are underway at expert level between Iran and Saudi Arabia and preparations must be completed for talks at diplomatic level.

Meshkini added that only then Iran will enter into an official dialogue with Saudi Arabia.

About the issues raised regarding the reopening of the Iranian mission in Saudi Arabia, the parliamentarian said, “The reopening of the Iranian mission in Saudi Arabia is not true and this issue has not been on the agenda of the meeting.”

News about reopening of Iran’s mission in Saudi Arabia has been circulated in media in recent days. It has been reported that in the recent meeting of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, it was agreed to reopen the Iranian mission in Jeddah in a few days to follow Iran’s diplomatic work in Saudi Arabia.

The spokesman stressed that the reopening of the Iranian missions should be discussed in official talks and then it should be agreed that the sides have or have not yet reached that stage of formal talks.

## Defusing tensions, forming ‘strategic partnership’ with neighbors are a priority: security chief

TEHRAN - In a meeting with the Iranian ambassadors in neighboring and regional countries as well as border governors on Monday afternoon, Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani said “defusing tensions” and allaying any concerns and establishing “strategic partnership” with neighbors are among the priorities of Iran.

Shamkhani also said Iran is seeking comprehensive economic, defensive and security cooperation with neighbors.

He insisted on the need to adopt policies that would reinforce cooperation between regional countries, particularly Iran’s interaction with neighbors.

The growth of ties with neighbors should be assessed and the performance of diplomats in neighboring countries and border governors should be “measured” in this regard, Shamkhani suggested.

The security chief added it is necessary to tap all capacities to realize such a goal.

**FM says border trade level insufficient**

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir

Abdollahian and Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi also addressed the gathering of the ambassadors to neighboring regional countries and border governors on Sunday.

The Secretary of the Free Zones High Council, Saeed Mohammad, and the chairman of the Parliament Councils and Internal Affairs Committee, Mohammad Saleh Jokar, were also present at the meeting.

Amir Abdollahian outlined the government’s foreign policy plan to activate relations with neighbors in efforts to develop trade and tourism.

The chief diplomat said that the Foreign Ministry has offices in 29 of the 31 provinces of the country, which in the past were mostly devoted to consular affairs, but now the focus of the ministry and its offices in the provinces is economic.

Unfortunately, foreign trade, especially in border areas, is not commensurate to the capacities of Iran, Amir Abdollahian remarked.

He also asked the governors of border provinces to help remove the obstacles for trade and tourism.

At the meeting, the interior minister also referred to the importance of

TEHRAN — Iran’s Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri announced on Monday that he has met with military officials from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

He made these remarks after his meeting with Oman’s Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning Brigadier Abdulaziz Abdullah al-Mandhari, where they discussed developing military cooperation.

Abdullah al-Mandhari is heading a delegation in Iran to promote military and international cooperation.

Promoting training and military relations, fighting terrorism, and safeguarding the region without intervention of foreigners were on top of the agenda of the meeting.

After the meeting, Bagheri referred to the long-standing relations between the two countries, saying Iran’s strategy is to develop comprehensive relations with Oman, which is an “unchangeable policy”.

He added, “Oman has played a good role in mediating and calming the situation in coordination with Iran in all regional events and in communications and interactions, and this process is commendable.”

Iran and Oman have established good cooperation in maritime security, promoting security in the Sea of Oman, the Strait of Hormuz, the Arabian Sea, as well as the issues pertaining to the Yemen crisis and other regional events, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces added, suggesting this cooperation should be reinforced day by day.

Bagheri continued, “On the issue of relations between the two countries’ armed forces, a friendship commission has been formed, which can be a good platform to increase cooperation, and holding the sixteenth round of these trips shows the depth of relations between the two countries.”



## Iran’s military chief: We met with Saudi, UAE officials

General Bagheri says some misunderstandings with UAE and Saudi Arabia have been cleared up

He expressed hope that by holding these meetings, the relations of Iran’s Armed Forces with Oman will expand more and more.

The military chief stated that Iran’s Armed Forces are considered as an independent and self-reliant force in various military fields, given that they have been under sanctions for a long time.

Bagheri added, “The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran are ready to cooperate with Oman in the fields of training, defense industry, health and engineering, and also to share their experiences in various fights against terrorism with the Armed Forces of Oman.”

He stated that the Armed Forces are also active in developing the country’s economic infrastructure and are ready to take responsibility in the field of construction of various projects in Oman.

Referring to the de-escalation policy of Iran in the region, the top general said, “On regional issues, we have had meetings with officials of the Emirates and Saudi Arabia, and some misunderstandings have been cleared up. We also have good relations with Qatar and Kuwait.”

General Bagheri added that there is not much contact with Bahrain yet, and Oman can definitely play a role in this regard.

“The Islamic Republic is fully

prepared to develop its relations with its neighbors and resolve misunderstandings when the new government is in office,” he stressed.

“We hope that Islamic countries have brotherly and friendly relations and that the previous disputes won’t lead to the abuse by foreigners,” the senior commander added.

Referring to the destructive effects of the presence of foreigners in the region, Bagheri said that Iran believes that the countries of the region have the full ability to establish security and defend their interests through cooperation.

The presence of foreign armies in the region will spread insecurity, he noted.

The military official added, “The Americans and Europeans know that the only way to stay in the region is to create discord and conspiracy between the countries of the region, and in this regard, they are acting in line with their own interests through Iranophobia and creating an illusion of threats from Iran.”

According to Bagheri, in this way, they create disputes to sell weapons, and in fact do not contribute to the security of the region.

“If these issues are solved, we will be able to establish security in the region with the cooperation and interaction of our neighbors,” he remarked.

The major general expressed surprise over the so-called normalization deals with Israel, saying, “The surprising point is that some countries in the south of the Persian Gulf have established relations with the Zionist regime. The enmity of the Zionist regime with the Islamic world and the Muslims of the region is not hidden from anyone, and establishing relationship, with the insistence of the United States and the conspiracies they are carrying out, will definitely lead to a troubled future for the region.”

## Israeli PM visit to UAE detrimental to regional peace

From page 1 ▶ steps in the interests of the people of the two nations and the region.”

Israeli media outlets reported that Bennett has visited to the UAE to discuss a possible sale of the Iron Dome technology to the UAE.

Iron Dome is the name for the Israeli aerial defense system, which failed miserably during the 12-day war with Gaza in May of the current year.

The visit comes as Jordan state news agency Petra reported on Monday that Iran and Saudi Arabia security officials have met in Amman and discussed missile program and cooperation in the field of nuclear fuel in detail.

Iran’s military chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri also said late on Monday that he has met with Saudi and Emirati officials in order to boost regional security ties.

However, he expressed his surprise over

the “normalization” of ties between southern Persian Gulf countries and Israel, noting that peace in the West Asia region cannot be achieved with the presence of Israel in the region.

“The surprising point is that some countries in the south of the Persian Gulf have established relations with the Zionist regime. The enmity of the Zionist regime with the Islamic world and the Muslims of the region is not hidden from anyone, and establishing relationship, with the insistence of the United States and the conspiracies they are carrying out, will definitely lead to a troubled future for the region,” the top commander remarked.

Iran has always welcomed peace and de-escalation in the region, but it is crystal clear that Israel’s presence in the region is detrimental to peace as the Israeli regime is actively trying to sabotage the ongoing nuclear deal talks between Iran, the P4+1 (Russia, China, France, UK, and Germany) and

the United States in Vienna by threatening to take military action against Iran.

On Thursday, Israeli war minister Benny Gantz met his American counterpart Lloyd Austin, saying that Iran is “playing poker with a bad hand.”

Austin also played along, saying that the United States is prepared for other options if the Vienna talks fail.

“We share Israel’s deep concerns about the Iranian government’s destabilizing actions, including its support for terrorism and its missile program, and its alarming nuclear advances,” Austin said.

He then stated that Biden is prepared to take other options, noting, “The president has made clear that if the policy fails, we are prepared to turn to other options.”

These destructive moves will not help the United States achieve results in Vienna. Diplomacy will finally prevail.



paying attention to neighboring countries, mentioning the many opportunities available in the region.

Vahidi expressed hope that the heads of Iran’s missions in neighboring countries and the border governors would use all the existing capacities in the region and increase mobility with a joint plan for comprehensive cooperation with neighboring countries.

For his part, Saeed Mohammad enumerated the existing capacities in the free trade zones and the neglected benefits.

In the meeting, Jokar stressed the readiness of the parliament to

cooperate with the Foreign Ministry and the Interior Ministry to promote cooperation in the field of relations with neighboring countries.

The heads of the missions of Iran in neighboring countries and border governors also expressed their views and suggestions in detail, and at the end the heads of missions in the form of working groups discussed their dealings with neighboring provinces and neighboring countries.

The new Ebrahim Raisi administration has prioritized ties with neighboring and regional countries in line with the “look to the East” policy.

Speaking in a meeting with the heads of the missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in neighboring countries, President Raisi said Tehran views as “strategic” the notion of strengthening relations with neighboring countries.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told IRIB News on Saturday that openings have taken place in some monetary and financial fields with some neighboring countries, and some openings are being pursued in the coming days.

Khatibzadeh added, “Over the last hundred days, from the beginning of President Raisi’s administration, we have practically expanded our economic relations with Tajikistan to 2.5 to 3 times more than before.”

With regards to Turkmenistan, Iran was also able to remove the obstacles to trade exchanges in the recent visit of President Raisi to Turkmenistan, he added.

The diplomat said Iran has 15 neighbors and the president will soon visit each one of them.

“The president’s visit to each of these countries is planned and soon some of the leaders of these countries, including Turkey, will come to Tehran,” he added.



# U.S. hostile maneuvering impinges on Vienna talks

TEHRAN – The U.S. is not a party to the ongoing Vienna talks aimed at disposing of its sanctions on Iran but its absent presence continues to make things difficult in terms of making progress.

Ever since the resumption of the Vienna talks nearly two weeks ago, the U.S. has done everything in its power to blame Iran for the manufactured failure of the talks. Before the new round of talks, the Americans launched an early blame game which continues to this day. They accused Iran of not being serious and, even worse, playing for time to build up its nuclear infrastructure.

When it came to light that Iran is dead serious about making a “good” and even “swift” agreement, the U.S. began stonewalling. In a bid to pave the way for result-oriented talks, Iran presented two draft proposals carefully crafted in strict conformity with the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Instead of studying and building on the Iranian proposals, the U.S. joined forces with the Europeans to brush aside them and when failed to do so by dint of Iran’s insistence on the need to address the proposals, they doubled down on their stonewalling.

During the short break that took place in the talks at the request of Western parties last week, Washington took a number of stances that cast a shadow of doubt on the Biden



administration’s seriousness in pursuing result-oriented talks.

Last week on Thursday, while negotiators from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries – France, Britain, China, Russia plus Germany – were descending on Vienna for a consequential round of talk, a White House spokesperson announced that President Joe Biden has asked his national security team to prepare other options in the event the Vienna talks failed to culminate in an agreement.

“We believe a diplomatic resolution offers the best path to avoiding a nuclear crisis. However, given the ongoing advances in Iran’s nuclear program, the President has asked his team to be prepared in the event that diplomacy fails and we must turn to other options, and that requires preparations,” White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a press briefing.

In the meantime, the U.S. negotiating team led by Iran envoy Rob Malley refused to come to Vienna on time. Press reports suggested that Malley’s behavior was intended to amplify a privately conveyed American message to Iran that the U.S. will withdraw from the talks if Iran continued to insist on a new agenda for the talks.

To make things even worse, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a bipartisan bill targeting Iran’s domestic development of drones. The bill, officially known as Stop Iranian Drones Act (SIDA), bans the supply, sale or transfer to or from Iran of unmanned combat aerial vehicles.

The new U.S. measure came on the heels of U.S. sanctions on a number of Iranian individuals and institutions in connection with alleged “serious human rights abuse and repressive acts targeting innocent civilians, political opponents, and peaceful

protestors.”

Also, the U.S. Department of Justice claimed that the U.S. seized approximately 1.1 million barrels of Iranian petroleum products as well as two large caches of Iranian arms allegedly bound for Yemen.

“These actions represent the government’s largest-ever forfeitures of fuel and weapons shipments from Iran,” the Justice Department said in a statement.

The U.S. moves raised alarm bells in Vienna as they came at a delicate moment for the Iran talks. The U.S. measures against Iran impinged on the talks in Vienna. The Iranian delegation and some other delegations protested the measures. Presenting a litany of U.S. hostile measures taken against Iran during various rounds talks, the Iranian side made it clear that Washington cannot claim it wants a return to the JCPOA while doubling down on sanctions and the so-called “maximum pressure” campaign initiated by former U.S. President Donald Trump, who first set off the current dispute by unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA in May 2018 and imposing blanket sanctions on Tehran.

As things stand, the U.S. pressing ahead with its hostile measures will most likely affect the talks in a negative way. Many believe that the U.S. needs to meet diplomacy with diplomacy, not empty threats and hostile measures that have proven unconstructive in dealing with Iran.

## Iran received no proposals from other side in Vienna: top negotiator

TEHRAN – Despite having presented two draft proposals in the Vienna talks, Iran has received no proposals from the other side, the top Iranian negotiator said on Sunday.

Ali Bagheri Kani, the deputy foreign minister of Iran who leads the Iranian negotiating team in Vienna, said the talks, however, are moving forward.

In remarks to Press TV on Sunday, Bagheri Kani pointed out that the Iranian side has not received any constructive initiative or proposal from the opposite side during the ongoing negotiations in the Austrian capital.

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 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally called 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.

Removal of the illegal and cruel U.S. sanctions and Iran’s nuclear activities are two main sticking points in the talks.

Bagheri Kani said despite this situation, Iran’s delegation has informed the opposite side of its views on differential points through modifications and proposals that it has offered.

“When it comes to these points of difference, we have so far received no proposal and initiative from the opposite side,” he said.

The most important points of contention that remain unresolved are removal of “the illegal and cruel” U.S. sanctions and Iran’s nuclear measures, Bagheri Kani further stated.

“These differences are clearly visible in the final draft that was achieved following the sixth round of talks in Vienna... The differences, especially on the

nuclear issue, are numerous and varied,” he stated.

Bagheri Kani noted that during the past few days, many sessions have been held both at the expert level and among chief negotiators to discuss modifications, viewpoints, and proposals offered by the Iranian side, which had been applied to the text of drafts drawn up during the sixth round of the talks.

“These talks have been positive and moving forward,” Iran’s top negotiator concluded.

Earlier on Sunday, the lead negotiator told Iran’s state TV that the general atmosphere in the ongoing Vienna talks is very serious, adding that he is optimistic that a final agreement would be reached.

He added that Iran and the five remaining signatories to the JCPOA are holding talks on a host of issues during the seventh round of negotiations, and have reached agreements on some of them, though a comprehensive agreement has not yet been reached on many issues.

“For example, when it comes to Iran’s nuclear activities, an agreement has been forged between the two sides on some of [outstanding] issues, but there are other issues in this area...which still remain to be agreed upon and negotiations on those issues will continue,” said Bagheri Kani.

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 Iranian proposals that the Europeans called unrealistic and maximalist.

With the start of the seventh round of talks in Vienna on Friday, the sides 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.

will also happen on Sunday,” the Iranian foreign ministry said in a statement on Sunday.

Bagheri also met with his Russian and Chinese counterparts on Sunday. “This afternoon I held a constructive & fruitful meeting with Russian & Chinese chief negotiators,” Bagheri said on Twitter.

He added, “We shared ideas about how to proceed & also coordinated our positions about several issues. We will continue our intensive & serious engagement to reach a good deal.”

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s envoy to the talks, said the trilateral meeting discussed issues related to the ongoing Vienna talks. “The delegations

of China, Iran and Russia held another round of trilateral consultations today on issues related to the on-going Vienna Talks on JCPOA,” the Russian diplomat tweeted.

Earlier, Ulyanov stated that a third working group on sequencing held a meeting for the first time since the talks resumed in late November.

During the current round of talks, Iran presented two draft proposals about the nuclear and sanctions spheres that are needed to be taken if the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is to be resuscitated. There have been disagreements between Iran and the Europeans on the proposals. But it seems that the

differences are being solved.

On Monday, Ulyanov suggested that the negotiators have managed to bridge the gap between the two sides. “The negotiators managed to reconcile the new Iranian ideas and the need for continuity of Vienna Talks. The work will continue on the basis of the previous drafts. The Iranian proposals will be properly considered and either incorporated or rejected or modified. Normal practice,” the Russian diplomat noted.

Bagheri Kani has told Iran’s state media that the Iranian has not received any constructive initiative or proposal from the opposite side during the ongoing negotiations in the Austrian capital.

## SPORTS

### Farhad Majidi: Esteghlal ready for Sepahan match

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team head coach Farhad Majidi says that they are ready for the match against Sepahan.



Esteghlal will host Sepahan on Matchday 10 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Tuesday in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium.

“We know how strong Sepahan are but Esteghlal are ready for the match,” Majidi said in the pre-match news conference.

“Our priority is not to concede the goal,” he added.

“We are determined to win the match but we know that Sepahan are a strong team. We have a difficult task ahead,” he concluded.

Sepahan are second in the league, two points above Esteghlal.

### Navidkia: tough task ahead of us against Esteghlal

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team head coach Moharram Navidkia says that they will have a difficult task ahead against Esteghlal.

Sepahan are scheduled to face Esteghlal on Tuesday in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium on Matchday 10 of Iran Professional League (IPL).

“Esteghlal are among the favorites to win the IPL title. We know that it could be a tough match for both teams,” Navidkia said in the pre-match news conference.

“Esteghlal are a better team than the previous season and we know that we have a tough job ahead of us,” he added.

Sepahan defeated Esteghlal 2-1 last season at the Azadi Stadium.

### Mehdi Torabi misses Paykan match

TEHRAN – Persepolis iconic midfielder Mehdi Torabi will not be fit for the match against Paykan.

He suffered an injury in the match against Havadar.

Torabi was forced to leave the field and the match finished in a 2-2 draw.

Ehsan Pahlavan, who suffered a foot injury against Sanat Naft three weeks ago, is ready for the match.

Persepolis are scheduled to meet Paykan on Wednesday.

The Iran titleholders sit sixth in the table and need to win the match to remain the favorites.

### Sayyadmanesh leaves Zorya to return to Fenerbahce

TEHRAN – Iranian winger Allahyar Sayyadmanesh left Zorya Luhansk to join his parent club Fenerbahce.

Playing his last game for Zorya against Dynamo Kyiv, the Iranian player helped his team gains a vital point on the road.

The Iranian attacker, whose loan period with the Ukrainian team has now ended, scored in the 49th minute.

Allahyar, who went to Ukraine’s Zorya on loan from Turkey, completed his temporary term of just over a year. With his final game with the team, his farewell was completed in style.

“Allahyar is leaving us. This match was his last game here,” Zorya coach Viktor Skrypyk said.

While it was stated that the Iranian football player said goodbye to his teammates, it was also mentioned that he would return to his parent club, Fenerbahce.

### Iran to compete at Erkinbaev Memorial Alysh Grand Prix

TEHRAN – Iran will send Alysh wrestling teams to the Bayaman Erkinbaev Memorial Senior Alysh Grand Prix.

The tournament will be held on December 20 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Iran will participate in the Grand Prix with men and women teams.

Alysh is a Turkic term for Central Asian folk wrestling or “belt wrestling” regulated by United World Wrestling.

### PSG to face Real Madrid in Champions League last 16

TEHRAN - Paris Saint-Germain will play Real Madrid while Liverpool take on Inter Milan in two of the standout ties in the last 16 of the Champions League after an embarrassed UEFA was forced to redo Monday’s draw following a “technical problem”.

PSG had initially been paired together with Manchester United but the reworked draw sees them play Real while the Old Trafford side will face Spanish champions Atletico Madrid.

UEFA had earlier blamed a “material error” due to a “technical problem with the software of an external service provider” as it announced that the draw for the first knockout round of its flagship competition would have to be redone.

With the draw being streamed live from UEFA’s headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, the problem was made evident when Manchester United’s name was drawn to face Villarreal, despite the fact the two clubs could not have played one another having been in the same group.

Record 13-time European champions Real are unlikely to be happy with the new draw as they had initially been paired with Benfica in the very first tie before the problems occurred -- a clash with the PSG of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe is, on paper, a far tougher tie.

Liverpool face a similar situation. Having initially been drawn against knockout-phase debutants Red Bull Salzburg of Austria, they now face three-time former winners Inter, the Serie A champions and current Italian league leaders.

Salzburg instead got Bayern Munich, while Manchester City take on Sporting Lisbon and Benfica will play Ajax.

Villarreal face Juventus, while the one tie in the original, botched draw that was repeated later sees reigning champions Chelsea face French title-holders Lille.

The first legs will be played in the second half of February with second legs in early March.

This season’s Champions League final will be played in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg on May 28.

## Iran chief negotiator meets E3, Chinese, Russian counterparts

TEHRAN – Iran’s top negotiator in Vienna held meetings with his European, Russian and Chinese counterparts amid intense negotiations over removing U.S. sanctions on Iran that resumed in late November after a months-long hiatus.

Ali Bagheri Kani, deputy foreign minister of Iran who leads the Iranian negotiating team in Vienna, met with the chief negotiators of the E3 – France, Germany and Britain – at Vienna’s Palais Coburg Hotel on Saturday afternoon as talks continued in Austrian capital.

“Also, negotiations were held between delegations at various levels and in different formats. Bilateral and multilateral meetings



## Part of electricity bills to be allocated for developing renewables



TEHRAN – Based on the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2022), the Energy Ministry is allowed to use a portion of the revenues collected from the electricity bills for the development of the renewable energy sector, IRNA reported.

As reported, according to the budget bill, 10 percent of the total electricity revenues is going to be transferred to a bank account owned by the Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir) of which 20 percent will be used for developing electricity network in rural areas, and the other 80 percent will be allocated for the development of renewable energy industry.

Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) is going to be in

charge of the mentioned budget and will determine the areas in which the money will be spent on.

President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1401 to the Majlis on Sunday.

Renewables, including hydropower, account for about seven percent of Iran's total power generation, versus natural gas' 90 percent share.

Based on Iran's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), the country is aiming for 5,000 megawatts (MW) increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

But in the final year of the plan, only one-fifth of the figure has been achieved.

Iran was supposed to become a regional hub in the field of energy in the past Iranian calendar decade (March 2011-March 2021), but evidence shows that the country is facing a shortage even in the supply of electricity inside the country, an issue that many believe that could be achieved by developing renewable energy and increasing efficiency of the thermal power plants.

From page 1 ▶ "The new phase of the program for assessing the units in industrial parks was started two months ago and 60 major issues that the country's industrial units are currently facing have been identified and reported to ISIPO", Ali Rasoulouli stated.

Back in September, the official had announced the allocation of 10,000 hectares of land for the development and construction of industrial parks across the country.

The index for development of Industrial parks in the country has increased by five percent, the official said in a ceremony for signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between ISIPO and the Industrial Engineering Basij Organization.

"To fulfill its two main tasks, which are to establish industrial parks and providing appropriate infrastructure and support for industrial and production units, ISIPO has developed various support programs and incentives to enable companies and production units to do business with ease and in proper conditions," Rasoulouli said.

As announced by the ISIPO head, in the last Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), 1,557 stagnant and semi-active units returned to the production cycle in the industrial parks with a financing of 35 trillion rials (over \$833 million), providing employment for 27,000 people.

With the aim of reactivating stagnant units or units that are operating below capacity, 900

## 4,000 new industrial units established in Iran in 7 months



consultants from the private sector and knowledge-based companies were selected in the form of industry clinics across the country to recognize the weaknesses of these units, Rasoulouli has previously stated.

"Despite the two major challenges of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic, which imposed severe restrictions on the country, we tried to activate domestic capacities by turning to localizing the technolo-

gy of manufacturing parts and equipment", he added.

Sanctions have caused problems for financial exchanges and the export of goods to other countries, he said, adding, "The negative effects of coronavirus pandemic on various parts of the country, including industry, are not hidden from anyone, and the economic growth of some countries has reached below zero during this period."

Iran is proud that despite

these restrictions and pressure from these two important challenges, its industry has grown by more than seven percent, according to the statistics and reports from various sectors, the official further highlighted.

Also, as announced by Niaraki, over 6,500 new industrial units were established across the country during the past year which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry's plans for the realization of the motto of the current year which is named the year of "Production: support and the elimination of obstacles" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the official has said: "In the year that has been dedicated to the production sector by the Leader of the revolution, the orientation of all government organizations and executive bodies should be towards supporting the country's industrial and mining units."

Niaraki pointed to a 40-percent increase in the issuance of establishment licenses for industrial units in the previous year, saying: "The number of establishment licenses increased to more than 36,000 last year, which shows that people are encouraged to invest in the productive sectors."

He also mentioned an 85-percent rise in the allocation of land for establishing industrial units across the country and noted that over 4,500 hectares of land were handed over to applicants in the previous calendar year.

## Govt. strongly seeking expansion of trade with world

TEHRAN - Vice President of Iran for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei has said the government is strongly pursuing new strategies to open new ways for the expansion of trade with the world, the portal of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

Making the remarks in a ceremony held on the occasion of the National Export Day at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds Persian Gulf Hall on Monday, Rezaei said: "We are seeking the lifting sanctions and we want to seriously open the way for Iran's trade with the world."

The ceremony was attended by senior officials including the First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber, Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari, and the Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Reza Fatemi Amin.

"We are looking for big reforms and technical and precise changes in the country's economy and we have no choice but to take big steps," Rezaei said.

"Customs, ports, logistics to marketing and branding are all important to us," he stressed.

The official noted that these economic reforms have already started in the field

of trade, and the first step in the trade reforms was the directive issued by the heads of the three branches of the government to facilitate exports.

"In addition to the trade reforms that are underway, we also have plans to reform the distribution of subsidies, the energy sector, and the banking sector," Rezaei added.

The official noted that in making the decisions regarding the necessary changes in various sectors, the government has consulted with the country's private sector representatives and has considered their views in making the mentioned decisions.

Referring to next fiscal year's budget reforms, he said: "The reforms have been done in favor of producers and exporters, and the creation of project funds is one of these reforms."

Providing financial support for exports and the elimination of cumbersome and unnecessary regulations are also on the agenda, he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rezaei said: "President Raisi's emphasis is on surging the exports, and we will do our best to make the decisions for realizing this goal at the government's economic headquarters and follow them from there."



Export obstacles to be removed

Further in the meeting, Industry Minister Reza Fatemi Amin mentioned a comprehensive plan for the development of the country's foreign trade and said: "With the finalization of the comprehensive foreign trade plan, the barriers and problems in the way of exports and imports will be removed quickly and exchanges will be facilitated."

"Positive trade balance, creating employment, technology transfer, and attracting investment are the most important factors that should be taken into account while making export-related decisions," he said.

Referring to the Industry Ministry's three major strategies to achieve export goals, Fatemi Amin noted: "Creating an

international network and being placed in such a chain is a strategy that can lead to an export boom for the country."

"The direct connection of Iranian businesses with the international arena, instead of government relations, is the strongest type of economic relationship that does not change in political disputes," he said, pointing to the second strategy which is establishing a direct connection between Iranian traders and their counterparts.

Production of Iranian goods in export markets was mentioned by the minister as the third solution.

### Exemplary exporters honored

During the 25th National Export Day ceremony, the country's top exporters were also introduced and honored.

In order to identify the top exporters, the performance of about 500 exporters was assessed, out of which two exporters were rewarded with Export Honorary Medals, seven exporters were recognized as excellent exporters, 37 exporters were recognized as national exporters and five exporters were celebrated as good exporters.

## Water, electricity sectors account for 57% of technical-engineering exports

TEHRAN - Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian has said over 57 percent of the country's exports of technical-engineering services are done by the water and electricity sectors, IRNA reported on Monday.

As reported, since the electricity sector accounts for the lion's share of Iran's technical and engineering exports, and also given that Iranian companies' presence in water projects of other countries (construction of dams, water, and wastewater treatment plants, and water transferring pipelines) is rising, Energy Ministry of Iran is seriously following up the objective of boosting technical and engineering services exports from electricity and water sectors.

According to the Association of Iranian Ex-



porters of Technical and Engineering Services, Iran has the potential and capability to export technical and engineering services worth \$25 billion every year.

Some Iranian companies including Mapna Group have already had a fruitful presence in

the completion of infrastructure projects in several countries including Iraq and Oman. Syria is also an important destination for the export of Iranian technical and engineering services as the country needs reconstruction.

Back in October, the chairman of the executive board of the coordination council of the country's technical-engineering entities announced the government's plan to increase the export of technical and engineering goods and services to neighboring countries.

Ali Azad said that the export of technical-engineering services is the basis for the growth and development of the country and increases employment in industrial and construction activities.

Azad referred to the export of more than \$4

billion of technical and engineering services in Iranian calendar year 1386 (March 2007-March 2008) and said: "Perhaps if this important issue had continued with the same correct order, today we would have reached an annual record of more than \$20 billion in this field."

Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) also said in early October that many of the countries in the region are seeking the Islamic Republic's engineering and technical services and the country can provide them with such services.

"The 13th government's major policy is to expand presence in target markets, and many countries in the region are looking for our engineering and industrial capabilities," Masoud Mir-Kazemi said.

## TEDPIX slides 25,000 points on Monday

Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 25,249 points to 1.295 million on Monday.

As reported, over 5.131 billion securities

worth 30.341 trillion rials (about \$722.4 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index lost 22,246 points and the second market's index dropped 39,071 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 Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has said the government is following new strategies to avoid pre-ordered pricing in the stock market in the long term.

"The government's policy, in the long run, is to avoid pre-ordered pricing. This policy has been repeatedly stressed by

the president and the government's economic team and has been placed on the government's agenda," Majid Eshqi said on November 14.

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

"We need to move away from imperative policies so that companies can be profitable in the long-term," he said.

Meanwhile on November 22, The SEO

head said facilitation of the activities of stock market institutions like brokers will lead to the development of the capital market.

"Facilitating the establishment of brokerage firms and the ease of licensing issuance for financial institutions, as well as the strict supervision of the SEO over the activities of such financial institutions, are the basis for the development of the capital market," Eshqi

stated.

Noting that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has put the support for the capital market on the agenda, Eshqi added: "In order to support the capital market, Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi has put issues such as the development of institutions, the removal of monopolies, the use of new tools, and the strengthening of the primary market on the agenda of this ministry."



# Will Britain's PM resign as scandals rise?

From page 1 ▶ The controversy is the parties were held at a time when the rest of the country was ordered by the government to avoid such gatherings and were locked up at home, living under strict Covid-19 restrictions while the government was partying, laughing and joking. Johnson is facing calls to resign from opposition MPs while facing anger from within his own party.

Labour leader Keir Starmer says he wishes he could "snap my fingers" and get Johnson to resign. Starmer branded Johnson "so weak" as he expressed his fury that the Prime Minister broke the government's own COVID-19 rules when the rest of the country were ordered to obey them. The Labour leader accused the Prime Minister of having "lost the authority to lead" Britain amid the ongoing scandals. As well as saying how weak Johnson is as a leader, he also suggested the Conservative party are "so divided". Starmer slammed the PM saying "He can't provide the leadership we need at this crucial time. He is the worst possible leader at the worst possible time!"

The Scottish National Party's Westminster leader Ian Blackford says the prime minister was facing "a moment of moral reckoning" and should either quit or be removed by his party. "Downing Street willfully broke the rules and mocked the sacrifices we have all made, shattering the public's trust. The prime minister is responsible for losing the trust of the people. He can no longer lead on the most pressing issue facing these islands. The prime minister has a duty. The only right and moral choice left to him: it is for his resignation. When can we expect it?"

The emergence of the video has led to significant public backlash, and within the Conservative Party as well. Doctor Saleyha Ahsan who represents the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Group described the latest revelations as feeling "like a bullet to the chest," and says the video brought back memories of that same month when her father fell ill with Covid and later died.

When the government was partying last Christmas, Johnson banned tens of millions of people from holding indoor gatherings or visiting their families. At the time, this is what he told the British pub-



lic "It is with a heavy heart that I must tell you we cannot continue with Christmas as planned." Yet indoor social gatherings went ahead among government officials.

But that's just one of several scandals that have rocked Downing Street as of late.

For several months, another scandal has been mounting and was back in the spotlight earlier this week. The Conservative Party was fined by the UK's Electoral Commission for "failing to accurately report a donation and keep a proper accounting record" over the refurbishment of the Prime Minister's apartment in Downing Street. The investigation was launched earlier this year following reports that Johnson had spent around \$280,000 on refurbishing his flat. Text messages uncovered by the probe indicate Johnson may have misled his own standards adviser over how and who paid for the renovations.

Another scandal centers on a Foreign Office whistleblower that Johnson personally intervened to have the pets of a non-governmental organization, evacuated from Afghanistan during the collapse of Kabul in August, at the expense of people desperate to escape the country. A former government staff member Raphael Marshall told a parliamentary committee on Tuesday that "there was a direct trade-off between transporting pets and evacuating British nationals and Afghans evacuees, including Afghans who had served with British soldiers". The testimony reflected the more damning Brit-

ish response to the Afghan crisis. Britain's then-Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab took several hours to respond to urgent requests and said many emails requesting evacuation were not even read.

This is a Prime Minister who had barely recovered from a lengthy "sleaze" row, which came to a head in November after he briefly backed plans to overturn the suspension of a fellow Conservative MP who was found to have violated lobbying rules. Owen Paterson sent multiple emails to government officials

## In yet another alarming scandal a 44,000-word investigation details multiple troubling examples of Islamophobia within the Conservative party.

on behalf of two companies that between them paid him \$136,000 as a consultant. Paterson then persuaded Johnson's government to change the laws so that his suspension would be overruled and instead refer the case to a newly formed parliamentary committee of MPs chaired by his Tory party colleagues. The backlash was so severe the government performed

the quickest U-turn in the history of U-Turns, but the avoidable saga led to weeks of reports about secondary jobs held by Conservative lawmakers. Last month, the Labour Party, accused Johnson's government of "sleaze, cronyism, and corruption". Starmer said, "It's one rule for the Conservatives and another for everyone else".

In yet another alarming scandal a 44,000-word investigation details multiple troubling examples of Islamophobia within the Conservative party. The inquiry looked into complaints of discrimination made to the party between 2015 and 2020 after the Muslim Council of Britain compiled a dossier detailing near-weekly Islamophobia cases involving various party members and was supported in its call by, among others, by Sayeeda Warsi, the former party co-chair. There have long been reports of widespread Islamophobia within the Conservative party. The report said two-thirds of all discrimination complaints that had been analyzed were anti-Muslim incidents. Johnson's comments about Muslim women as looking like "letterboxes" and "bank robbers" merely added fuel to the fire.

So will Boris Johnson stay in his post as British Prime Minister? If an election was held tomorrow, he would be out of office, but since a general election is not on the agenda, the anger of the public and the seemingly never-ending scandals may just force the Premier to step down or the Conservative party may be forced to vote and replace him.

## Islamic Jihad condemns UAE 'betrayal to Palestine'

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement has strongly condemned the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officials over receiving Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett, stressing that any normalization and alliance with the Tel Aviv regime amounts to "betrayal to Palestine."

"Bennett's reception would help the criminal [Israeli] regime beef up its security and would be an attempt to legitimize the regime's false existence, wash the hands stained with the blood of Palestinian children and innocent people, and exonerate Israeli murderers and terrorists from their crimes against the entire Palestinian nation," the movement said in a statement released on Monday.

The Israeli prime minister met the UAE's de facto ruler on Monday after becoming the first leader of the Israeli regime to visit the Persian Gulf state, more than a year after the two sides agreed to establish formal relations under a US-brokered deal.

Bennett had a meeting with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) at his private palace, Israeli officials said, following the premier's arrival in the Emirati capital late on Sunday.

The UAE officially inaugurated its embassy in Israel on July 14. The inauguration ceremony was hosted by UAE's Ambassador to Israel Mohammad al-Khaja, with the regime's president Isaac Herzog in attendance.

The embassy is situated in the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange building, also known as the Bursa.

Israel opened its embassy in the Emirati capital in late June. Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid inaugurated the Israeli embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Israeli consulate in Dubai during a two-day visit.



Since they signed the normalization agreement in August last year, Israel and the UAE have signed a raft of deals in various areas, ranging from tourism to aviation and financial services.

Israeli ministers had previously visited the UAE, but Lapid is the most senior Israeli diplomat to have made the trip, as well as the first to travel on an official mission.

In March, a planned official visit by then-Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the UAE was canceled due to a "dispute" with Jordan over the use of its airspace, according to Israeli officials.

Netanyahu signed agreements with the Emirati foreign minister and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani during an official ceremony hosted by former U.S. president Donald Trump at the White House on September 15 last year.

Palestinians, who seek an independent state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip with East al-Quds as its capital, view the deals as a betrayal of their cause.

Meanwhile, a member of the Palestinian Fatah movement's Central Committee said the United Arab Emirates must be expelled from the Arab League due to normalization with Israel.

## Germany warns Nord Stream won't operate if Russia-Ukraine tensions escalate



fearing that the pipeline will increase Europe's reliance on Russian energy.

Russia says the project could provide relief to the European gas market, which has been grappling with tight supplies and soaring prices, while criticizing the US-led efforts to impede the completion of the pipeline.

Last month, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov pointed out that Washington must stop putting diplomatic pressure on European countries to undermine the economic project.

"It is very important, of course, that the United States of America does not put pressure on anyone in connection with the ongoing implementation and certification of this project," he said.

The U.S. government has slapped a slew of sanctions on firms involved in the project, mostly recently last month, under the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act of 2019 (PEESA).

US President Joe Biden's administration has so far identified 9 individuals and 18 entities to be subject to sanctions for their involvement in the \$11-billion project, which is designed to double the capacity of the existing Nord Stream pipeline to 110 billion cubic meters per year.

Biden administration in July reached a deal with Germany, which includes support for Ukraine and the threat of sanctions if Russia is deemed to "weaponize" fuel deliveries.

On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken again warned that gas is unlikely to flow through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline if Russia "renews its aggression" against Ukraine.

"That pipeline ... doesn't have any gas flowing through it right now. And, in fact, it's a source of leverage on Russia because to the extent (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin wants to see gas flowing through that pipeline - if and when it becomes operational - it's very unlikely or hard to see that happening if Russia has renewed its aggression on Ukraine, if it takes renewed action," Blinken told NBC's "Meet the Press" program.

Meanwhile, Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, has also urged Germany to suspend the pipeline project, fearing that Moscow can use this project to later 'blackmail' Europe.

"It would be better not to allow the opening of Nord Stream 2," Morawiecki said. "I drew the chancellor's attention to the risks linked to the opening of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline and sadly the extent to which... these risks for Ukraine could get considerably worse."

(Source: Press TV)

## America the land of opportunities or a place of shattered dreams?

By Hussein Pabarja

North American and European Studies Researcher

The United States' infrastructure is in disarray, with broken seawalls and flooded housing developments in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Cars, school buses, and trucks plunged into the Mississippi River after the collapse of a highway bridge in Minneapolis. Lead-contaminated water gushing from aging pipes in Michigan, overhead power lines in Texas collapse under the weight of masses of snow, leaving the state dark. These kinds of images you can see everywhere on the net and it's a part of the daily lives of Americans. U.S. President Joe Biden wants to modernize the country with his \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan, which was originally proposed at \$2.3 trillion but was practically reduced. Many communities, cities and states wait for the packet, but who has the priority to receive help as soon as possible?

### The ruins of the American Dream

Since the '60s every government has prioritized infrastructure, but according to experts, nothing has changed since then. Because political objectives have always varied, as has the allocation of funds. Because the United States is a big and federally structured nation, each state, city, and county has varied infrastructure needs. For years, the American Society of Civil Engineers, has been raising the alarm. They discovered an investment shortfall of about 2.6 trillion dollars. Biden's predecessor in office, Donald Trump, had already recognized that the USA would have to invest a lot of money in its infrastructure. But despite many announcements, nothing happened under him.

### Polluted Water and lethal drinking water

It's not the first time a water controversy



has rocked a community like Flint, in the United States. Other cities in the United States have water that is tainted by contaminants. The U.S. Congress banned water pipes containing lead 30 years ago. But there are still up to 10 million of these pipes lying in the ground. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that it would cost up to \$50 billion to replace all the old pipes in the country. The primary source of lead pollution in potable water has long been recognized to be lead service lines. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) thinks there are between 9.7 million and 12.8 million lead pipes throughout the United States, even in states that claim to have no lead pipes at all.

### America's power grid is under pressure

America is under pressure, because it's completely dependent on its power grid and the technology that support this sector is hopelessly outdated. Experts expect dramatic power failures, since most of the infrastructure is 50 to 80 years old. The electricity system has been in desperate need of investment and upgrading for a long time. The Electric Power Research Institute, EPRI, predicted a net investment volume of between \$338 billion and \$476 billion for high-voltage grid restoration and expansion over the next 20 years in 2011 research.

### Roads and Transport

Potholes full of water, dilapidated bridges, outdated rail networks - if you look at the state of the infrastructure in the USA, you wouldn't think it was the richest country in the world. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, one in nine bridges is in urgent need of renovation, one-third of roads are in deplorable shape, and more than 43 percent of all highways in urban areas are congested. There are about 617,000 bridges in the United States. The nation's backlog of bridge repair requirements is estimated to be \$125 billion, according to a recent study. It is estimated that the poor state of infrastructure costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars each year through congestion, accidents, increased gasoline consumption and increased wear and tear on cars.

### Conclusion

In the United States, federal expenditures are conducted as if there were no tomorrow. The fact that the country has record debts and deficits does not seem to matter. Inflation, on the other hand, is already eating away at people's savings in this overheated economic climate. Until now, the United States has spent an average of just 2.4 percent of its gross domestic product on the construction and maintenance of its transportation and energy infrastructure. In Europe, the average is five percent, while in China, it may be as high as eight percent. The White House left vague in its announcement exactly how the state plans to finance the investments. The measures would be financed by reallocating unused funds, but if Biden goes beyond that and hands out unfunded social welfare in turn with the "exceedingly generous" support of the Federal Reserve, he will overplay his hand. Then inflation will first eat away at the savings of the ordinary citizen on the street. However, even in Biden's America, economic laws cannot simply be suspended.



## Turkish journalists to explore East Azarbaijan on fam tour



Photo: File photo depicts a group of foreign tourists visiting Azarbaijan Museum in Tabriz, East Azarbaijan province

TEHRAN –The northwestern Iranian province of East Azarbaijan plans to host a delegation of Turkish journalists and media personnel for a familiarization tour across the province in the near future, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

A fam tour introducing East Azarbaijan's tourism capabilities will be organized in cooperation with the private sector during the winter for Turkish media representatives and tourism activists, Ahmad Hamzezadeh said on Monday.

A suitable platform can be provided for the development of the tourism industry by having fam tours in the province and taking advantage of the existing capacities in the sector, he explained.

Holding fam tours is the best strategy for developing tourism in top countries, the official added.

To accomplish this goal, the province's tourism department is planning to organize fam tours for tourism activists and media members of the other neighboring countries early next year, he noted.

Soaked in history and culture for millennia, Tabriz, which is the capital of East Azarbaijan, embraces several historical and religious sites, including the Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few. The city became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor, Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548 when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

The ancient city was declared a world craft city of carpet weaving by the World Craft in 2016. It also bore the title of 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital.

## Centuries-old rock-carved inscription discovered in southern Iranian plain



TEHRAN – A centuries-old rock-carved inscription has recently been discovered in Marvdasht plain, which is home to the UNESCO-registered sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae as well as tens of other magnificent structures, in southern Fars province.

The inscription bears Middle Persian (or Pahlavi) script and it is carved in the face of a giant rock in memory of a religious man, Said Hamid Fadai who presides over Persepolis World Heritage site.

The text of the relief suggests that it was inscribed 1328 years ago during the early Islamic era, Fadai said.

Such tombstones that several of its similar ones have been discovered in the plain so far have no material value, but they are very valuable culturally and spiritually, the report said.

Persian language, also called Farsi, is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family. Old Persian, spoken until approximately the 3rd century BC, is attested

by numerous inscriptions written in cuneiform, most notable of which is the great monument of Darius I at Bisotun, western Iran.

Middle Persian, spoken from the 3rd century BC to the 9th century CE, is represented by numerous epigraphic texts of Sasanian kings, written in Aramaic script; there is also varied literature in Middle Persian embracing both the Zoroastrian and the Manichaean religious traditions. Pahlavi was the name of the official Middle Persian language of the Sassanian empire, according to Britannica.

The ancient region, known as Pars (Fars), or Persis, was the heart of the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great and had its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC. Alexander the Great defeated the Achaemenian army at Arbela in 331 and burned Persepolis apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

Persis became part of the Seleucid kingdom in 312 after Alexander's death. The Parthian empire (247 BC– 224 CE) of the Arsacids (corresponding roughly to the modern Khorasan in Iran) replaced the Seleucids' rule in Persis during 170–138 BC. The Sasanid Empire (224 CE–651) had its capital at Istakhr. Not until the 18th century, under the Zand dynasty (1750–79) of southern Iran, did Fars again become the heart of an empire, with its capital at Shiraz.

fully restored, he explained.

Also known as Malek al-Tojar Mansion, the structure was built by French architects using local and indigenous materials.

Covering an area of 4,000 square meters, the mansion was registered on the national heritage list in 1998.

With over 6,000 years of history and significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanid eras, Bushehr Province is one of Iran's most important historical centers.

Besides its cultural heritage, beautiful beaches and lush palm groves make it an attractive destination for world travelers.

The historical and architectural monuments of Bushehr include



Islamic buildings like mosques and praying centers, mansions, old towers, castles, as well as gardens.

When it comes to cultural attractions, there are many historical mounds in Bushehr including Tall-e Khandaq with Sassanid ar-

# Mashhad handicrafts market seen to flourish in post-coronavirus era

From page 1 ▶ A number of factors make handicrafts a promising option to reduce unemployment, including the participation of women in production, diversification of household income sources, use of local raw materials, high added value, preservation of local culture and originality, and other aspects, he mentioned.

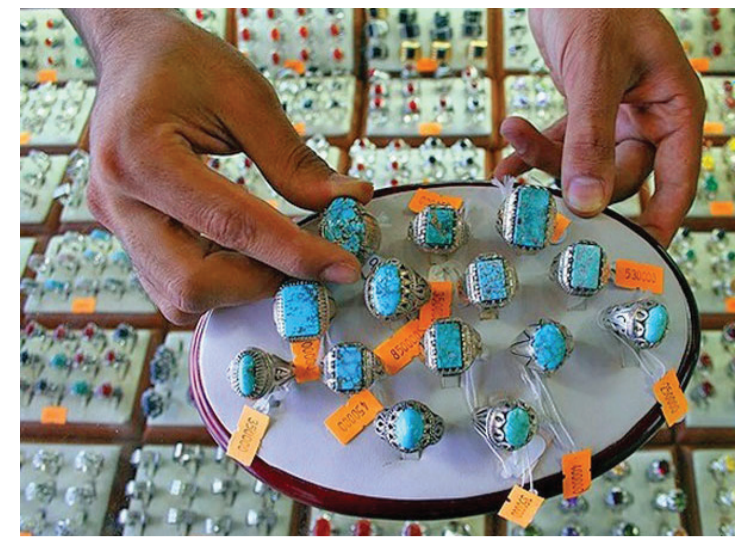
Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city which embraces the shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.

Dozens of five-star hotels and hostels are dotted across Mashhad. The city has also the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it also embraces a variety of cultural and historical sites that are generally crowded.

The metropolis is also a good place to buy top handwoven rugs and carpets, and it's a staging post for travel to Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and little-touristic Khorasan regions.

Before the coronavirus puts almost everything on lockdown, Mashhad, played host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the holy shrine.

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



### Wide-ranging handicrafts

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qasemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

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

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

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

## Exhibition showcases unseen photos of Hegmataneh

TEHRAN –An exhibition of unseen photos of Hegmataneh is currently underway in the historical site in the west-central Iranian province of Hamedan.

The exhibition includes more than 50 pictures taken from different vantage points of Hegmataneh by photographers who have achieved top rankings in various competitions, the director of the historical site said on Monday.

Images of Hamedan's customs and various buildings illustrating the historical texture of the city are also on show on the sidelines of the exhibition, CHTN quoted Mehdi Soltani as saying.

The exhibit aims to identify the artistic and cultural capacities of Hegmataneh and represent them in the dossier of possible registration of the historical site on the UNESCO World Heritage list, the official added.

Back in March, the tourism ministry announced that Iran was completing an all-inclusive dossier for the mysterious Hegmataneh Hill to have it registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The ruined Hegmataneh (Ecbatana) which is partly beneath the modern city of Hamedan (the capital city), is widely believed to be once a mysterious capital of Medes. According to ancient Greek writers, the city was founded in about 678 BC by Deioceus, who was the first king of the Medes.

French Assyriologist Charles Fossey (1869 – 1946) directed the first excavation in Tepe Hegmataneh for six months in 1913. Erich Friedrich Schmidt (1897 – 1964), who was a German and American-naturalized archaeologist, took some aerial photos from Hamedan between 1935 and 1937.

According to the Greek historian Xenophon of Athens (c.430-c.355), Ecbatana



became the summer residence of the Achaemenid kings. Their palace is described by the Greek historian Polybius of Megalopolis. He writes that the city was richer and more beautiful than all other cities in the world; although it had no wall, the palace, built on an artificial terrace, according to Livius, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

An inscription, unearthed in 2000, indicates that Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358) built a terrace with columns in Ecbatana. Some twelve kilometers southwest of Hamedan is Ganjnameh, where Darius I and his son Xerxes had inscriptions cut into the rock.

Polybius, a Greek historian of the Hellenistic period noted for his work The Histories, tells that the builders used cedar and cypress wood, which was covered with silver and gold. The roof tiles, columns, and ceilings were plated with silver and gold. He adds that the palace was stripped of its precious metals in the invasion of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great and that the rest was seized during the reigns of Antigonos and Seleucus. Later, Ecbatana was one of the capitals of the Seleucid and the

Parthian Empires, sometimes called Epiphaneia.

Ecbatana is deemed to be remaining a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, for decades or even centuries to come as the site of the ancient city lies partly within the modern city of Hamedan, which has never been excavated before.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations. Ecbatana was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenian kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

Hamedan has had many names: it was possibly the Bit Daiukki of the Assyrians, Hangmatana, or Agbatana, to the Medes, and Ecbatana to the Greeks. One of the Median capitals, under Cyrus II (the Great; died 529 BC) and later Achaemenian rulers, it was the site of a royal summer palace.

About 1220 Hamedan was destroyed by the Mongols. In 1386 it was sacked by Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, and the inhabitants were massacred. It was partly restored in the 17th century and subsequently changed hands often between Iranian ruling houses and the Ottomans.

Sitting on a high plain, Hamedan is gracefully cool in August but snow prone and freezing from December to March. In summer the air is often hazy.

Ali Sadr cave, Ganjnameh inscriptions, Avicenna Mausoleum, Hegmataneh hill, Alaviyan dome, Jameh mosque, and St. Stephanos Gregorian Church are amongst Hamedan's attractions to name a few.

## Restoration begins on Qajar-era mansion in Bushehr

TEHRAN – A restoration project has been commenced on the Qajar-era (1789-1925) Malek Mansion in southwestern Bushehr province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

A budget of 43 billion rials (about \$156,000) has been allocated to the project, Mohammad Hossein Arastuzadeh said on Sunday.

The project involves strengthening the building's foundation and walls as well as repairing its façade ornamentation, the official added.

Carried out by the private sector, the project is estimated to come to an end within eight months, he noted.

The mansion is planned to turn into a cultural center after being

## Historical properties in Qazvin demarcated

TEHRAN –New boundaries have been defined for 18 historical properties, which are scattered across the northwestern province of Qazvin, IRNA reported on Monday.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism has announced the exact legal boundaries of the properties in separate letters to the governor-general of the province, the report added.

The demarcation projects are aimed at preventing further destruction and damage as well as preserving and protecting historical sites.

Pirhesar Public Bathhouse, Sarokhani, Behruzi

and Ardakani mansions, and Nobad Cemetery are among those demarcated recently.

Qazvin was once the capital of the mighty Persian Empire, under Safavids, from 1548 to 98. It is a major tourist destination with a wonderfully restored caravanserai-turned-arts precinct, some quirky museums, and a handful of decent eating options. For most travelers, Qazvin is also primarily the staging point for excursions to the famous Castles of the Assassins and trekking in the sensational Alamut Valley.

Also known as the castle of the Assassins, the 12th-century Alamut castle

is nestled on top of a peak. It was once a shelter for the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070-1124) who was a spiritual leader of an Islamic sect. In the early 1930s, British-Italian explorer and travel writer Freya Stark described her exploration of the place in her book "The Valleys of the Assassins".

Qazvin is also home to one of the biggest roofed caravanserais of the country, Sa'd-al Saltaneh caravanserai. Dating back to the Qajar era, it's a place for discovering tens of Hojreh or shops, cafes, yards, and a stunning mosque. It's a place for visitors who want to experience the culture, culinary, and hospitality of Iran.



# Algal bloom a colorful threat to aquatic ecosystem

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – “Algal blooms” have negative effects on aquatic environments and bring losses to the fisheries sector, which is mainly caused by various factors such as climate change, rising temperatures, the entry of industrial, domestic, agricultural, and human effluents.

An algal bloom or algae bloom is a rapid increase or accumulation in the population of algae in freshwater or marine water systems. It is often recognized by the discoloration in the water from the algae's pigments.

The term algae encompass many types of aquatic photosynthetic organisms, both macroscopic multicellular organisms like seaweed and microscopic unicellular organisms like cyanobacteria. Algal bloom commonly refers to the rapid growth of microscopic unicellular algae, not macroscopic algae. An example of a macroscopic algal bloom is a kelp forest.

Algal blooms are the result of a nutrient, like nitrogen or phosphorus from fertilizer runoff, entering the aquatic system and causing excessive growth of algae. An algal bloom affects the whole ecosystem.

Consequences range from the benign feeding of higher trophic levels to more harmful effects like blocking sunlight from reaching other organisms, causing a depletion of oxygen



levels in the water, and, depending on the organism, secreting toxins into the water.

The process of the oversupply of nutrients leading to algae growth and oxygen depletion is called eutrophication. Blooms that can injure animals or the ecology are called “harmful algal blooms” (HAB) and can lead to fish die-offs, cities cutting off water to residents, or states having to close fisheries.

Various factors such as increasing greenhouse gases, hydrological fac-

tors, and massive changes in global climate, movement, and transfer of non-native species are involved in the

occurrence of algal blooms, the most important of which are rising temperatures in line with climate change and an increase in nutrients, especially phosphorus and nitrate, that enters the seas and then the oceans by discharging industrial, domestic, and agricultural effluents containing chemical fertilizers.

When algal blooms increase and spread over a large area of water, they eventually cause sedimentation

and destruction in the gills of the fish, which eventually leads to the death of the fish and other aquatic organisms.

In recent years, the increase in the algal bloom in the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and Oman Sea has caused great damage to fishermen and locals, in addition to the animal species and aquatic animals.

Recently, Behrouz Abtahi, director of the National Institute of Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences, said that algal blooms have negative effects on aquatic environments, so monitoring the phenomena in northern and southern waters is on the agenda.

Being of great importance, it is one of the few projects in which countries work together to address the issue on an international scale, he added.

But in the last decade, what has made algal blooms important is the increase in the number and variety of these blooms, partly due to climate change and rising global temperatures.

This bloom has negative effects on aquatic environments so that some changes caused by algal blooms are irreversible, so several strategies are proposed to deal with it, one of which is the use of birds to deal with the thick algal cover.

Manual collection of algae and use of herbicides are known as strategies to deal with this phenomenon, he explained.

**An algal bloom is a rapid increase or accumulation in the population of algae in freshwater or marine water systems.**

## EU to boost cooperation with Iran on disaster management

TEHRAN – The European Union (EU) and the Iranian Red Crescent Society will enhance cooperation to reduce the risk of natural incidents and disasters as well as dealing with crises and droughts.

A six-member EU delegation, led by Sarah Rinaldi, head of the Middle East and Central Asia office of the European Commission's international partnerships, met Mansoureh Bagheri, IRCS deputy director for international affairs and humanitarian law, on Saturday.

The officials discussed joint cooperation to respond to the two drought crises in the country and the influx of Afghan refugees to the eastern borders of Iran due to the recent hostilities.

Of course, planning to respond to crises was based on the experience of the IRCS, such as relief services during floods caused by climate change in recent years and relief for those affected by the recent devastating earthquakes, IRNA reported on Monday.

At this meeting, the issue of EU participation in disaster risk reduction programs in Iran was raised, which was well received by both parties.

On November 13, the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations appreciated the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) for its humanitarian services.

Also in July, the EU allotted €15 million in



humanitarian aid to support those most affected by man-made crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-induced, and other natural disasters in Iran.

## Budget bill allocates \$444m to childbearing, family support plans

From page 1 ▶ President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1401, to the Majlis on Sunday. The proposed budget amounted to about 36.31 quadrillion rials (about \$123 billion).

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 and hoc budget review committee.



### Demographic issue

Today, the country's fertility rate has reached about 1.6 children per woman, however, it was 6.5 children per woman, in 1986. The lowest fertility rate in the whole region of West Asia, North Africa, and the MENA region is recorded for Iran.

While 1,594,000 births were registered in the [Iranian calen-

dar] year 1394 (March 2015-March 2016), the downward trend continued annually to the point that the number of births reached about one million in the [Iranian calendar] year 1399 (March 2020-March 2021). In other words, we lost more than 550,000 births in five years.

The fertility rate declined to 1.71 children in the past [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020-March 2021), reaching below the replacement level, according to the report released by the Statistical Center of Iran.

Replacement level is the amount of fertility needed to keep the population the same from generation to generation. It refers to the total

fertility rate that will result in a stable population without it increasing or decreasing.

Nicholas Eberstadt, the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) wrote in an article in July 2020 that the fertility rate in Iran has dropped by 70 percent over the past 30 years, which has been the highest decline in human history.

Seyed Hamed Barakati, deputy health minister for family and school population, said in May that Iran's population growth rate has decreased to less than one percent for the first time over the past four decades.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### Iran plans building desalination plants along Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman

The Department of Environment (DOE) is preparing a plan to deploy desalination plants on the shores of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in order to supply drinking water to the coastal provinces.

Ahmad Reza Lahijanzadeh, deputy chief of the marine environment of the DOE, announced that suitable areas that cause the least damage to the environment have been identified in Hormozgan province.

According to him, the project, which is to be carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, will supply water for 17 drought-ridden provinces.

The country's coastline stretches to about 5,800 kilometers, which includes the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in the south.

The provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran, Golestan, Khuzestan, Bushehr, Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan in the north and south are among the coastal provinces that are struggling with water shortages.

### برنامه ایران برای تامین آب شرب از طریق خلیج فارس و دریای عمان

سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست ایران در حال مطالعه طرحی برای استقرار آب شیرین کن‌ها در سواحل خلیج فارس و دریای عمان به منظور تامین بخشی از آب شرب استان‌های ساحلی است.

به گزارش ایرنا، احمد رضا لاهیجان زاده معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست اعلام کرد مکان‌یابی در استان هرمزگان به پایان رسیده و محل‌های مناسبی که کمترین آسیب را به محیط زیست وارد کند، در این استان مشخص شده‌اند.

به گفته او، این طرح که قرار است با همکاری وزارت نیرو انجام شود شامل ۱۷ استان خشک و بی‌آب می‌شود.

طول سواحل کشور حدود پنج هزار و ۸۰۰ کیلومتر است که شامل دریای خزر در شمال و خلیج فارس و دریای عمان در جنوب می‌شود. استان‌های گیلان، مازندران، گلستان، خوزستان، بوشهر، هرمزگان و سیستان و بلوچستان در شمال و جنوب کشور جزو استان‌های ساحلی محسوب می‌شوند که با کمبود آب شرب دست و پنجه نرم می‌کنند.

## ICRC supports vaccination of Afghan refugees in Iran

TEHRAN – The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has provided 250,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine for Afghan migrants in eastern provinces of the country.

Up to 125,000 Afghan migrants and host community members in Iran will receive two doses for a total of 250,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine in eastern provinces of the country as part of the partnership of the ICRC and the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

Iran has been one of the countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with more than 6 million reported cases of infection and 129,000 deaths till November 2021. The country hosts about 3.6 million displaced Afghan migrants.

In the last months, Iran has managed to step up its vaccination campaign with around 53 percent of the eligible population now fully vaccinated. In order to maximize the safety of the whole community, it is crucial that migrants present in Iran – regardless of their legal immigration status – are also included in the national COVID-19 vaccination plan.

Johannes Bruwer, the head of the ICRC delegation in Iran, said, “Equitable access to the vaccine is vital in the efforts to resolve the COVID-19 pandemic. The involvement of the IRCS in this process is particularly pertinent, as a successful campaign requires community-level delivery and social mobilization to ensure community buy-in and acceptance.”

The Iranian health authorities and the IRCS are making massive strides on the national vaccination plan, and we are happy to be able to support this effort.”

Mansoureh Bagheri, the under-secretary-general for international affairs and international humanitarian law, pointed out that “This is a very welcome donation from our long-standing partner the ICRC on such an important humanitarian issue.”



The purchased vaccines as the result of this donation will be used to vaccinate 125,000 individuals, both migrants and members of host communities, in the four eastern provinces of Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, Sistan-Baluchestan, and Kerman.”

The IRCS is a member of the National COVID-19 Task Force in Iran and has been actively supporting the Ministry of Health endeavors in counter-

**Iran hosts about 3.6 million displaced Afghan migrants.**

ing the pandemic in the country through various activities including prevention, screening, treatment, and vaccination.

The ICRC works with organizations and authorities across Iran to provide humanitarian assistance and support for those in need, including migrants.

In December 2020, Daniel Munoz-Rojas, the deputy representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Tehran, said he was impressed by the domestic manufacturing of oxygen concentrators for COVID-19 patients in Iran.

Also in May 2020, Barbara Rizzoli, head of the ICRC delegation in Tehran, said the actions taken by the Iranian Red Crescent Society to battle the COVID-19 outbreak were very significant in various fields, including prevention and treatment.

Moreover, in June, the Iranian Red Crescent Society asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide 2 million doses of coronavirus vaccine to be used for Afghan refugees.

## Scientists use ostrich cells to make glowing Covid detection masks

Japanese researchers have developed masks that use ostrich antibodies to detect Covid-19 by glowing under ultraviolet light, the Guardian reported.

The discovery, by Yasuhiro Tsukamoto and his team at Kyoto Prefectural University in western Japan, could provide for low-cost testing of the virus at home.

The scientists started by creating a mask filter coated with ostrich antibodies targeting the virus, based on previous research showing the birds had strong resistance to disease.

In a small study, test subjects wore the masks, and after eight hours the filters were removed and sprayed with a chemical that glows under ultraviolet light if the

virus is present. The filters worn by people infected with Covid glowed around the nose and mouth.

The team hopes to further develop the masks so that they will glow automatically, without special lighting, if the virus is detected.

Tsukamoto, a veterinary professor and the president of the university, has studied ostriches for years, looking for ways to adapt their immunity power to fight bird flu, allergies, and other diseases.

Tsukamoto told the Kyodo news agency he discovered his own positivity for Covid after he wore one of the special masks. The diagnosis was confirmed after a standard test.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 13

New cases	2,706
New deaths	50
Total cases	6,157,519
Total deaths	130,764
New hospitalized patients	442
Patients in critical condition	3,069
Total recovered patients	5,975,404
Diagnostic tests conducted	40,157,086
Doses of vaccine injected	110,084,738





DECEMBER 14, 2021

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Unfortunate is he who cannot gain a few sincere friends during his life and more unfortunate is the one who has gained them and then lost them (through his deeds).

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon: 11:59 Evening: 17:12 Dawn: 5:37 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:06 (tomorrow)

## Iran: Persian literature

Part 12

### Persian epic,

A complex literary phenomenon, the Persian epic honors heroic figures that do not necessarily bear the divine traits of Greek heroes.

It narrates their heroic deeds but is neither a unified epic in the manner of Gilgamesh, nor a compendium of chansons de geste. Using myth as its canvas, this epic form mixes history with legend.

The diversity of sources is noticeable in its construction. Its usual form is a long narrative poem; and one monumental work dominates the entire genre: Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.

### Sources of the Persian epic

Religious beliefs and myths, as well as historical events from time immemorial belonging to the Iranian cultural sphere constitute the deepest stratum of the epic literature—oral at first, then written.

Some elements go back to even before the Avesta, others date from Scythian times, the Zoroastrian age, or the religious debates of the Sassanid era.

The Bundahishn, a Zoroastrian text written in Middle Persian, gathers many an ancient element in one book. It constitutes a kind of Book of Genesis.

In time, royal deeds, dynastic chronicles, romances, and various legends of past ages began to feature in these compositions. Such was the case for the great Parthian or Scythian families, or the famous Alexander Romance. Various didactic and scientific texts were also included, acting as a bond, wielding the various materials together.

A compilation in Middle Persian was no doubt made at the initiative of Sassanid rulers. It contained military treatises as well as rules of conduct expected of the different classes in society.

'Books of the Crown,' laudatory chronicles of the lives of royalty, were composed during the lifetime of these monarchs. Also known as instruction books of a moral and religious nature written in a question-and-answer form.

We know that at least on two occasions this material was given an orderly arrangement. First, under Khosrow I (531-579), the task of glorifying the king, placed at the center of a dynastic history, was embarked upon, as mentioned by Ferdowsi.

Then, under Yazdegerd III (632-651), the work was completed. Though this version was later lost, it was available at the time of Ebn al-Moqaffa, who translated it into Arabic prose.

We are only familiar with the general contents of this translation and other sources thanks to later bibliographic references in literature, including those in Ebn al-Nadim's great bibliographical inventory, al-Fehrest and hence able to verify that this text served as the basis for the Persian epic.

However, it was in prose, and this, at a time when cultural memory as the guardian of faithful transmission systematically preferred poetry, was a great handicap and obstacle to its appeal to a wider audience.

In the interim between Ebn al-Moqaffa's text and the poem by Ferdowsi, many important texts appeared, particularly a chronicle of Syriac and Persian provenance, as well as the famous chronicle by Tabari (911).

The former source, which appeared first in the Syriac milieu of the early Islamic period, was translated into Arabic and appears to have had close affinities with the actual Persian chronicles that had been extant in the first two centuries after the rise of Islam.

The five surviving 'Royal chronicles' which appeared in Arabic between the 8th and the 10th century depend largely on this particular chronicle for their information.

The creation and composition of these texts illustrate an important dilemma for the first Islamic centuries: the necessity to allow for and incorporate significant historical narratives and milestones well before the advent of the Prophet and the victories of the Arabs.

Once the adjustments were made, a first compilation in Persian prose was completed in 957 by four scholars (with distinctly Persian names) under the direction of Abu Mansur, the governor of Tus.

At the same time, around the end of the tenth century, Abu Rayhan Biruni, an Iranian writing mostly in Arabic, completed his Chronicle of Ancient Nations (al-Atar al-baqia).

The Persian poets also set off to work, basing their epic tales, even before Ferdowsi, on the Persian prose text mentioned above, entitled Abu Mansur's Book of Kings. Some of these texts have been lost; others were left unfinished.

The most famous is by Daqiqi, who did not conceal his faith in Zoroastrianism. Eventually, Ferdowsi makes his entrance, and in doing so preserves Daqiqi's poem, which contains a narrative account of Zoroaster's life, by inserting it into his own vast masterpiece.

Ferdowsi: Originally from a family of landowners in Tus in Khorasan, he belonged to a social class that maintained its cultural links with the pre-Islamic past of the country.

He was probably born around 940; and at the age of 71, in 1010, he believed he had at last completed his great poem, the Book of Kings (Shahnameh). He put the finishing touches on it when he was "approaching eighty," and he died around 1020.

We associate his life with the composition of his poem. He began to compose it at the end of the Samanid reign, a dynasty celebrated for its cultural sophistication and sympathies for pre-Islamic Iranian courtly traditions, but completed it under the rule of the first Ghaznavid, Sultan Mahmud, a monarch of Turkish descent.

At the dawn of an era when the Turkish rulers were embracing Islamic culture wholeheartedly and their poets and panegyrists were consequently distancing themselves from the pre-Islamic past, Ferdowsi had managed to paint a vast canvass depicting the Iran of the bygone days, a poetic creation which would inform and inspire subsequent generations.

He dedicated his book to Mahmud of Ghazni and received a paltry reward. It is also true that in the process of glorifying Iran, he was not too kind to the Turks.

Furthermore, by openly declaring his Shia faith, he displeased Mahmud, the self-declared champion of Sunni orthodoxy. In spite of his fame and support from various patrons, the poet ended his days in distress and discomfort.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

To be continued

# Japanese artist Jun Matsubara shows his interest in Iran on canvas

From Page 1 ▶ "My studies raised my knowledge of Iran so that I became very interested in Iranian tile works, architecture and historical sites," he added.

Referring to the architecture of the Imam Mosque, Matsubara said that there are many differences between the site and Japanese structures, and expressed his hope that he could do more paintings about Iran in the future.

He expressed his appreciation for organizing the Iran-Japan Cultural Exchange Exhibition, and asked the Iran Cultural Center to provide other opportunities for artists from both countries to showcase their works in joint exhibitions.

Other Japanese artists, Shigenobu Moriyama, Hideko Murata, Takumi Sejima, Kidai

Taguchi, Soh Tsukamoto, Syouchirou Tsukuda and Kazunori Yamauchi, also put a number of their artworks on view at the exhibition.

Murata has created "A Day to Thank Family Members" exclusively for the exhibition.

"Persepolis" by Sejima, "Travel" by Taguchi, "More than a Memory" by Tsukamoto, "Tehran" by Tsukuda, "A Fantasy of Pars with a Vase and Tulip" by Yamauchi and "Desert and Flower" by Moriyama were drawn for the exhibition.

The Iran Cultural Center in Tokyo is also organizing the Iran Cultural Month at the Japan International Cooperation Agency in Tokyo in June.

Top documentaries on Iran have been selected to be screened during the festival. The organizers



Japanese artist Jun Matsubara poses with his painting "Beautiful Iran" at the Iran-Japan Cultural Exchange Exhibition.

also plan to screen videos of performances by a large number of top Iranian music ensembles.

Several exhibitions of Iranian handicrafts and cuisine will also be organized during the festival.

## Iran's top ritual, traditional plays of the year honored



A winner bows to the audience after receiving her award during the 20th Traditional and Ritual Theater Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on December 12, 2021. (Honaronline/Raha Ahmadi)

From Page 1 ▶ "A Festival of the Famine-Stricken People" by Mohammad Mirfakhrai-Motlaq, "A Tazieh of Fereidun's Test" by Ali Azizi, "Moqarreb al-Khaqan's Performance" by Mehdi Daryai and "Seven Adventures of Rakhsh and Rustam" by

Mohsen Soleimani won honorable mentions.

The winners received their awards from the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili and Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Mahmud Salari.

Performing nearly 100 plays, troupes from across Iran participated in the festival, which took place in Tehran from December 5 to 12.

The festival's closing ceremony began with a short speech by Davud Fathalibeigi, the president of the festival.

In his speech, Fathalibeigi asked Esmaeili to provide the necessary preliminaries for establishing a national foundation for ritual and traditional theater in order to develop education, research and performances in this field.

He also asked the ministry to support the Traditional and Ritual Theater Festival by dedicating a number of its theaters for the plays performed at the different editions of the event.

Speaking at the ceremony, Esmaeili said that

his organization is proud of the Iranian theatrical community and added, the culture ministry, within the scope of its new policy, has specific plans to develop traditional and ritual theater.

"In the government, we have the duty to provide a happy atmosphere for our dear artists in various fields of theater," he noted.

"The cultural life in a society depends on its active and creative artists," he stated.

Last Tuesday, the organizers of the Traditional and Ritual Theater Festival honored German-American puppet show director Peter Schumann and Czech writer Nina Maliková with the Jalal Sattari Awards.

Due to the pandemic, Schumann and Maliková could not attend the awards ceremony, which takes place every year on the sidelines of the festival.

The award was established in 2011 to honor scholars of different nationalities for their efforts in the promotion of ritual and folk artistic performances.

## Mohammad Badrlu named Iran's Still Photographer of the Year

TEHRAN - Mohammad Badrlu was selected as Iran's Still Photographer of the Year on Monday.

He won the title for his collection on the drama "Without Roya" directed by Arian Vazir-Daftari.

The film is about Roya, whose meeting with an unknown girl causes odd incidents in her life with her husband, Babak.

Badrlu has previously been awarded for his works on several films. In 2015 he received a Crystal Simorgh at the Fajr Film Festival and an award at the Iran Cinema Celebration for his collection on "Confessions of My Dangerous Mind" directed by Hooman Seyyedi.

He has also won prizes for his stills of "The Warden" by Nima Javidi, "The Lost Strait" by Bahram Tavakkoli and several other movies.

The Still Photographer of the Year is honored by the Iranian



Mohammad Badrlu holds his award after being selected as Iran's Still Photographer of the Year at the Iranian House Cinema in Tehran on December 13, 2021.

Society of Still Photographers at the Iranian House of Cinema.

Three other photographers also received nominations for this year's award.

Hassan Shojaei was nominated for his collection on director Amir-Hossein Asgari's drama, "The Last Snow", on the ordinary life of a veterinarian.

Habib Majidi received a nomination for his collaboration on the acclaimed drama "African Violet" by Mona Zandi-Haqiqi.

The film tells the story of a middle-aged Shokuh who finds out that her ex-husband, Fereidun, has been placed in a nursing home by their children.

She, and her second husband

Reza, decide to take care of Fereidun themselves, but in their own home. In doing so, the relationship between Shokuh and Fereidun is significantly transformed. This new situation affects Reza and Shokuh's daily life and unexpected changes take place in the lives of all three characters.

Majid Talebi was nominated for his work on "Walnut Tree" by Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian.

The film is based on true events that took place in 1987. Sardasht, a Kurdish city on the Iran-Iraq border, along with several villages in the surrounding areas had been attacked with chemical weapons by Iraqi forces. Qader, a villager from the area and his pregnant wife, as well as his three young children, are exposed to the chemicals and suffer injuries. The situation in the village and surrounding cities is chaotic. Qader must singlehandedly try to keep his family alive.

## Joel S. Migdal's "State in Society" appears in Persian

TEHRAN - "State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another" by Joel S. Migdal, a professor of international studies at the University of Washington, has been published in Persian.

Mohammad-Taqi Delforuz is the translator of the book published by Kavir.

The essays in this book trace the development of Migdal's "state-in-society" approach.

The essays situate the approach within the classic literature in political science, sociology and related disciplines but present a new model for understanding state-society relations.

It allies parts of the state and groups in society against other such coalitions, determines how societies and states create and maintain distinct ways of structuring day-to-day life, the nature of the rules that govern people's behavior, whom they benefit and whom they disadvantage, which sorts of elements unite people and which divide them,

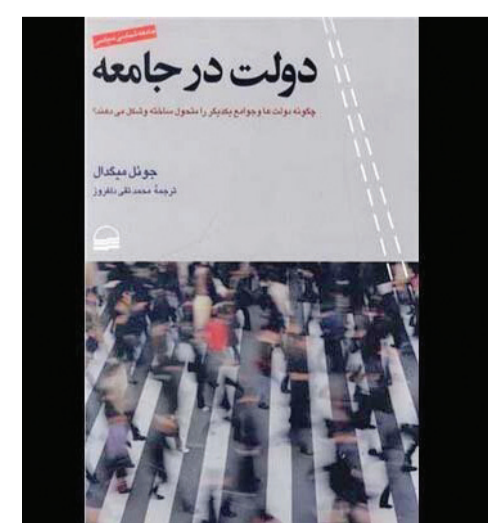
and what shared meaning people hold about their relations with others and their place in the world.

He received a B.A. from Rutgers University in 1967. He then earned an M.A. in 1968 and Ph.D. in 1972 from the Department of Government of Harvard University.

Previously, he served as an associate professor of government at Harvard University (1975-80) and a lecturer and senior lecturer at Tel Aviv University (1972-75).

He came to the University of Washington in 1982 and was named the Robert F. Philip Professor of International Studies in 1994.

He is the author of dozens of books, including "Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East", "Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices" and "The Palestinian People: A History".



Front cover of the Persian translation of Joel S. Migdal's book "State in Society".