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Inclusive Government in Afghanistan

Key to Sustainable Security

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Report

Oil sector inks co-op MOUs with domestic knowledge-based firms

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Industry Innovation and Technology Park signed four memorandums of understanding (MOU) with the country's knowledge-based companies on Monday to cooperate in a variety of areas, Shana reported.

The MOUs covered cooperation in areas like providing capital for innovative companies and market development, using the infrastructure of Iran's National Tech Market network in creating and developing the oil industry technology market, supporting and empowering businesses to meet the needs of the petrochemical industry, and artificial intelligence, as well as Internet of Things (IoT).

The mentioned MOUs were signed with Iran National Innovation Fund (INIF), Pardis Technology Park, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGSIC), and Parsian Data Processing Group Company, in a ceremony attended by senior officials including Oil Minister Javad Oji, Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari, Science, Research and Technology Minister Mohammad Ali Zolfigol.

Oil ministry to focus on improving recovery of wells

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony which was held on the occasion of the National Research Day, Oil Minister Javad Oji mentioned the new plan of the Oil Ministry for the development of oil and gas fields and noted that this new program will be focused on the improvement of the recovery factor of oil and gas wells.

"We believe that more than 700 [oil and gas] wells can be developed to have higher efficiency and productivity in less time by using the capacities of knowledge-based companies," Oji said. The minister referred to a visit to some of the country's knowledge-based companies in the past few weeks and added: "There are knowledge-based companies that are able to increase the production capacity of [oil and gas] wells with advanced initiatives and new methods." Page 4

Discover pristine places to visit in Qeshm Island

TEHRAN – People all over the world know Iran as the land of historical sites, deserts, mountains, and forests, but in the south of Iran and in the heart of the Persian Gulf there are islands that are important tourist destinations.

The southern Iranian island of Qeshm, after Kish, which has the most luxurious and developed facilities, is the most popular tourist destination.

The island is home to many natural attractions, historical monuments, recreational facilities, and shopping malls.

Here is a list of places one shouldn't miss when visiting the island:

UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark

The Qeshm Island Geopark, as the sole geopark in West Asia, is a vast area whose borders are clearly defined and within which some remarkable geological phenomena are found such as Namakdan Cave that is one of the longest salt caves in the world.

Due to its location on the beautiful Persian Gulf shore and Hara Forest, this geological area has some interesting geological phenomena. Page 6



Secret Pentagon documents shed light on U.S. terror strikes

TEHRAN - The New York Times has published hundreds of secret pentagon reports on civilian casualties as a result of the U.S. military's airstrikes in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. Flawed American intelligence is a term the world is getting used to by now. Other aspects of the documents are important to reflect upon.

The never seen before documents, obtained by the newspaper, shows (other than deeply flawed intelligence), how the rushed and often imprecise targeting by warplanes or drones in West Asia occurred during the attacks and the murder of thousands of innocent civilians, many of them children. More than 1,300 secret re-

ports are in the hands of the paper (more than 5,400 pages in total) and the timeframe dates between September 2014 to January 2018. The documents expose what the Pentagon has been saying in public and what the Pentagon discloses from the public; and the difference between the two is vast. Page 5

UNHCR thanks Iran for vaccinating Afghan refugees

TEHRAN – The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi, thanked Health Minister Bahram Einollahi for including Afghan refugees in Iran's COVID19 vaccination campaign.

Grandi arrived in Tehran on December 17 on a 3-day mission to meet with government counterparts to advocate for access to safety for newly arriving asylum-seekers from

Afghanistan, as well as to discuss additional support needed to help Iran maintain its generous refugee-inclusive services.

Iran is a major refugee-hosting country. Its policies and services are inclusive. UNHCR will continue to help mobilize vaccines and other resources against the pandemic, he stated.

Facing new arrivals from Afghanistan, Iran needs more support for all the Afghans it hosts,

including long-term refugees, he added.

Einollahi also for his part said that we do not make any difference in terms of providing services to refugees and Iranian nationals.

"We have always tried to provide free health services to the refugees; For example, all infected ones were admitted to medical centers and received treatment free of charge," he added. Page 7

Iran's ambassador to Sanaa back in home, receiving COVID treatment

TEHRAN - The Iranian ambassador to Yemen has arrived in Iran and is receiving treatment for COVID-19 pandemic, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Saturday.

Khatibzadeh said Hassan Irloo needed urgent medical attention days after contracting the infectious disease, Press TV reported.

The spokesman also expressed gratitude to the countries that helped the diplomat's transfer to his homeland for treatment, praising their assistance as a "humanitarian act."

"By the grace of God and with the help of some countries in the region, Mr. Irloo is being transferred to the country," Khatibzadeh tweeted. Page 2



IRGC launches 5-day drill in Persian Gulf, Hormuz Strait

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) launched a five-day drill on Monday morning in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the coastal provinces of Hormuzgan, Bushehr and Khuzestan. Page 5

Commander vows decisive response against any Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear, military facilities

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Monday warned Israel of a "crushing" response to any attack on Iran's nuclear and military sites, emphasizing that the country will target the source of any aggression against its sensitive sites.

"If such threats are carried out, the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces will immediately and decisively attack all centers, bases, routes,

and spaces used to carry out the aggression," Major General Gholam Ali Rashid, commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, said at a meeting with IRGC Ground Force commanders on Monday, Press TV reported.

In a veiled warning to Washington, the top general pointed out that any Israeli threat against Iranian sites will be impossible without the support of the United States.

The remarks come as Israeli war minister Benny Gantz told officials in Washington last week that he had directed the regime's military to prepare for the possibility of a military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Iranian politicians and military officials have repeatedly warned Israel against any adventurism against the Islamic Republic, pledging a crushing response to any attack. Page 2

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Interview

Christianity and Islam seek to convert secular world to a religious view: Richard Swinburne

By Mohamad Mazhari

TEHRAN - Richard Swinburne, a professor emeritus of Philosophy of the Christian Religion, says that Christianity and Islam are trying to convert the secular world to a religious view.

"We have so much in common that we should both seek to convert the secular world to a religious view," Richard Swinburne tells the Tehran Times.

Swinburne notes that the Abrahamic prophets were great reformers of their era. "I certainly accept the view that they were the great reformers of their era."

Swinburne who was professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at the University of Oxford from 1985 to 2002 believes the core of Abrahamic religions is represented in worshiping only one God and caring for humankind.

"The core of the messages of the Abrahamic prophets is contained in the Ten Commandments. (See Exodus 20); and the prophets continually reminded the notions of those commandments, centered on the obligations to worship only one God and to care for our neighbors." Page 5

Persepolis ease past Vista Turbine in Hazfi Cup

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated Iran's first division side Vista Turbine 4-0 in Hazfi Cup Round of 32 on Monday.

Mohammad Sharifi opened the scoring for the Reds in Tehran's Azadi Stadium with a header in the 64th minute. Siamak Nemati extended the lead one minute later with a powerful shot outside the area and Issa Alekassir made it 3-0 in the 80th minute. Ali Shojaei also scored the fourth goal just before the final whistle.

Earlier in the day, Tractor lost to Mes Rafsanjan 3-0 in penalty shootout, Khalij Fars Mahshahr edged past Havadar 1-0 and Sanat Naft beat Shams Azar Qazvin 3-1.

The Iran's Hazfi Cup was founded in 1975 and Esteghlal are the most decorated club with seven titles, followed by Persepolis who have won six titles.

Foolad are defending champions.

General Soleimani created great capacity in Islamic world: Raisi



TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi on Monday that General Qassem Soleimani created a great capacity for the Islamic world.

Raisi made the remarks in a meeting with family members of General Soleimani and the staff tasked to mark the second anniversary of the martyrdom of said that Late General Qassem Soleimani

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, mostly known as Haj Qassem Soleimani, was martyred in U.S. terrorist airstrike near Baghdad international airport on January 2, 2020.

"Soleimani belongs to the Islamic Ummah and the character of that great martyr should be introduced to everyone as an influential figure in the Islamic world," President Raisi remarked.

Raisi considered the title of "school" for General Soleimani as an effective point by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, stating the fact is that General Soleimani "was not a common person but as a school: He was a messenger for all societies," Raisi said.

He thanked the activities of the staff commemorating the martyrdom anniversary General Soleimani, noting, "It is the duty of all of us to remember memory of Haj Qassem, thanks to the orders of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and with the help of the great spirit of that martyr; the school of martyr Soleimani has done good and commendable work in the cultural and social fields and introduced the character of martyr Soleimani."

Raisi emphasized that in addition to

commemorating martyr Soleimani, the people should honor the names and memories of the martyrs who defended the holy shrines in Syria so that their rights wouldn't be violated.

"It is true that martyr Soleimani is a symbol of the martyrs who defended the holy shrine(s), but he himself emphasized that their memory should be honored," the president noted.

Emphasizing that "we should not allow the issue of defending the holy shrines in Syria and Iraq to be distorted," the president said that perhaps many Muslims did not know the reason for Iran's presence in Syria and Iraq at all.

Having capacity and building capacity as two important characteristics of the general, he said what happened was that the late general was able to train very good forces among Iraqis and Syrians to defend their countries in the fight against oppression.

This action of General Soleimani created a huge capacity in the Islamic world, he noted.

Ayatollah Raisi added, "Today, we need to build the capacity and line up the revolutionary forces, and we need the authorities, the youth and the people to have such a capacity not to leave the field in the face of threats" because people who have no strong determination "leave the field quickly."

Referring to the strong will of General Soleimani, the president said the will of this great martyr has many dimensions and is extremely effective in the social and revolutionary aspects.

Press TV reported.

Head of Iran's Navy Industries, First Captain Siamak Pourkazzazi, said the new engines installed on Alvand destroyer enjoy sophisticated safety and steering systems, and come with new generators and related equipment. They enable the vessel to be sent on long maritime missions.

He added that the homegrown al-Sabehat-15 swimmer delivery vehicles have been repaired and equipped with advanced electro-optical systems.

For his part, Rear Admiral Sayyari underlined the importance of Iranian naval forces' deployment in the northern tip of the Indian Ocean, stating that their presence will help secure the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca and the strategic Bab-el-Mandeb strait.



Anbar province, which was occupied by U.S. terrorist forces, is now under the control of the Iraqi army.

Many of the headquarters at the base are completely evacuated from foreign troops, and some headquarters are used to deliver logistical equipment to Iraqi forces, including weapons, vehicles, and equipment to assist Iraqi forces remain on their mission, according to Rasool.

on Monday.

The exercise, codenamed Peyambar Azzam (Great Prophet), is in line with the military preparedness and tactics of the IRGC in the face of imagined

Foreign Ministry says no direct talks between Iran and U.S. in Vienna

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Monday rebuffed claims by U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan that Washington had given Iran a direct message on Tehran's nuclear program, saying no direct messages or talks have been exchanged between Iran and the United States.

There have been no direct talks between Tehran and Washington since the start of the talks in Vienna in April, Khatibzadeh said.

"Regarding the Vienna talks, no direct talks have taken place with the United States in the recent months," Khatibzadeh told a weekly press briefing.

However, the spokesman further clarified that any messages concerning the negotiation have been delivered to Iran through European Union deputy foreign policy chief Enrique Mora.

"Some messages on the issues of negotiation have been received [by Iran] in a written and unwritten form through Enrique Mora since the start of the talks in Vienna, and answers have been given on the spot," the diplomat reiterated.

Two agreed-upon texts on the table

In response to a question about the agreed-upon texts in Vienna, Khatibzadeh clarified that there are

two texts, on which Iran and the P4+1 (Russia, China, France, UK, and Germany) have agreed.

"These texts have incorporated Iran's views in addition to the previous texts ... We now have texts according to which we can continue the future talks," he underscored.

The spokesman complained that if the other parties had begun the latest round of talks with the same attitude that they concluded the round, "we could have reached these texts sooner."

We are pessimistic of U.S. intentions in Vienna

Later in the briefing, when asked whether he is optimistic of the talks in Vienna, he said, "We do not engage in psychological operations to declare optimism or pessimism. Some of these announcements are part of a psychological operation. It is quite clear that in the framework designed by some American and European parties, some smear campaigns or sudden expressions of optimism occur to impact the negotiation room."

He added that during the talks, the Iranian delegation always thinks about the outcome.

"We pursue the talks with determination and optimism, but we are not optimistic about the intentions

of the other side, the United States," the spokesman said.

According to Iran, He added, the right path is to avoid early judgment and put all the energy into reaching a conclusion.

"In the 12th and 13th days of our seventh round of talks, despite the fact that the other side made public campaigns against the talks, we focused all our energy on shaping that text into the basis of the negotiations in the eighth round," he declared.

Khatibzadeh added that Iran is entering into the Vienna talks with the hope that if the other side enters with the will to lift the sanctions effectively and in a verifiable manner, a result can be reached in the "shortest possible time."

The latest round of talks in Vienna to lift the sanctions imposed on Iran ended on December 17 with the meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA attended by Iran and the P4+1 group of countries.

The sides agreed to return to their capitals to consult with higher officials.

After Friday's meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, EU coordinator Enrique Mora spoke to the press saying that participants have reached a joint text for negotiations.

Mora added that this draft is comprehensive and includes the views

and proposals of the P4+1 and the Iranian delegation on various issues, including the lifting of sanctions and the sequencing arrangements.

Meanwhile, Iran's top negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani told IRNA that during the latest round "serious negotiations took place," and finally the Europeans accepted Iran's stance as a basis for "effective negotiations."

He added that the Europeans did not offer any initiatives.

"They have previously stated that we have suggestions and initiatives on some issues, but during this period of discussions we did not receive any suggestions or initiatives from them," Bagheri Kani said.

The developments come as Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian announced on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic had reached a "good deal" with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that will allay Western concerns about Iran's nuclear energy program.

According to the agreement, the IAEA will be allowed to replace security cameras at the TESA Karaj centrifuge component manufacturing workshop, which were damaged following a sabotage attack on the complex in June of this year.

Iran's ambassador to Sanaa back in home, receiving COVID treatment

From page 1 ► Giving further details at his weekly press briefing on Monday, Khatibzadeh said that bringing questions to the presser from Western media is a "validation of their false narratives."

"Asking Western media questions is a validation of the false narratives and storytelling. Relations between Iran and the Yemeni National Salvation Government are stronger and closer than ever. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains committed to assisting the Yemeni people through all diplomatic and political means. Those who invent these news pieces should pay attention to the fact that the only way to help the Yemeni issue is to respect the will of the Yemeni people," he added.

Khatibzadeh then went on to say that Irloo needed immediate medical attention and this issue was on the agenda of Iran for several days.

He added that several countries in the region, including Iraq, helped Iran in this regard

"Irloo is in a stable state of health today. His coronavirus illness is acute and he needs to be under very special care, and we hope that he will recover as



soon as possible and return to his mission," he added, hinting that Irloo will return to Sanaa when recovered.

Reportedly, the flight was organized following mediation by Iraq and Oman.

Meanwhile, the official spokesman for Yemen's Ansarallah told Sabereen News that the Iranian ambassador was "severely ill."

The spokesman added, "All rumors about problems between the ambassador and Ansarallah are untrue and baseless stories."

In Sanaa, Yemeni government spokesman Mohammed Abdul Salam tweeted that an

understanding between Iran and Saudi Arabia brokered by Iraq had allowed the ambassador's evacuation on health grounds.

Irloo officially began his diplomatic mission to Yemen in November 2020, in defiance of the United States' anger at the two countries' developing relations.

The United States added him to the list of its sanctions a month later.

The U.S. has played a key role in Saudi Arabia's war against Yemen, which has caused the world's worst humanitarian disaster in the impoverished Arab country.

Saudi Arabia launched the war in March 2015 with the goal of bringing former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi's government back to power and crushing the popular Ansarallah resistance movement.

According to a UN report released last month, the death toll from the war will reach 377,000, including those killed as a result of indirect and direct causes, by the end of 2021.

Commander vows decisive response against any Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear, military facilities

From page 1 ► Last week, Iran's Army Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi said Israel's empty threats hail from Tel Aviv's fear of the Islamic Republic, adding that the country's firm response to any Israeli aggression would bring forward the occupying entity's annihilation.

The New York Times, citing several current and former Israeli military

officials and experts, reported on Saturday that the Tel Aviv regime lacks the ability to act on its threats of launching an attack against nuclear sites in Iran, as the Islamic Republic has significantly promoted its defense capabilities.

The report highlighted that a wider attempt to destroy dozens of nuclear sites in distant parts of Iran would be

"beyond the current resources of the Israeli armed forces."

According to retired Israeli air force general Relik Shafir, Iran has dozens of nuclear sites, some deep underground that would be hard for Israeli bombs to quickly penetrate and destroy.

The Israeli air force, he added, does not have warplanes large enough to carry the latest bunker-busting

bombs.

"It's very difficult — I would say even impossible — to launch a campaign that would take care of all these sites," Shafir said.

One current Israeli security official said the Tel Aviv regime did not currently have the ability to inflict any significant damage to the underground facilities in Natanz and Fordow.

U.S. forces have left Ain al-Assad air base in Iraq

TEHRAN — Major General Tahsin al-Khafaji, head of the Joint Operations Command of the Iraqi army, announced on Monday that the United States military combat forces have withdrawn from Ain al-Assad air base in Iraq.

The Major General Tahsin al-Khafaji added that the American troops have completely withdrawn from the Ain al-Assad base and only advisory forces have remained, according to Sputnik.

He noted that an Iraqi security delegation will enter the Al-Harir base in Erbil province in northeastern Iraq to accompany the U.S. troops to withdraw from the base in the coming days.

The general stressed that the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq will be officially announced on December 31.

On Saturday, Iraqi military spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Rasool said Ain al-Assad base in Al

IRGC launches 5-day drill in Persian Gulf, Hormuz Strait, coastal provinces

From page 1 ► The drill will continue for five days with the involvement of the IRGC Ground Force, Navy, Aerospace, military exercise spokesman Brigadier General Abbas Niloufroushan announced

on Monday.

The exercise, codenamed Peyambar Azzam (Great Prophet), is in line with the military preparedness and tactics of the IRGC in the face of imagined

threats and combined warfare.

However, the number of troops that have withdrawn from the base and the remaining forces are still unclear, and the Iraqi authorities refuse to make it clear.

The development comes as Robert McGurk, the CENTCOM chief, had said that no U.S. force was going to leave Iraq, adding that only the role of the forces would change from combat to training and advising.

Iraqi resistance groups have also stated that the presence of American forces under any name in the country is equal to occupation and there is no difference between combat forces and advisers, asking for a full withdrawal of the U.S. troops.

On December 9, the U.S. formally ended its combat operations in Iraq, according to the Pentagon.

Only a few thousand members of the U.S. military remain to support and train Iraqi security forces, according to Mission News Network.

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Inclusive government in Afghanistan key to sustainable security

TEHRAN – Pakistan has just played host to the biggest international gathering on Afghanistan in which Iran actively participated and submitted a number of proposals to address the dire situation in neighboring Afghanistan.

On Sunday, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held an extraordinary session on Afghanistan at the request of Saudi Arabia. The meeting of the OIC council of foreign ministers was held in Islamabad, Pakistan with the participation of Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The session was the latest effort by Pakistan to put the limelight on the dire situation of Afghanistan amid growing international apathy toward the war-torn country. Since the rise of the Taliban a few months ago, Afghanistan has turned into a pariah state with no legitimate and internationally recognized government.

In August, the Taliban overthrew the U.S.-backed government in Kabul and assumed power. But it is yet to be recognized by any country. Since then, some of Afghanistan's neighbors, including Iran, have tried to help the Afghan people while encouraging the Taliban into forming a broad-based government representing all Afghan ethnoreligious groups. The Taliban has announced a caretaker government that raised alarm bells across the globe for excluding women and ethnic groups.

The Taliban's acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, was in attendance at the OIC meeting but he was excluded from the family photo of the 17th



Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers given the fact that none of the OIC member states has recognized the Taliban-led government.

With the Taliban government continuing to be unrecognized, the international community has faced difficulty providing humanitarian aid to the Afghan people who are grappling with economic hardships during a frosty winter.

Iran and some other countries have sent many plane loads of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. But some countries are concerned about and unwilling to directly provide aid to Kabul. This was addressed during the OIC meeting which pledged to set up a humanitarian trust fund for Afghanistan.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi also pointed to this issue. He said many want to make donations, but they don't want to donate directly, they want a certain mechanism that will comfort them.

Commenting on the OIC-proposed mechanism, Qureshi said that the

mechanism has been established, and donations will be made.

Prime Minister Imran Khan also highlighted the dire situation in Afghanistan. "Unless action is taken immediately, Afghanistan is heading for chaos," he said, adding, "Any government when it can't pay its salaries for its public servants, hospitals, doctors, nurses, any government is going to collapse but chaos suits no one, it certainly does not suit the United States."

Pakistan seems to believe that the non-recognition of the Taliban's government would further exacerbate the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. But the Taliban also failed to meet the requirements of the international community in regard to the formation of an inclusive government.

Iran sought to help the Taliban in this regard by presenting a four-point proposal that seems to be devised to pave the way for recognition of the Taliban by the international community.

In his speech at the OIC meeting, Amir Abdollahian unveiled Iran's proposal

that he said was made in support of the people of Afghanistan.

"First, Muslim states should encourage the ruling establishment in Afghanistan and all parties to form an inclusive government. Second, the people of Afghanistan are in dire need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The formation of a financial fund among the Muslim states seems necessary to realize this objective," Amir Abdollahian said.

He added, "Third, it is also necessary to release Afghanistan's assets. Fourth, undoubtedly, the UN member states and its Secretary General can play a leading role in contributing to the formation of an inclusive government and assisting the people of Afghanistan and prevent a new humanitarian catastrophe."

The Iranian foreign minister also expressed hope that an inclusive government will soon be formed in Afghanistan with the participation of all Afghan ethnic groups so that its representative will be able to attend the next OIC conference and Afghanistan's seat won't be vacant.

Amir Abdollahian reiterated Iran's position during a meeting with Imran Khan. He pointed out that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan's neighbors, regional countries and the UN to facilitate the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan by Afghans themselves. Amir Abdollahian also spoke of bilateral issues between Iran and Pakistan, especially the issue of border cooperation.

Iran FM meets with Pakistan army chief

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian met on Sunday with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa as he continued his meetings with Pakistani officials on the sidelines of the OIC conference.

Amir Abdollahian visited Islamabad to attend the 17th emergency meeting of the Islamic Cooperation Organization's foreign ministers in Pakistan.

A political delegation accompanied the Iranian foreign minister during the trip.

The two discussed issues of mutual interest, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

Amir Abdollahian in the meeting referred to cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad in border areas and described the two countries' border security as appropriate. He called for cooperation with Pakistan to increase border security.

The Iranian foreign minister said fighting terrorism is an area of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan.

He emphasized Iran's readiness to export electricity and gas to Pakistan given the capacities of the two countries in various fields of cooperation.

Amir Abdollahian and General Bajwa spoke of the developments in Afghanistan too. The Iranian foreign minister said peace and security can only be restored to Afghanistan through the formation of an inclusive government representing all ethnic groups.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa also extended his greetings to the high-ranking officials of Iran and said the cooperation between the two countries is based on neighborliness and brotherhood. He described terrorism as a common enemy of Iran and Pakistan. General Bajwa stressed the need to activate a joint committee on border security given the need for boosting security along common borders as much as possible.

He also stressed the need for closer cooperation with Iran on Afghanistan, especially in the fight against terrorism.

The Iranian foreign minister also met with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday morning. In this meeting, the top Iranian diplomat congratulated Pakistan on holding the emergency meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Conference's member states. He stressed the need for cooperation between all Islamic countries in the rapid delivery



of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

Amir Abdollahian added that the Islamic Republic of Iran, regardless of political issues in Afghanistan, has supported the sending of humanitarian aid to the country. He said for this purpose, Iran has kept its borders open and is ready to cooperate with all countries to deliver aid to the Afghan people.

The Iranian foreign minister said the only pathway to final peace and stability in Afghanistan is the formation of an inclusive government with the participation of all ethnic groups. He added that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan's neighbors, regional countries and the UN to facilitate the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan by Afghans themselves. Amir Abdollahian also spoke of bilateral issues between Iran and Pakistan, especially the issue of border cooperation.

The prime minister of Pakistan also emphasized the importance of Iran's role in the region and in the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan. He supported the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and stressed the need to help the Afghan people in the current situation given that winter has arrived and Afghans lack fuel and food.

Considering the need to expand bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan, Imran Khan also reviewed different areas of cooperation. He emphasized cross-border cooperation, especially cross-border trade, and formation and expansion of border markets.

Amir Abdollahian met several foreign officials during his stint in Islamabad. He met with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on the sidelines of the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Islamabad.

In this meeting, Amir Abdollahian underlined the need for expanding bilateral ties between the two countries, removing consulate obstacles

and facilitating travels by citizens of the two countries. He also declared Tehran's readiness to hold a meeting of the Iran-Kuwait joint commission as well as consular and border committees. Amir Abdollahian said ties between the two countries are based on brotherhood and neighborliness and extended him President Raisi's greetings to the Kuwaiti emir.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister also extended the Kuwaiti emir's greetings to the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution and the Iranian president.

He also spoke over regional developments and bilateral relations at the meeting and invited Amir Abdollahian to visit Kuwait. Amir Abdollahian also met with the foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia.

During his meeting with his Palestinian counterpart, Amir Abdollahian reaffirmed Iran's support for the Palestinian people and the liberation of Holy al-Quds and condemned the Zionist regime's continued crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The OIC emergency meeting on Afghanistan was requested by Saudi Arabia and hosted by Pakistan which seeks to marshal support for the new government in Kabul. During his speech at the meeting, the Iranian foreign minister presented a number of proposals regarding the situation in Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran submits the following proposals to this important meeting in support of the people of Afghanistan: First, Muslim states should encourage the ruling establishment in Afghanistan and all parties to form an inclusive government. Second, the people of Afghanistan are in dire need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The formation of a financial fund among the Muslim states seems necessary to realize this objective. Third, it is also necessary to release Afghanistan's assets. Fourth, undoubtedly, the UN member states and its Secretary General can play a leading role in contributing to the formation of an inclusive government and assisting the people of Afghanistan and preventing a new humanitarian catastrophe. We hope that an inclusive government will soon be formed in Afghanistan with the participation of all Afghan ethnic groups so that its representative will be able to attend the next OIC conference and Afghanistan's seat won't be vacant," Amir Abdollahian said.

political and diplomatic solutions and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Comprehensive regional arrangements go through mutual respect and understanding of the realities of these countries."

In response to a question posed by Tehran Times correspondent, Khatibzadeh said the fifth round of the Iran-Saudi talks has not been held yet.

He added, "We call on Riyadh for

SPORTS

Persepolis transfer ban lifted

TEHRAN – FIFA lifted the transfer ban of football club Persepolis, the Iranian club announced on Monday.

Persepolis had been handed the transfer ban by FIFA's Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC) over non-payment of dues to former coach Gabriel Calderon.

In a letter sent to the club, the world football governing body has confirmed that the Iranian team are eligible to sign player.

Persepolis are now allowed to play two Tajikistani Vahdat Hanonov and Manuchehr Safarov players who joined the team last month.

Iran GR among Top Five Team Performances of '21

TEHRAN – Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team was chosen among top five team performances of '21 by the United World Wrestling.



What a year 2021 will go down as. A year of uncertainty turned out to be a year full of remarkable performances. After the conclusion of the anthems and the team trophies were hoisted, five memorable performances stood out as this year's most impressive collective showings of the season.

Despite falling six points shy of winning the team title in Oslo, Iran's Greco-Roman unit, headed by world and Olympic champ Mohammadr Reza Geraei, captured six medals – including four podium-topping finishes.

Kyrgyzstan's women's wrestling team, U-23 Ukraine's women's freestyle team, the Russian Wrestling Federation and Japan's women's wrestling team are the other top performers of the year.

Iran to play Australia at 2022 Asian Handball Championship opener

TEHRAN – Iran will play Australia in their opening match of the 20th edition of the Asian Men's Handball Championship.

Iran will meet Australia on Jan. 18 in Group B at the Dammam Sports Hall, Dammam.

The Persians will also play India on Jan 20 and are scheduled to face Saudi Arabia on Jan. 22.

South Korea are in Group A along with Kuwait, Jordan and Singapore.

Defending champions Qatar have been drawn with the UAE, Iraq and Oman in Group C.

Group D consists of Japan, Bahrain, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The competition was supposed to be held

with 18 teams but Thailand withdrew from the event.

The 2022 Men's Handball Championship will be held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia from Jan. 18 to 31. The competition was originally scheduled to be held in Iran but Asian Handball Federation (AHF) decided to move the event to Saudi Arabia due to spread of COVID-19 in Iran.

It also acts as a qualification tournament for the 2023 World Men's Handball Championship, with top five teams from the championship directly qualifying for the event to be jointly hosted by Poland and Sweden.

Norway win IHF Women's World Championship title

TEHRAN – Norway equaled Russia's record four International Handball Federation Women's World Championship titles with a dramatic comeback victory over Olympic champions France.

Six goals down in the 28th minute, prospects looked bleak for Norway, who were facing a French team that were yet to lose in the tournament.

But their defense tightened in the second half, conceding just six goals, and they roared back to secure a historic 29-22 victory.

After replacing Katrine Lunde in the Norway goal, Silje Solberg was named Player of the Match.

She made an incredible 11 saves in the second half, including eight from one-on-ones.

Iran also took part in the competition and finished in 31st place.

Iran, Iraq's physical education colleges to develop coop.

TEHRAN – Seyed Reza Salehi Amiri, President of Iran's Olympics Committee, said that Iranian and Iraqi physical education colleges will cooperate on exchanging coaches, experts and holding joint training camps and training courses.

On the third day of his trip to Iraq, Seyed-Reza Salehi Amiri, President of Iran's Olympics Committee visited several sports centers in Iraq.

During the visits, Salehi Amiri visited Iraq's Physical Education college and stressed the valuable position of Physical Education colleges in Iran with the presence of veterans, champions and elite instructors.

He also invited the head of Iraq's Physical Education college to visit Iran to further develop cooperation and exchange experiences with various Iranian Physical Education colleges.

Salehi Amiri met and held talks with Raad Hammoudi, president of the Iraqi National Olympic Committee on Sunday and signed a MoU on Sports cooperation.

The MoU includes four fields which include holding joint training camps, exchanging coaches and athletes, holding training courses in the two countries and providing tripartite cooperation between sports federations.

Iran beach soccer defeat Belarus in friendly match

TEHRAN – Iran national beach soccer team defeated Belarus 3-2 in a friendly match.

Mostafa Kiani, Ali Darvish and Aidin Teshneh Kam were on target for Iran in the warm-up match.

The match was held in Bushehr, southern of Iran.

Iran became runners-up in the 2021 Intercontinental Beach Soccer Cup in November.

Iran, Saudi Arabia FMs hold brief meeting in Pakistan

TEHRAN – The foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia held a brief meeting in Islamabad on Sunday on the sidelines of a regional summit on Afghanistan, the spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry said.

Speaking during a presser on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh said, "The foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia had a brief meeting on the

sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Conference foreign ministers' meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan."

But the spokesman at the same time underlined that no new developments have taken place in negotiations between Tehran and Riyadh.

Commenting on the negotiations, the spokesman said, "We did not have

a new development in this regard. We are still waiting for Riyadh's answer. The progress of the negotiations will depend on the seriousness of the other side. To the extent that they show seriousness, we are ready to make progress in the talks as well as to reach an understanding on the region and the bilateral talks."

He added, "We call on Riyadh for

Iran-ECO trade grows over 44%



TEHRAN - Iran's trade with the members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) exceeded \$10.447 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 22) to register a 44 percent increase year on year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, the volume of trade with the mentioned countries also increased by 34 percent in comparison to the previous year's same eight months, IRNA reported.

As reported, during the mentioned period Iran traded over 21,778,387 tons of commodities worth \$10,447,084,435 with ECO member countries including Turkey, Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Iran exported 18.631 million tons of commodities worth over \$6,823,246 billion to the said nations in the mentioned period.

He said major export destinations of the Iranian goods in the said union were Tur-

key with about \$3.767 billion of imports, Afghanistan with \$1.27 billion, Pakistan with \$764.389 million, and Azerbaijan with \$335.843 million.

As reported, the Islamic Republic's export to ECO members increased by 46 percent and 54 percent compared to the figures for the previous year in terms of weight and value, respectively.

Meanwhile, the country imported 3,147,332 tons of goods valued at over \$3.623 billion from the ECO member countries, with Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan being the top sources of imported goods.

The value of Iranian imports from the ECO union also increased by 28 percent compared to the previous year's same time span, the official said.

According to Latifi, more than 23.723 million tons of goods worth \$11.71 billion were traded between Iran and the ECO member countries during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), of which the share of exports was 18.419 million tons of goods worth \$6.890 billion and the share of imports from these countries was 5.312 million tons worth \$4.819 billion.

The value of Iran's non-oil trade during the first eight months of the current year stood at about \$33 billion, Latifi had previously announced.

The Economic Cooperation Organization or ECO is an Asian political and economic intergovernmental organization that was founded in 1985 in Tehran by the leaders of Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey.

'Govt. should take new approach in holding pavilion in intl. expos'

TEHRAN - Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak has said the government should take a new approach in holding national pavilion in international expos, the TPO portal reported on Monday.

"The essence of expos and the purpose of holding these global events is to produce artistic-cultural content and to showcase the approach of nations towards the future based on their culture and resources using creative output in the form of visual and theatrical tools," Peyman-Pak said.

According to the official, awarding the holding of the country's national pavilion in

expos, especially Expo 2020 Dubai, to Iran International Exhibitions Company was a strategic mistake that the previous government made.

"This approach will change in the current government administration, and reforms will be made in the process of setting up our country's pavilion at expos, especially the forthcoming Expo Japan," the official noted.

Referring to the importance of the content that presents the image of the country at the expos, he stated: "Holding of the pavilion should be entrusted to capable working groups that can turn the country's culture into a product and present it well."

Over 172,000 tons of car tires produced in 8 months

TEHRAN- Iranian tire manufacturers produced 172,109 tons of the product during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), to register a two-percent drop compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Over 15.911 million tires were produced during the eight-month period of this year, indicating a three-percent decline in terms of number.

According to the statistics, in the mentioned period, 99,297 tons of passenger cars were produced, showing five percent fall year on year.

In the period under review, some 18,294 tons of van tires were also produced, indicating a 13-percent growth. Meanwhile, 37,225 tons of truck and bus tires were produced, showing a three-percent rise.

Production of the tires of light agricultural vehicles experienced a decline of 24 percent to stand at 2,318 tons, while that of the heavy ones also declined two percent to stand at 11,698 tons.

Production of the tires of road building and in-

dustrial vehicles also fell 21 percent to 3,277 tons in the period under review.

In the first eight months of the present year, 12,458 tons of bicycle and motorcycle tires were produced, showing 18 percent growth.

In a bid to nullify the U.S. sanctions, Iran is determined to strengthen its domestic production to achieve self-reliance.

Selecting the motto of "Pickup in Production" for the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020), and the slogan of "Surge in Production" for the year 1399 (March 2020-March 2021) indicates the Islamic Republic's determination to achieve this goal.

To this end, the Iranian ministries besides the private sector outlined their programs for the surge in production in the past year and pursued the set objectives seriously in this due.

It is clear that among different ministries, the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade was one with a somehow heavier responsibility to materialize the motto of the year.

The ministry managed to fulfill its duty as the

(about \$121.2 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 11,274 points, and the second market's index gained 7,031 points.

TEDPIX lost 56,000 points (4.3 percent) to 1,293 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices

TEDPIX up 9,800 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 9,841 points to 1.301 million on Monday.

As reported, over 5.004 billion securities worth 35.154 trillion rials

Oil sector inks co-op MOUs with domestic knowledge-based firms



NIOC Managing Director Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr (1st L), Oil Minister Javad Oji (2nd L), Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari (1st R), and Science, Research and Technology Minister Mohammad Ali Zolfigol (2nd R) look upon as heads of knowledge-based companies ink MOU documents.

From page 1 ▶ The official noted that based on the Oil Ministry's traditional contracts, a total field is assigned to a domestic or foreign company to maintain or increase its production; which will have high costs.

In the new program that the oil industry is considering, apart from the discussion of reservoir development, the focus will be on improving wells and assigning oil and gas wells to smaller knowledge-based companies.

Referring to the existence of more than 5,500 oil and gas wells in 400 oil and gas fields across the country, he said: "Using the capacities of knowledge-based companies, we will undoubtedly be able to increase the annual production capacity of these fields by more than 80 million barrels."

NIOC calls for transfer of new knowledge, technology

Further in the ceremony, Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr stressed the need to access and transfer new knowledge and technology by the company and said: "Underground capital [oil and gas reserves] is not our (Iran's) leverage. It can only be considered an advantage when we are able to recover and produce from them."

He put the country's total hydrocarbon resources at about 1.200 trillion barrels of crude oil equivalent, located in 400 oil and gas reservoirs, saying that Iran's oil and gas reservoirs are the most complex reservoirs in the world.

Pointing out that in the current situation, less than 30 percent of the available resources can be extracted with the available tech-

nologies, Khojasteh-Mehr said: "This has one meaning [and that is] if we want to turn existing resources into wealth, we must use new science and technology," he stressed.

Developing national standards in oil industry

Elsewhere in the event, Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari mentioned some of the problems that domestic producers are facing in obtaining international standards due to the U.S. sanction, saying that the country should develop national standards in the oil industry.

"Although we have had good investments in research, we have not been able to produce much," he regretted.

Sattari noted that the Iranian oil and gas industry used to use foreign-made equipment and

machinery for so many years and this caused the industry to become reliant on external sources but the situation has changed and now despite the sanctions domestic companies are meeting most of the needs of the industry.

Investment in knowledge, technology to boost revenues

Furthermore, Science, Research and Technology Minister Mohammad Ali Zolfigol pointed to the significance of investment in research, knowledge, and technology and said: "By investing in science and technology, it is possible to prevent the sales of raw materials in the oil industry [by creating products with higher added-value]."

"Instead of selling oil for \$60 a barrel, if we trust the researchers, we will produce products worth hundreds of dollars," he said.

Over \$67m to be allocated for developing PSEEZ by Mar. 2022

TEHRAN - Managing Director of Iran's Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) has said 20 trillion rials (about \$67.3 million) of funding is going to be provided for developing the infrastructure in this zone by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022).

Sekhvat Asadi noted that over the past few months some good measures have been taken to strengthen and stabilize revenue sources for Pars Energy Special Economic Zone Organization, Shana reported.

According to Asadi, the necessary licenses have also been obtained for the allocation of more funding for this zone in the near future.

"Considering the coordination made with Iran's Free Zones High Council, a substantial portion of the zone's financial needs for infrastructure development and environmental protection is expected to be provided," the official said.

Emphasizing the pivotal role of Pars Energy Special Economic Zone Organization in developing the infrastructure of this strategic re-



gion in southern Iran, the PSEEZ managing director said: "Flood control is our first priority in the current year, for which effective measures have been taken. In this regard, several dams and waterways are under construction to prevent damage to transmission lines and refineries."

Asadi pointed to the other PSEEZ priorities this year, saying: "The reconstruction of boulevards and city highways in the region and the implementation of emergency plans such as the reconstruction of part of the Persian Gulf airport is on the agenda and will be final-

ized by the end of this year."

According to him, the development of port capacities and increasing the capacity, and organizing electricity transmission lines in the region, along with the implementation of projects related to water distribution networks are other major issues being followed up by this organization.

Asadi further informed about the environmental activities in this organization and stated: "We have already signed a memorandum of understanding with Department of Environment based on which we are going to establish several air pollution monitoring stations in the region."

Located in the port city of Assaluyeh, PSEEZ is home to several petrochemical complexes that receive gas and gas condensate feedstock from the giant South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

The zone is the hub of Iran's exports of major non-oil commodities that are gas condensate and petrochemicals.

'IME makes commodity market observable, transparent'

TEHRAN- The head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) said that Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) has made the country's commodity market observable and transparent.

Addressing a ceremony to launch "futures" for the copper cathode deals at the IME, Majid Eshqi said, "Pricing is one of the problems that has always existed in this market and we still have this problem in some products."

Futures contracts (more colloquially, futures) are financial contracts obligating the buyer to purchase an asset or the seller to sell an asset at a predetermined future date and price.

In a bid for more risk management in the country's capital market, Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) officially launched futures contract during a ceremony held in December 2018 at the place of Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI), which is the sole registrar, central custodian and clearing house for the Iranian stock market.

Addressing that ceremony, TSE head at the time, Ali Sahraei, said, "Futures contract is one of the risk management tools (also called hedging tools) which is today becoming operational at the TSE."

He said: "Jurisprudence Committee of the SEO [which oversees compliance of capital market instruments with sharia rules] has approved the regulations related to the futures and we hope that it will act as a highly-applied

derivative for hedging in the capital market."

"Today we launch futures for seven indexes mainly in vehicles, banking, base metals, minerals, refined products and petrochemicals sectors", Sahraei further announced.

Addressing the same ceremony, the SEO head at the time, Shapour Mohammadi, said that futures are some very important instruments for the market balance, while they are also some strong hedging tools.

They provide investment opportunities for those who are seeking the amount of profit more than they can earn in the normal market deals, the official noted.

He further highlighted the significance of taking the advantage of new financial instruments to grab the opportunities for market arbitrage (purchasing and selling the same security at the same time in different markets to take advantage of a price difference between the two separate markets).

In October 2019, "futures" was launched for the pistachio deals at Iran Mercantile Exchange.

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

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

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

What are the main differences between the teachings of Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) and other religions like Buddhism? The existence of an omnipotent and omniscient God?

Yes. The three Abrahamic religions claim that the universe was created by and sustained in existence (by keeping the laws of nature operative) by an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God who chooses freely to do that; and can, if he so chooses, interfere in its regular operation by setting aside the laws of nature. Also, these religions all have as one foundation the Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible (which Christians call “the Old Testament”).

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are interlinked religions. Christianity approves Moses’ teachings, and Islam endorses Moses and Jesus’ messages and prophecy. However, history shows these three religions had been caught in violent struggles. What are the main causes of such struggles when they have similar roots and origins?

The wars between Christian states and Islamic states (and especially the Christian Crusades) were a disgrace to both; as was the persecution of Jews by (largely, I suspect) Christian states; and also the persecutions by Christian states of those Christians whom they deemed to be “heretical” (of Protestants by Catholic states, and Catholics by Protestant states).

On the other hand, the spread of Christianity throughout the Western world during the first five Christian centuries involved no use of physical force and was achieved by preaching the Christian gospel and by the example of so many Christians who were subjected to a cruel death if they refused to deny their faith. (In the words of the historian Gibbon, “the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.”) The use of force to expand the Church would have been contrary to the example of its founder, Jesus Christ, who allowed himself to be crucified rather than attempt to impose his views by force. There have been no wars of religion and no persecutions of heretics in Christian countries for the last two centuries, and all Christians agree that every human has the right to practice their religion. I am not knowledgeable enough about the history of Islam to know exactly what the position of Islam on these issues is. But I have been led to believe that its expansion in the early Islamic centuries and subsequently was largely the result of military conquest. But Islamic states have been much more tolerant of Christian and Jewish subjects than (in the past) Christian states have been of Islamic subjects. However, some Islamic states today consider it a very serious crime for a Muslim to convert



Christianity and Islam seek to convert secular world to a religious view: Richard Swinburne

to Christianity or for any Christians to seek to persuade them to do so.

However, there are significant differences between the doctrines of Christians and those of Judaism and Islam – notably, Christians claim that God is a Trinity (three persons of one essence) and that the second person of the Trinity, the Son, became incarnate as Jesus Christ, lived for 30 years on earth, preaching his gospel, was crucified for doing so, but rose again from the dead after three days; and that his death provides atonement for our sins. These are central claims of Christianity, and so contrary to the central claims of Islam, I cannot see any grounds for convergence of views. Both Christianity and Islam believe that it is important to convert others to their faith: and so we must each seek to persuade each other by rational means of the truth of our different views.

Although as a Christian, I believe that Christian doctrines are more probably true than are other doctrines, and I argue for this in my writings, I hope that I am open to taking all arguments seriously from Muslims, seeking to persuade me otherwise. However, we have so much in common that we should both seek to convert the secular world to a religious view.

In Islam and Christianity, there is a division between scholars who believe that God’s existence is provable by rational arguments and thinkers who reject rationalistic ways highlighting intuition and non-rational models to conceptualize the notion of God. Do you endorse the first group (rationalists)?

I believe that it is a basic principle of epistemology, which I call “the

principle of credulity,” that it is always rational to believe that things are as they seem to you – in the absence of counter-evidence. Hence, if it seems to someone they have a deep experience of God, it is rational for them to believe this – in the absence of counter-evidence. It is also a basic principle of epistemology, which I call “the principle of testimony” that it is always rational to believe what anyone else tells you – in the absence of counter-evidence. Hence, if the only people you know tell you that there is a God, it is rational to believe them – unless you have any evidence to the contrary. But in the modern world, almost all of us are aware of counter-evidence in the form of people who tell us that there is no God or produce arguments purporting to show us that there is no God. Hence almost all of us in the modern world need arguments to show that there is a God. The production of such arguments is called “natural theology,” and natural theology has always been a part of Christian and Islamic thought; and we need it a lot more today than we did in the past. I have written much in defense of the view that the existence of the physical universe, its conformity to natural laws, the fact that these natural laws lead to the evolution of humans, and humans being conscious, makes it probable that the universe was created and is sustained by God.

How do you respond to the “problem of evil” which tries to question the main monotheistic religions: how God could allow humans to do evil and suffer?

God gives to humans free will and the power to make great differences

to the world, others, and themselves. This is a great gift, but almost inevitably, many humans sometimes make the wrong choices and thereby cause much pain and other sufferings to others. Such suffering, which is the result either of the deliberate choices of a human or of a human neglecting to prevent it, is called “moral evil”. But there is also “natural evil” that is pain and suffering caused by natural processes which humans so far have not learned to control; these include incurable diseases, accidents, and the infirmities of old age. If the only choices we had were deliberately harming or not harming others or neglecting to prevent them from being harmed, many of us would have relatively little opportunity for serious choices at all. But the occurrence of any natural evils gives to each of us a choice – if I am suffering from disease, others have the choice of whether to sympathize with me and try to cure me, or to be callous and ignore me; and I have the choice of whether to bear my suffering with patience or to be bitter about it. Humans are so made that each time we make a choice of a certain kind, it becomes easier to make the choice of that kind next time. If we decide to tell the truth when it is very difficult for us to do so, it will be easier to tell the truth next time; and by continually forcing ourselves to tell the truth, we naturally become truth-telling people. So we can alter our characters. So evils of both kinds give us choices with important effects for good or ill at the time and enable us gradually over time to make ourselves good people, or to allow ourselves to become bad people. It is a great gift from God that we are in this way, mini-creator, making a difference to the world, each other, and ourselves. Evils provide these opportunities. If God had so arranged the world that there were no evils, we would not have any serious responsibility for it, and it is good for us that we do have that responsibility.

What are the main cores of Abrahamic prophets’ messages? Some scholars say they were great reformers of their era, but their followers distorted their messages and teachings over time. What is your comment?

The core of the messages of the Abrahamic prophets is contained in the Ten Commandments. (See Exodus 20) The prophets continually reminded the notions of those commandments, centered on the obligations to worship only one God and care for our neighbors. They also developed and applied these commandments in various ways. I certainly accept the view that they were the great reformers of their era, and I don’t see that their message has been distorted at all in the written texts of the Hebrew Bible.

(The views expressed in this interview do not necessarily reflect those of Tehran Times.)

responsible. Either our government, or our citizens, or both, are to blame.”

In 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed an executive order, formally apologising to Native Americans for historical mistreatment and violence. He later signed a bill that acknowledged California’s role in paying for the massacres of Indigenous people, and agreed to work cooperatively with tribes that have ancestral territory within state-owned land to transfer the land back to them.

Lindsay said the federal government reimbursed California millions of dollars for Indian affairs, including the costs of volunteer companies that slaughtered Indigenous people – and by establishing reservations, it encouraged settlers to massacre Indigenous people who were outside those borders. In 2000, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs issued a general apology for its “legacy of racism and inhumanity,” including massacres and forced relocations.

Hastings, who founded the California law school, orchestrated the killings of at least 283 Indigenous people in Round Valley, marking the deadliest of the state-sanctioned massacres, UCLA history professor Benjamin Madley told The New York Times.

In 1878, Hastings reportedly donated \$100,000 in gold coins to start the UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. In 2017, a professor at the school, John Briscoe, wrote an essay arguing that the college should change its name: “Our rising sensibility obliterates the names of those who sought to enslave or discriminate against a people. How ought we treat the names of those who sought to exterminate a people?”

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Secret Pentagon documents shed light on U.S. terror strikes

From page 1 ▶ The newspaper says it has conducted independent research of its own, and the results closely match much of the basic information from the Pentagon documents, but it found significant discrepancies and oversights by the Pentagon, including the location of the strikes or the number of people killed or injured following the attacks.

The United States pledged a war against alleged terrorists waged by “all-seeing drones” and “precision bombs.” The documents exposure of flawed intelligence, faulty targeting, years of civilian deaths and scant accountability does not match the Pentagon account.

President Barack Obama is widely known as being the pioneer of U.S. air wars. Following the disastrous invasion of Iraq and the number of American military casualties between 2003 till 2011 (nearly 4,500 troops killed, some 900 contractors killed, and 32,000 soldiers injured [not including mental injuries]). The public backlash against the Iraq war casualties was immense, with calls to bring the troops home growing louder by the day. Obama’s thought process was to heed the American

has found that these were not one-offs but rather the regular casualties of a transformed way of a secret war that has gone wrong by bad intelligence or maybe deliberately. (Nobody knows until there is an international trial of some form).

The other issue is not so much that the U.S. will be forced to spend money on compensation but more that Washington lessens the public outcry and the calls for accountability and justice of the military personnel, who are far away yet literally playing video games on a monitor by dropping bombs on civilians. This is the reality and many children have been orphaned and many parents have lost their children as a result.

Following a U.S. airstrike that killed ten Afghan civilians this summer, Amnesty International said, “the U.S. must now commit to a full, transparent and impartial investigation into this incident. Anyone suspected of criminal responsibility should be prosecuted in a fair trial. Survivors and families of the victims should be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and be given full reparation.”

Yet no prosecution ever took place.



publics’ demands while continuing wars and military missions from the air without the need to deploy a large number of troops on the ground. The idea was purported to be if America could precisely target and kill the “right people” while taking the greatest possible care not to harm the wrong ones, then those on the home front would have little cause for concern. In 2016, the former American President said, “with our extraordinary technology, we’re conducting the most precise air campaign in history.”

Now that Obama was speaking a load of absolute nonsense, it has come to light now.

The “extraordinary technology” is conducting the most imprecise air campaign in history. In the more than 50-thousand U.S. airstrikes between 2014 and 2019, which killed thousands and possibly tens of thousands of civilians meant Obama’s initiative made America the judge of those civilians, their jury, and executioner. In just one of the hundreds of examples documented by this research, in 2016, American Special Operations forces bombed what they allegedly believed were three Daesh “staging areas” on the outskirts of a riverside hamlet in northern Syria. The official announcement reported at the time was 85 terrorists were killed. The reality, as a result of the secret Pentagon documents and subsequent investigation shows there was more than 120 innocent villagers killed. No terrorists, just villagers and just bombs that fell on houses far from the front line, where farmers, their families and other local people sought nighttime sanctuary from the bombings and the gunfire.

The problem is Obama can’t be reached anymore to face accountability for the “peaceful” initiative he started. Other American officials in the Pentagon share the same responsibility for intentionally undercounting and underreporting civilian fatalities.

It is believed to be the tip of the iceberg. Over the past few months, revelations have slowly emerged about the nature of U.S. airstrikes and the report suggests more will be revealed; which means the U.S. State Department will be working day and night to try and prevent that from happening.

In September, The New York Times reported that a drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan, which U.S. officials insisted had destroyed a vehicle laden with bombs, had instead killed 10 members of the same family. Last month, The Times reported that scores of civilians had been killed in a 2019 bombing in Syria that the American military had intentionally hidden from the public eye. Now, the Times investigation

The right group added that “it should be noted that the U.S. military was only forced to admit to its failure in this strike because of the current global scrutiny on Afghanistan. Many similar strikes in Syria, Iraq, and Somalia have happened out of the spotlight, and the U.S. continues to deny responsibility while devastated families suffer in silence. The U.S. must ensure that it ends unlawful strikes, consistently and thoroughly investigates all allegations of civilians harmed in attacks, and publicly discloses its findings.”

Successive American administrations are very good at labeling other countries as “state sponsors of terrorism”, but the fact of the matter is America is a state sponsor of terrorism and unlike American accusations that come without evidence; there is evidence from America’s own media outlets about its acts of state sponsored terrorism.

The documents exposure of flawed intelligence, faulty targeting, years of civilian deaths and scant accountability does not match the Pentagon account.

The bombings in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria brought nothing other than death and destruction rather than the publicly stated goal of peace and security. This is while the U.S. has kept killing civilians with impunity.

The civilian murders by the American military is now widely believed to be an undercount of the actual fatality numbers and while the Pentagon repeatedly emphasizes on the notion that it’s military operations are the most “transparent,” the truth that is being exposed tells a completely different story of Washington trying to hide its own investigations and the world now knows why that is the case. The Times visited 100 casualty sites in three countries, it talked with families of the victims and has brought what analysts are saying is just a fraction of the reality.

Nevertheless, as the latest report notes, America continues this policy; U.S. service members sit in front of giant LCD screens and push buttons that drop bombs, just like in a video game. But unlike video games, their targets are very real, and their lethal strikes caused the death of many in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, among other countries. All of these crimes continue with no accountability and with the Pentagon continuing to downplay its acts of terror. Until now, fewer than 20 of the research assessments on airstrikes that have been revealed dating to late 2014 have been made public.

At the end of the day, critics argue what difference is there between a civilian being killed inhumanly by a bomb on the ground or a bomb landing inhumanly and indiscriminately from the sky. Both equate to terror, and both are against international law.

Indigenous groups seek justice for California Gold Rush massacre

During the 19th-century Gold Rush era, state-sanctioned groups of settlers massacred thousands of Indigenous people in northern California, in what both historians and Indigenous descendants of the victims have labelled a genocide.

Last month, following years of pressure from Indigenous groups and media reporting about the historical injustice, a California law school founded by Serranus Hastings, who initiated hundreds of the killings, agreed to change its name. Now, Indigenous people in California are calling for broader accountability from the state and federal governments.

“These were not battles, they were massacres. We didn’t have weapons to fight back,” Deb Hutt, a descendant of an Indigenous group that was hunted down in California, told Al Jazeera. “Who is accountable? The whole state of California? The federal government who actually reimbursed the state of California for their payments to these murderers?”

During the Gold Rush era in the 1840s, several hundred thousand settlers trekked to California, bringing herds of cattle and horses into lush valleys where Indigenous people had lived for thousands of years, according to historian Brendan Lindsay, author of Murder State: California’s Native American Genocide, 1846-1873.

The animals grazed and ranchers cut grass for hay, reducing the food available for elk and deer, which starved or were hunted by ranchers, Lindsay told Al Jazeera.

Faced with starvation, Indigenous people, who relied on elk and deer as a food source, resorted to stealing and killing settler livestock. In retaliation, settlers formed volunteer groups to hunt down and

kill Indigenous people, Lindsay said.

“The massacres were triggered by people starving to death, who needed to kill a horse or cow and eat it to survive,” he said. “And then the owners of those cattle and horses, they go out and repay that theft with murder. That’s the cycle. It’s the rarest of things where a California Indian person killed a white person.”

While Californians know these events as the “Indian wars”, they were not wars at all, Lindsay said. “What they are is massacres. They are unilateral in nature. They are typically unprovoked.” He believes the events meet the United Nations’ definition of genocide.

Settler encroachment decimated the area’s Indigenous population; according to one estimate, the population dropped to 18,000 from 150,000 during the 19th century.

California authorised these massacres under an 1850 law that enabled volunteer militias to deal with crises when state forces were unavailable. The law allowed the governor to certify settler groups, and pay their wages, travel and food, Lindsay said: “It’s kind of like when you go on a business trip and your company reimburses you for all your expenses.”

Amid reports of certified settler groups killing Indigenous people, California’s legislature in 1860 launched an investigation, and the ensuing report noted that settlers did not deny slaughtering Indigenous people.

“Indians continue to kill cattle as a means of subsistence, and the settlers in retaliation punish with death,” the report stated, noting that within a four-month period, “more Indians have been killed by our people than during the century of Spanish and Mexican domination. For an evil of this magnitude, someone is

Tourism projects underway in Golestan



TEHRAN – A total of seven tourism-related projects are currently underway across Ramian county, northern Golestan province, CHTN reported on Monday.

An investment value of 698 billion rials (\$2.3 million), has been channeled into the projects, Ramian's tourism chief announced.

Eco-lodge units, hotels, and motels are among the underway projects, Alireza Hesar-nai said.

The projects are expected to create more than 140 job opportunities upon their completion, the official added.

In terms of natural attractions, cultural heritage, and handicrafts, Ramian has great potential, and to make the most of this potential, the tourism infrastructure needs to be developed, he noted.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some

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

Underway tourism-related projects across Iran

Last September, the former Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said that over 2,400 tourism-related projects were being implemented across the country with a total estimated cost of 1,370 trillion rials (around \$32 billion).

"This volume of investment indicates that investors recognize the growing tourism sector as a new economy in the country and have high hopes for it," he added.

He also noted that ecotourism has developed rapidly and the number of eco-lodge units increased from 400 units in 2017 to over 2,000 units at the beginning of 2020.

The tourism industry of the country was growing and progressing well but unfortunately, it has faced the coronavirus outbreak, which brought the industry to a standstill, he added.

Ilkhanid-era mosque in Masouleh being restored to former glory



TEHRAN – A restoration project has been commenced on the Ilkhanid era (1256 to 1335) Qanbarabad Mosque in Masouleh, a historical village in northern Iran, a local tourism official has announced.

Due to the fact that Qanbarabad mosque is one of the oldest monuments in the area, the restoration is being carried out under the supervision of cultural heritage experts and by experienced restorers, CHTN quoted Mohammad Sanai as saying on Monday.

The historical mosque was registered on the national heritage list in 2012.

Ilkhanid dynasty, also spelled Il-Khanid, was a Mongol dynasty that ruled in Iran from 1256 to 1335. Il-khan is Persian for "subordinate khan."

Hulegu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, was given the task of capturing Iran by the paramount Mongol chieftain Mongke. Hulegu set out in about 1253 with a Mongol army of about 130,000. He founded the Il-Khanid dynasty in 1256, and by 1258 he had captured Baghdad and all of Iran, according to Britannica.

The Il-Khans consolidated their position in Iran and reunited the region as a political and territorial entity after several centuries of fragmented rule by petty dynasties. During the reign of the Il-Khanid Maumud Ghuzun (reigned 1295-1304), the Il-Khans lost all contact with the remaining Mongol chieftains of China. Mahmud Ghuzun himself embraced Sunni Islam, and his reign was a period of Iranian cultural renaissance in which such scholars as Rashid al-Din flourished under his patronage.

Ghuzun's brother Oljeitu (reigned 1304-16) converted to Shia Islam in 1310. Oljeitu's conversion gave rise to great unrest, and civil war was imminent when he died in 1316. His son and successor, Abu Sa'id (reigned 1317-35),

reconverted to Sunni Islam and thus averted war.

However, during Abu Sa'id's reign, factional disputes and internal disturbances continued and became rampant. Abu Sa'id died without leaving an heir, and with his death, the unity of the dynasty was fractured. Thereafter various Il-Khanid princes ruled portions of the dynasty's former territory until 1353.

The stairs village of Masouleh where roofs and streets become one is located in the middle of green mountains of Gilan, northern Iran. Stairway with a specific architecture, the houses of the village are built on each other and the roof of each house is the courtyard of his upper Neighbor.

Masouleh, the most beautiful stairs village in Iran

The stairs village of Masouleh where roofs and streets become one is located in the middle of green mountains of Gilan, northern Iran. Stairway with a specific architecture, the houses of the village are built on each other and the roof of each house is the courtyard of his upper neighbor.

Masouleh is estimated to date for a millennium, as the existence of numerous graveyards inner and outside of the village proves its old age.

The combination of such architecture with natural landscapes can be a national and international touristy center and the only way of the inhabitants' living. As all people could directly see the main facade of houses, the local artists and artisans did their best in this part of the building.

According to the Lonely Planet, local and foreign tourists swarm like ants across the village's rooftops and through its narrow passageways during summer.

From page 1 ▶ The geopark is one of the most important in terms of geological phenomena and the diversity of phenomena such as ecology, monuments, environment, and wildlife that it enjoys more than any other geopark.

Portuguese fort

Qeshm, because of its geographical location, has long been an important strategic center. The Portuguese conquered and ruled it for about 200 years, so even today, it has an ancient Portuguese fortress and many streets bear Portuguese names.

The fortress was constructed on the island in the 16th century. The stronghold was built upon the orders of Portuguese commander Alfonso de Albuquerque when his forces seized the islands in the early sixteenth century.

The Portuguese also left other military structures on the Iranian islands of Hormuz and Larak and in the port of Kong as legacies of their colonialism in the Persian Gulf.

The Persian-Portuguese war took place from 1507 to 1622 and involved the Portuguese Empire and the Kingdom of Ormus, its vassal, on one side, and the Safavid Persia (Iran) with the help of the Kingdom of England on the other side.

In 1622 when the Persians retook Hormuz and other occupied lands, the Portuguese Empire was one of the largest and most powerful empires in the world.

Darreh-ye Tandis-ha ("Valley of Statues")

One of the world's most eye-catching nature's creativities at its finest, Darreh-ye Tandis-ha is a remnant of a high plateau that has been once connected to the "Roof" of Qeshm. The valley is part of those areas which have been once underneath the water, and when pulled up, it has been heavily eroded by sea waves among other factors.

This type of erosion gets reduced gradually while moving more towards the "Roof" of Qeshm, which has remained intact.

In some areas of the valley, numerous fossils may be found including fossils of bivalves, in some areas as colonies. Another interesting geological phenomenon in the valley is sedimentation forming muddy mud cracks, which has created beautiful and interesting landscapes.

During and after the rainfall, it is important to pay attention to muddy areas where sometimes the mud is very sticky and dangerous to walk on at this geo-site.

Darreh-ye Setaregan ("Valley of Stars")

About two million years ago, the Valley of Stars was formed due to soil, stone, and sand erosion caused by the wind, rain, and showers, making the valley a rare natural masterpiece on the Qeshm Island.

According to local legend, a star fell from the sky and hit the ground right in the heart, forming a huge, mysterious, and strange valley that we now know as Stars Valley.

The locals aren't entirely wrong since scientific investigations revealed that this phenomenon was formed by a cosmic in the

Discover pristine places to visit in Qeshm Island



A view of the Valley of Stars in Qeshm Island

first place. Moreover, this valley's mysterious shapes are a result of water and wind erosions as well.

Although no stars were involved in the formation of Stars Valley, thousands of stars are clearly visible to the naked eye at night, hence the name 'Valley of Stars'.

Hara forests

The Hara (Mangrove) forests on Qeshm Island are among the most popular attractions due to their unique and diverse ecology, which appeal to tourists, especially nature lovers.

There are very few tree species that can survive in salty water, such as those of the forest. Because of the abundant salt in the seawater, trees are able to grow along the seafloor, and little vegetation can be seen there.

But in the course of their gradual evolution, which has occurred over thousands or even millions of years, these trees have been able to adapt to the saltwater of the sea and have grown to be an important part of the southern seas of Iran.

Because of their importance, many of these trees are protected in these areas. As the mangrove forests are frequently submerged in seawater, these trees must also be able to survive conditions where most of their leaves and roots are underwater.

Aside from the commercial benefits for the locals of this region, this area has become a popular tourist destination, and countless nature lovers stroll through these forests on Qeshm Island.

Different species of birds can often be found in these forests because mangrove forests are a good habitat for birds and other animals.

Chahkooh Valley

As part of the Qeshm Island Geopark, Chahkooh Valley, literally meaning a mountain of wells, shows erosion of sedimentary rocks and has a depth of 100 meters.

Chahkooh Valley is famed for its three or four wells in its heart, which have been dug since ancient times by the inhabitants of the nearby villages in order to supply fresh water.

Due to the dry and hot climate on Qeshm Island, freshwater stored in the valley is valuable, and wells have been used to store rainwater.

The valley is surrounded by rock mountains. Initially, Chahkooh's walls are high and the area appears wide, but gradually the width decreases until it becomes difficult to pass through, but the walls are still high.

Kharbas Cave

In Kharbas Cave, visitors to Qeshm Island enjoy the mysterious world of the cave, which was built by humans in ancient times but its true story is still unclear.

Median tribe - the first Persian tribe - is thought to have built this cave. Natural factors such as declining water levels and human carvings throughout history contributed to the appearance of the cave today. The structure of the cave has changed over time as people's needs have changed.

The cave rock walls are about 20 to 30 meters high. Kharbas Cave is in fact a collection of four caves. In the Sasanid era, there was a village called Khorbiz or Khorbes that was thriving and prosperous. Kharbas Cave, however, has gained the importance it deserves despite the village being in ruins.

There are some who believe that this cave used to be a place of worship for the Anahita, the Persian goddess of water. Others believe that this cave used to be a temple for followers of Mithraism.

Another theory suggests it was a place where the dead bodies were kept to be eaten by birds, which is a Zoroastrian tradition and belief. According to some others, this cave provided refuge from pirate attacks when the island was attacked.

Namakdan Cave

Namakdan Salt Cave is the longest salt cave in the world, measuring about 6400 meters long. The cave is one of several salt caves in the salt cone-shaped Namakdan mountain.

A view of this mountain from a distance is stunningly beautiful due to the white streaks of salt on its body.

Visitors' eye-catching views have been created by the cave's colorful sedimentary layers and white walls. Various minerals and salt deposits have given the cave mouth a colorful appearance. Within each layer lies a part of the earth's ancient antiquity.

Upon entering the cave and getting further into it, you will see crystalline salt covering the floor. A beautiful white view is created by the stalactites in the cave along with this beautiful flooring. Crystals of pink, purple, blue, and crimson red can also be seen.

It is quite amazing to hear when walking through the cave an unfamiliar crackle sound due to stepping on salt crystals.

A beautiful feature of the cave is the saltwater streams that flow from the bottom. Namakdan Mountain has an underground water flow that runs continuously. This flow opens out of the cave from the heart of the mountain. Saltwater gathers in a natural white pool beneath the mountain that resembles a spring.

There are times when the saltwater in the cave reflects the images and creates a stunning and unique view. The main bed of the spring has a red color and is covered with sediments of red mud.

This cave has a beautiful structure with crystal stalactites that appear to have different shapes on the roof. Seawater drips on the stalactites' bodies due to the humidity of the air on the island and the infiltration of water in the cave. Because of this, these stalactites are always in the process of forming.

Laft Village

The village of Laft is situated on Qeshm Island next to Hara forest.

Even though Yazd is most commonly associated with badgirs (the ancient Persian windcatchers or wind towers), a structure that provided natural ventilation, a glance at the skyline of this historical port gives the impression of fierce rivalry.

A few Ab-Anbars (cisterns) exist as well and are still used by locals today. The Tala Wells (Golden Wells) are also located in Laft, which were created by cutting holes into layers of stone. In the past, the number of wells was equal to the number of days in a leap year, but now there are fewer than 100, each with its own name.

Several aspects of this village's architecture are interesting. The most notable feature is the badgirs of different sizes. Moreover, the streets are narrow and the buildings and houses are built very close to each other.

In the village, mosques stand out as the most impressive monuments. In Laft, there are seven mosques, and the residential areas are clustered around the mosques. The main center of the village is the Jameh Mosque of Laft.

Historical cistern in northern Iran reopens

TEHRAN – A historical Ab-Anbar (cistern) in Sari, northern province of Mazandaran, has reopened for visitors and history buffs, Sari's tourism chief has announced.

The historical structure is planned to be promoted as one of the region's tourist destinations as its restoration project has recently come to an end, Mohsen Bastani said on Monday.

The term Ab-Anbar is common throughout Iran as a designation for roofed underground water cisterns. It associates with water management systems in arid areas that are reliant on permanent springs or on seasonal rainwater.

Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains.

Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

Sandwiched between the towering Alborz mountain range and the Caspian Sea, Mazandaran has a rich yet turbulent history. An early civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabaristan).

Its insecure eastern and southeastern bor-

ders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty.

The northern section of the region consists of lowland alongside the Caspian and upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Marshy backlands dominate the coastal plain, and extensive gravel fans fringe the mountains. The climate is permanently subtropical and humid, with very hot summers.

Yalda night celebration or welcoming Omicron?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – It has been over a year that Iranians are fighting coronavirus, avoiding traditions and celebrations, however, this year, Yalda night has arrived concurrent with the new contagious strain, and family gatherings will be a door to welcome Omicron.

Of all the ancient Persian festivals, only two are celebrated by Iranians worldwide -- Yalda night (the birth of a new sun) and Noruz or Persian New Year (the birth of a new day).

The story of Yalda may perhaps be interpreted as a tale of courage and effort during darkness, a triumph of light and human warmth that ultimately causes the spring to bloom in hearts.

Nationally called "Shab-e Yalda" or "Shab-e-Chelleh", it literally means the night of the forty. This refers to the first forty days of winter that are often the coldest and toughest to bear.

Falling on December 21 this year, Shab-e Yalda needs the empathy of the nation to prevent the new variant.



Omicron transmission is three times faster than delta, and since the outbreak of the virus, people have 17 days to control and prevent the spread of the disease by following health protocols and injecting a third dose of vaccine.

On Sunday, the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control proposed to tighten restrictions, closing all public places such as cinemas, restaurants, amphitheaters,

concert halls, sports clubs, as well as even schools and universities.

The remarkable thing about Omicron is that, unlike Delta, it is not so fatal and is much weaker. So that, an important way to prevent and control the spread of the virus is to avoid parties and gatherings.

The first case of the Omicron COVID-19 variant was identified in Iran on Sunday.

The first case was a man who had traveled to the United Arab Emirates. He has been identified [with the Omicron] in Tehran. One or two other suspected cases are being examined.

Omicron, which has raised global fears of a surge in infections, was first detected in southern Africa earlier this month and has prompted governments across the globe to impose travel restrictions and take other measures to try and contain it.

Iranian students win India's intl. innovation competition

TEHRAN – Iranian students grabbed 3 gold medals in electronics, artificial intelligence, and programming at the India International Innovation and Invention Expo (INEX 2021), IRNA reported on Monday.

Mehrbod Bani-Amirani and Arvin Yaghoubi won the gold medals and the special prize of the competition. A team consisting of Behnam Karimi and Alireza Jafari was the other gold medal winner.

Hassan Kakanejadi and Koosha Rostami also won a gold medal in this competition.

Held on December 13 to 16, the INEX 2021 is planned to be organized in Hyderabad, India under IFIA's patronage.

This competition is held every year with the support of the World Federation of Inventors and the Intellectual Property Organization, in cooperation with the Inventors Organization of India, and this

year was held in person and online with the participation of students from 30 countries.

Rapid development of innovation

Knowledge-based companies and creative startups have grown over the past five years, and Iran has risen 45 places in the Global Innovation Index, according to the UNESCO 2021 Report.

The Global Innovation Index in Iran from 2015 to 2019 has risen from 106 to 61 with continuous improvement, showing 45 steps growth.

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

Between 2014 and 2017, exports of knowledge-based goods grew by a factor of five, before slumping in 2018 after the U.S. withdrew



from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015), commonly referred to as the nuclear deal, and re-imposed sanctions.

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

UNHCR thanks Iran for vaccinating Afghan refugees



From page 1 ▶ Before receiving any help from international organizations, we used our vaccine resources to inoculate all Afghan citizens for free, he also noted.

During this epidemic, the developed countries must help the countries in need, which unfortunately did not do so, he lamented, adding, only 6.5 percent of people in Africa have been vaccinated, where Omicron

emerged and has affected affluent countries, indicating that we must act globally to control the pandemic.

Iran has been one of the countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with more than 6 million reported cases of infection and 130,000 deaths till December 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.

World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran Jaffar Hussain has said it is a great achievement for Iran that the government is vaccinating every Afghan refugee going to the vaccination center even before receiving COVID vaccines from Humanitarian Buffer (COVAX).

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

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

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

Without any discrimination, Iran has provided various services to a large number of refugees.

Population "Juvenilization" in Iran

Part 3

Iran has also made an effort with its new law. Although it's too soon to judge its efficacy before it's put into full practice.

With a focus on shaping young minds, the law stipulates that "All higher education institutions in the country are obliged to raise awareness about the positive aspects of childbearing."

The Ministries of Interior, Sports, and Culture, and other relevant institutions are legally obliged to allocate 30 percent of their budgets to NGOs that work to reduce the age of marriage and encourage childbearing.

Employees with three to five children will be promoted. Maternity leave will be extended to 9 months with full salary and relevant extras.

The government is obliged to establish a life insurance and investment fund for unemployed housewives with 3 or more children living in rural and nomadic areas.

The Ministry of Health is to provide quality natural childbirth in state-run hospitals, in addition to providing free infertility treatment to the couples.

Municipal public transportation services and cultural, sports, and recreational tariffs are to be halved.

Tuition fees for children in private schools and educational centers will include a 20 percent discount.

And all production, distribution, and service units must include phrases highlighting childbearing support on products and goods.

In a plan to boost healthy births, The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Statistics Center of Iran, is to continuously monitor the birth rate and total fertility rate in the country every year, and submit the necessary proposals to the National Population Headquarters regarding plans to improve the fertility situation in provincial areas and cities.

Concluded

Wood burners cause nearly half of urban air pollution cancer risk – study

Wood burning stoves in urban areas are responsible for almost half of people's exposure to cancer-causing chemicals found in air pollution particles, new research has shown.

The polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in tiny pollution particles are produced by burning fuels and have long been known to have carcinogenic effects. The new study examined the sources of the PAHs and found wood burning produced more than the diesel fuel or petrol used in vehicles.

The analysis was done in Athens, Greece, but the researchers were clear that this was not an unusual case. They said that home wood burning was a significant issue for urban air quality throughout Europe and that excessive exposure to wood smoke could cause severe health effects.

"Athens is not an exception – it's more representative of a rule," said Athanasios Nenes, at the Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas in Patras, Greece, and the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland, and one of the team behind the new study. "On the one hand, it's: 'Oh, my goodness, this is terrible.' But on the other hand, it points to something people can actually do to reduce this risk without too much effort. You basically stop burning wood. That's the bottom line."

Research published in the last year has shown wood burning in homes is the single biggest source of small particle air pollution in the UK, producing three times more than road traffic, despite just 8% of the population using wood burners, the Guardian reported.

Even new wood burning stoves meeting the "ecodesign" standard still emit 750 times more tiny particle pollution than a modern HGV truck. Wood burners also triple the level of harmful pollution inside homes and should be sold with a health warning, according to scientists.

The new research, published in the journal Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics, took background samples of the air in Athens every day for a year. These were analysed for 31 PAHs and a wide range of other chemical markers.

Specific compounds are associated with dif-



ferent sources of pollution and these enabled the scientists to calculate the proportion of PAHs produced by each source. They found 31% of annual PAHs came from wood burning, mostly in the winter, 33% from diesel and oil, and 29% from petrol (gasoline).

Some PAHs are more carcinogenic than others, however, and when this was taken into account, the proportion of the cancer risk to people as a result of wood burning rose to 43%, with diesel and oil at 36% and petrol at 17%.

"We know that [smoke from] wood burning is much more toxic than other types of particles," said Nenes, and the results clearly highlight wood burning as a principal driver of long-term carcinogenic risk.

The level of PAH pollution in Athens was the same order of magnitude as found in studies of other European and North American cities, the researchers said, with much higher levels usually reported for cities in China.

The average annual concentration of the PAHs in the Athens study was below EU limits but double the World Health Organization's reference level. Based on WHO data, the PAHs in Athens would be expected to cause 5 extra cancer cases for every 100,000 people, the researchers said.

"Given [the carcinogen exposure] and the extended usage of [wood] burning throughout Europe, eg France, Germany, Ireland and the UK, European action and policies aimed at the regulation of [wood] burning emissions are immediately required, as they can lead to considerable benefits for public health," the scientists said.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Education, labor ministries ink MOU on out-of-school children

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare have signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to bring out-of-school children back to school.

The memorandum of understanding will pave the way for future steps, ISNA news agency quoted Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei as saying on Sunday.

He made the remarks over the 8th session of council meeting for improving educational standards in underprivileged and underdeveloped areas at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. "The meeting is aiming to live up to educational standards, however, the current conditions are unjustifiable, and we should move faster," he added.

تفاهم وزراء برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل به مدارس

وزارت آموزش و پرورش تفاهم نامه مشترکی با وزارت رفاه برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل امضا کردند.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه ایسنا، محمد بطحایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش گفت: امروز تفاهم نامه‌ای امضا می‌شود که نقشه کار برای ادامه مسیر کاملاً مشخص شود.

بطحایی در هشتمین جلسه شورای هماهنگی بهبود ارتقای شاخص‌های آموزشی و پرورشی مناطق محروم و کمتر توسعه یافته که در وزارت رفاه برگزار شد گفت: هدف اصلی این برنامه و شورای هماهنگی ارتقای شاخص‌ها بود، هرچند این روند قابل قبول نیست و باید با سرعت بیشتری حرکت کنیم.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 20

New cases	2,390
New deaths	41
Total cases	6,173,369
Total deaths	131,124
New hospitalized patients	304
Patients in critical condition	2,849
Total recovered patients	6,009,489
Diagnostic tests conducted	40,880,338
Doses of vaccine injected	113,751,456

Recommended prayers cannot attain the pleasures of Allah for you when obligatory prayers are left unattended.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:02 Evening: 17:15 Dawn: 5:41 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:11 (tomorrow)

Iran: Persian literature

Part 18

In the 11th century, the Qabusnameh, written by Prince Keykavus of Tabarestan, shortly after 1082, introduces a different kind of a mirror and at times offers somewhat sardonic counsel, while the overall content is supported by a well-articulated argument.

The various anecdotes that embellish its elegant prose are culled from the historiography of the period and buttress the pragmatic assertions in the book.

It contains forty-three chapters that deal with morality, behavior, and customs successively, and describe various occupations and professions.

A final and completely different chapter is an invaluable treatise on the noble and chivalrous conduct in the kind of milieu frequented by Samak, referred to earlier.

At the end of the 11th century, Nezam al-Molk, the renowned vizier of the Seljuks, wrote his Book of Government or Rules for Kings (Siyar al-muluk or Siyasatnameh), a major work in simple yet elegant prose containing political comment on contemporaneous history.

In turn, the Book of Advice to Kings (Nasihat al-muluk) is the work of the great theologian Mohammad Ghazali, completed circa 1105.

An introduction deals with the fundamentals of faith for a prince in power. Seven stylistically eloquent chapters then examine the exercise of power and its pitfalls; the book became a classic of its genre.

Also worth citing is the Book of Political Aims (Aghraz al-siyasat) written shortly after 1157 by Zaheri, noted above. It is a part legendary, part historical account of 74 kings, their lives, and the maxims attributed to them.

Moral literature: A traditional literature of brief aphoristic sayings similar to proverbs has existed in Persian literature from very early on.

Even before Islam, Zoroastrian catechisms were in this genre (Aturpat-i Emetan). Gathered in large collections, these maxims provided a rich harvest for more elaborate works.

Ferdowsi's Book of Kings contains many collections of moral and political advice originating in Middle Persian sources. In about 945, Abu Shakur wrote a long didactic poem (which has survived) composed of maxims.

Sufi treatises drew heavily from similar collections. Well-known Persian works, already cited, such as Ghazali's Alchemy of Happiness (Kimiya-ye saadat), The Garden of Truth by Sanai, and Sadi's Gulestan, are indebted to this kind of literature.

Nezami took an innovative approach by inventing collections of advice of his own which attempt to show that, confronted with their destiny, human beings are nevertheless able to strive towards intellectual and moral perfection.

Notable Iranian writers in turn composed works in Arabic on ethics inspired by Greek thought. The treatises by Farabi, Avicenna, and Ebn Meskawayh are well known documents of ethics and moral philosophy.

In Persian, Nasir ad-Din Tusi (1201-1274) excelled in this subject with his Nasirean Ethics (Akhlāq-e naseri). In two chapters of his Tasawworat (Reflections), he clarified his thought in personal terms and from the perspective of Ismaili philosophy.

Tusi's Ethics is based on the Greek tripartite

division of morality: the individual, the family, and the polis, concluding with a collection of advice to the prince in Persian that has traditionally been attributed to Plato. Tusi considered this work to be an epitome of all that he had valued in his predecessors.

The great legacy of these important moralists was to create a language of morals in Persian that would inspire the succeeding generations and provide them with a vehicle for further speculations.

Later, in the 14th century, a period of intense political turmoil, Obeyd-e Zakani's (1300-1371) satirical work managed to create the most radical expression of a morality turned immoral in order to unsettle and lampoon a society and depict it in a way which would have been unrecognizable to previous generations.

Sufi literature in Persian

Sufism played a major role in the process of Islamization of the Iranian world. The literary expression of its doctrine suited its didactic approach, which entailed initiating, then guiding its audience on the spiritual path.

Its devotional intensity inspired monumental works in Persian literature. Sufism sought perfection of the soul. Moving from austerity to asceticism, it soon advocated the path of love.

It prompted its audience to reach beyond themselves, leading them to recognize the true self. Sufism could also lead to a form of ecstatic mysticism.

Literary works ensued to comment upon this and guide the seeker along the path. One must recall here that two schools of Greek philosophy, Stoicism and Neoplatonism, had a great influence on the history of the three great monotheistic religions.

At its most basic, Sufism is a relationship between a master and his disciple, between the Beloved as the heralding angel and the Lover as the seeker.

A number of Sufi movements were formed based on this relationship, but not before the 13th century. In the Iranian cultural sphere, two Sufi tendencies first stood out.

In the partially Islamicized rural environment of Khorasan, Ebn Karram (d. 869) headed a pietistic movement with a substantial following, while in the more urban milieu Hamdun al-Qassar (d. 884) encouraged an intimate form of piety focusing on self-blame as a form of asceticism. It is mainly this malamati movement that greatly influenced Iranian Sufism and its literary production.

Poetry by Hafez, who was not a Sufi, can be read from this perspective. The Karrami movement met with early opposition and suppression because of its political implications. In this early period of Sufi propagation, a great and solitary, though oft-visited, master appeared: Bayazid Bestami (d. 874). He left behind a legacy of maxims in Persian that had a lasting influence.

In these one senses an Indian influence and a highly developed consciousness of one who has attained union with God (Zaehner).

At the beginning of the following century a remarkable figure, Mansur-e Hallaj, found Khorasan receptive to his radical form of mysticism. He was eventually martyred in Baghdad in 922 for having dared to testify to his union with the Almighty/Truth.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
 To be continued

Iranian artists shine at Al Burda Awards

TEHRAN – Iranian artists have been honored in four of six categories at the 16th Al Burda Awards at this year's Al Burda Festival, a biennial event in Dubai that celebrates Islamic arts and culture.

The awards ceremony was organized on Sunday evening at the Dubai Exhibition Center, Expo 2020 Dubai.

Mahsa Javad-Davachi took first place in the Modern Calligraphy category, while Dhia Al-Jazaeri from Canada won second prize.

Iranian artists Babak Mohammedali Hejazi and Masud Asghar Mohebbifar received third and fourth prizes respectively.

In the Classical Calligraphy section, Iranian artist Ahmad-Ali Namazi-Reyhanlu received fourth prize, while first place was taken by Mohamed Gaber Aboueilla from Egypt. Second prize went to Meryem Nuruzi Halilani from Turkey, and Noman Tayseer Rajab from Syria and Mahfod Thunnun from Iraq won third and fifth places.



People pass a work by Iranian artist Mahsa Javad-Davachi, first place winner in the Modern Calligraphy category, during the Al Burda Festival at the Dubai Exhibition Center. (The National/Leslie Pableo)

Second, third, fourth and fifth places in the Ornamentation category were taken by the Iranian artists Masumeh Ahmad-Moradi, Afsaneh Khademreza-Mahdavi, Asghar Ahmad-Moradi and Zeinab Ebrahimshahi. First prize went to Turkish artist Mihirben Beyza Kaya.

Eight artists were honored in the Typography category, while Iranian

artists Reza Babajani and Bitam Amel were among the honorees.

Duaa Abzeed from Syria, Jamal Eldin Elsamani Mohammed from Sudan, Tarek Samir Alsawwa from Syria, Lama Kadri from Lebanon, Asia Alsheshani from Jordan and Fatima Abdulla Alketbi from the UAE were also awarded in this section.

In the Classical Poetry section, first place went to Egyptian poet Heba Alfeky, while her compatriot Diyaa Alkilamy took second place. Third and fourth prizes were given to Syrian poets Lamis Al Rahabi and Bahija Masri Ildibi respectively.

Omani poet Abdulaziz Hamed Mohammed Al-Omairi won the top prize in the Nabati Poetry category, Mohammed Hamdan Alanezah from Jordan came next. Ali Alqarni from Saudi Arabia and Omani poet Muzna Rabia Albrieki won third and fourth places respectively.

The Al Burda Festival launched the awards to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (S). The 2020 edition was postponed until this year due to the pandemic.

Iranian House of Cartoon, Tehran gallery pay tribute to Kambiz Derambakhsh



A caricature of Kambiz Derambakhsh by Ali Radmand.

TEHRAN – The Iranian House of Cartoon and Tehran's CAMA Gallery paid tribute to Kambiz Derambakhsh, a celebrated Iranian cartoonist who died from COVID-19 in November at the age of 79.

His friends and fans came together at the Iranian House of Cartoon on Monday to attend an opening ceremony of an exhibition, which has been organized to commemorate the artist

44 days after his death.

"Kambiz Derambakhsh was a unique and prolific artist who had numerous positive effects on the cartoon and contemporary art in Iran," the Iranian House of Cartoon said in a statement for the exhibition.

"He loved peace, and peace and love of people were always represented in the forms and lines of his works. A line was the simplest element, which circulated in the maze of his mind much like the words in the mind of a poet, and he drew his thoughts on white paper which made up his new world," the statement added.

The statement referred to quotes from Derambakhsh and said, "Derambakhsh once said, 'I am seeking to find a global visual language; I want the world to talk in the same language; I hate borders, I love peace, I hate wars, discrimination, injustice and environmental pollution; I think visually, I work visually, therefore many people in the world know my language and that is a great fortune, however, it is not complete as yet; I try again day and night'."

The month-long exhibition is showcasing

40 caricatures of Derambakhsh created by 30 cartoonists from Iran and other countries, including Ahmad Arabani, Javad Alizadeh, Hadi Heidari, Bahman Abdi, Ali Radmand, Alireza Pakdel and Bahram Azimi.

In addition, a number of his cartoons are also on view on the sidelines of the exhibit.

CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery is also playing host to an exhibition of Derambakhsh's cartoons published by magazines and newspapers in the 1960s and 1970s.

A private collector has loaned the collection to the gallery for the show, which opened last Friday.

The cartoon's themes are the social and political events of the time, CAMA director Mona Khosheqbal said and added that due to this fact each work in the collection is a historical document.

The exhibition will run until December 28.

Derambakhsh's works were published in the world's major newspapers and magazines such as New York Times and Spiegel. Museums in Tehran, Paris, Basel, Hiroshima, Istanbul, Warsaw and several other cities across the world display his works.

French crime novel "The Mad and the Bad" published in Persian

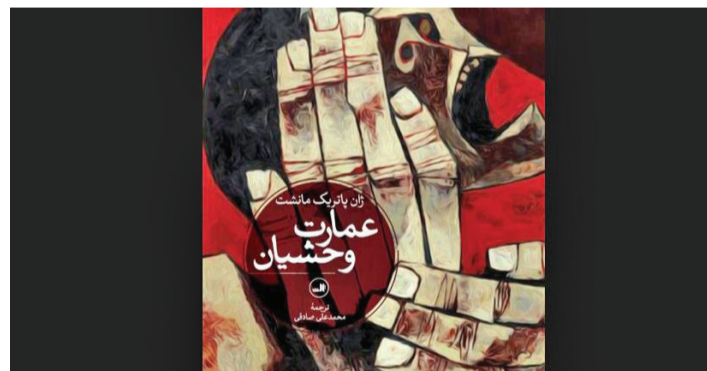
TEHRAN – French crime novelist Jean-Patrick Manchette's book "The Mad and the Bad" has been published in Persian.

Saless is the publisher of the novel translated into Persian by Mohammad-Ali Sadeqi.

The original edition translated into English by Donald Nicholson-Smith was published in 2014 by NYRB Classics with an introduction by James Sallis. It won the French-American Foundation Translation Prize for Fiction.

The book tells the story of Michel Hartog, a onetime architect who is a powerful businessman and famous philanthropist whose immense fortune has just grown that much greater following the death of his brother in an accident.

Peter is his orphaned nephew,



Front cover of the Persian translation of Jean-Patrick Manchette's book "The Mad and the Bad".

a spoiled brat. Julie is in an insane asylum. Thompson is a hired gunman with a serious ulcer. Michel hires Julie to look after Peter. And he hires Thompson to kill them. Julie and Peter escape. Thompson pursues. Bullets fly. Bodies accumulate.

The craziness is just getting started.

Like Jean-Patrick Manchette's celebrated "Fatale", "The Mad and the Bad" is a clear-eyed, cold-blooded, pitch-perfect work of

creative destruction.

Manchette was a French crime novelist credited with reinventing and reinvigorating the genre. He wrote ten short novels in the seventies and early eighties, and is widely recognized as the foremost French crime fiction author of the 1970s and 1980s.

His stories are violent, existentialist explorations of the human condition and French society.

Manchette was politically to the left and his writing reflects this through his analysis of social positions and culture.

His books are reminiscent of the nouvelle vague crime films of Jean-Pierre Melville, employing a similarly cool, existential style on a typically American genre.

Land ho! "Treasure Island" spotted at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – "Treasure Island", an adventure novel by Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson, has been published in Persian.

Mehrdad is the translator of the book published by Peydayesh.

Originally titled "The Sea Cook: A Story for Boys", the novel tells the story of "buccaneers and buried gold." It is considered a coming-of-age story and is noted for its atmosphere, characters and action.

First published as a book on May 23, 1883, it was originally serialized in the children's magazine Young Folks between 1881 and 1882 under the title "Treasure Island" or, the mutiny of the Hispaniola with Stevenson adopting the pseudonym Captain George North.

Treasure Island is a tale noted as a vry commentary on the ambiguity of morality – as seen in Long John Silver – unusual for

children's literature.

It is one of the most frequently dramatized of all novels. The influence of "Treasure Island" on popular perceptions of pirates is enormous, including such elements as treasure maps marked with an "X", schooners, the Black Spot, tropical islands, and one-legged seamen bearing parrots on their shoulders.

Stevenson was also a poet and travel writer, and a leading representative of English literature. He was greatly admired by many authors, including Jorge Luis Borges, Ernest Hemingway, Rudyard Kipling and Vladimir Nabokov.

Most modernist writers dismissed him, however, because he was popular and did not write within their narrow definition of literature.

It is only recently that critics have begun to look beyond Stevenson's popularity and allow him a place in the Western canon.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel "Treasure Island".