Why U.S. Creates a Sense of Urgency on Vienna Talks

Report



Russia calls on NATO to back off

TEHRAN - The Russian Embassy in Washington has denounced a statement by the U.S. State Department on the escalating military activities by NATO near Russia's eastern borders, especially Ukraine. The statement has urged the U.S. not to shift the blame on Moscow and to avoid distorting the reality on

The Russian diplomatic mission wrote "for the sake of de-escalation, the United States should not create anti-Russian military sites near our borders, In particular, Washington shall undertake to prevent the further eastward expansion of NATO, deny accession to the Alliance to the States of the former USSR, not use their infrastructure for any military activities, and not develop bilateral military cooperation with them"

Earlier, the U.S. State Department spokesman, Ned Price, claimed that "Russia and its proxies are responsible for escalating tensions, not Ukraine or the United States." He called on Moscow "to stop using false, inflammatory rhetoric and take meaningful steps to de-escalate tensions to provide a positive atmosphere for discussions."

The U.S. State Department issued the statement after Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu touched on the situation in Ukraine during a ministerial board meeting on Tuesday where he said the presence of over 120 personnel belonging to American private military companies had been spotted at two sites in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine. ▶ Page **5**

Iran develops two vaccines of rotavirus pneumococcus

TEHRAN - Two vaccines of rotavirus and pneumococcus, domestically made by the Pasteur Institute, will enter the country's vaccination cycle next year (starting March 21, 2022) to inoculate children.

The pneumococcal or pneumonia vaccine for children is included in the vaccination program of 70 percent of the world, and soon Iranian children will be able to receive this vaccine produced in the country, Delaram Doroud, vice president of production at the Pasteur Institute said.

Reminding that the infrastructure for the production of the rotavirus vaccine is fully ready, she stated that the technology transfer contract for this vaccine has been concluded and we are ready to produce it in the

Due to the prevalence of coronavirus, the process of technology transfer, and exchange of specialists and supply of pneumococcal vaccine equipment was somewhat slow, and according to the follow-up of the Pasteur Institute, however, it will be finalized soon, she explained.

The Pasteur Institute has been producing BCG vaccines for infants, intravesical BCG, and hepatitis B for decades.

BCG, polio, hepatitis B, measles, rubella, and mumps (MMR) vaccines are among the vaccines in the general vaccination package and are injected to infants and children in Iran. ▶ Page 7

Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul freight train launched

TEHRAN- The Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) railway project, or ECO freight train, was inaugurated with the first freight train moving on Tuesday during a ceremony attended by Iranian and Pakistani officials.

Pakistani Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati, along with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood inaugurated the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul freight

Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Seved Mo-

train at Margalla railway station, in Islamabad.

hammad Ali Hosseini, as well as the ambas-

Iran, Russia, Turkey condemn Israeli continuing attacks on Syria

TEHRAN - Negotiating teams from Iran, Russia and Turkey who had met in Kazakhstan issued a joint statement on Wednesday in which they insisted on several important issues, including a condemnation of the continued Israeli attacks on Syria.

"(They) condemned continuing Israeli military attacks in Syria which violate the international law, international humanitarian law, the sovereignty of Syria and neighboring countries, endanger the stability and security in the region and called for cessation of them," the three countries, known as the guarantor of Syria truce, said at the conclusion of the 17th round of talks within the Astana format.

In part of their statement, the participants also said the aim of the talks started on Tuesday in Nur-Sultan, the new name of Kazakhstan's capital, was to ensure peace in Syria.

The name of Kazakhstan's capital was changed from Astana to Nur Sultan in March 2109. Yet, the talks on Syria held in Kazakhstan are still known as the Astana format, Astana process of Astana group. ▶ Page 2

sadors of Turkey, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to Pakistan, in addition to the representative of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) were also present at the ceremony.

Addressing the ceremony, the Pakistani minister for railways said, "Launching of the container train from Pakistan to Iran and Turkey was a long-standing dream of the countries of the region, which has come true again".

Terming the ITI freight train an important milestone in Pakistan's history, the minister said that business-to-business contact among the business community would further enhance through this train. He said the service would further strengthen relations between the three countries.

Also, Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi appreciated the resumption of ITI freight train and said the service would play an important role in regional connectivity and promoting economic activity in the region.

Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, for his part, said that ECO train as one of the most effective vehicles can help in expanding exports, imports and trade between member countries. ▶ Page 4

Journey to Faith: Iran pushes heritage agenda at UNESCO, seeks status for Razavi pilgrimage

TEHRAN - The spiritual tradition of pil- cance and values. grimage to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) along with sustained efforts to safeguard hospitality services for Razavi pilgrims may soon join UNESCO's listing of cultural treas-

Iran has asked the United Nations cultural agency UNESCO to recognize officially the concept of 'Good safeguarding practices to improve hospitality services for Razavi Pilgrims', an official said.

An all-inclusive dossier on the spiritual pilgrimage site and its associated rituals has been submitted to the UN cultural body for possible inscription on the register of good safeguarding practices, IRIB quoted Mostafa Pourali, who is in charge of Registration, Preservation, and Restoration of Spiritual and Natural Heritage sites at the Ministry of Heritage, Culture, Tourism, and Handicrafts, as saying on Wednesday.

As mentioned by the UN cultural body, the rituals and ceremonies merged with the pilgrimage rites are generated based on the social and religious needs and requirements rooted in the public believes, the consistency and persistence of which exhibit their signifi-

Moreover, the tradition of pilgrimage to the holy shrine, which is situated in the northeastern city of Mashhad was registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts last year under the number 2015 upon a proposal offered by the tourism department of Khorasan Razavi province.

Mashhad, the provincial capital, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city. Its raison d'être and main sight is the striking massive shrine complex of the eighth Shia Imam that is encircled by dozens of five-star hotels and many other accommodation centers. Mashhad and the buffer zone of the complex present a unique approach and exercise towards the development of pilgrimage areas during history concerning a city and its religious core, in a way that the expression of the pilgrimage concept can be vividly seen in the architectural and urban planning of the city.

The Imam Reza complex, in general also in detail enjoys unique creativity and genius, altogether has formed a unique cultural, artistic masterpiece all over the world. ▶ Page 6

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Interview **T**



Sophisticated people know Iran has no plan to build nuclear weapon: American scholar

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - An American anthropologist says sophisticated people know that Iran does not plan to build nuclear weapons.

"Sophisticated people know that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program and will not manufacture a nuclear weapon," William O. Beeman tells the Tehran Times.

So far, the talks to revive the JCPOA – the

official name for the 2015 nuclear deal - has seen no breakthrough. The talks started in April after President Biden claimed his country is willing to rejoin the 2015 nuclear agreement.

"So for the United States," Beeman argues, "the chief value in returning to the JCPOA is to demonstrate American facility in diplomacy, and to have a political 'win' for President Biden."

Some critics say Iran and the U.S. are not ready to make meaningful concessions because they don't need the JCPOA in its old

"Iran can afford to wait, and the United States is under no real pressure to negotiate or make concessions. Hence the stalemate."

Following is the text of the interview:

Are you optimistic about the new rounds of talks to revive the JCPOA? Do you think inflexibility is a prelude for a new deal? > Page 5

Volleyball coach Campedelli arrives in Tehran

TEHRAN - Italian coach Alessandra Campedelli arrived in Tehran, capital of Iran Tuesday night to finalize her contract with Iran volleyball federation.

She will stay 15 days in Iran and offer her preparation plans to the federation in her stay in the country.

The Italian coach will also watch the women's volleyball league. Campedelli will lead Iran's women's volley-

ball team at the 2021 Asian Women's Volleyball Championship if she pens a contract with the volleyball federation.

She has most recently worked as head

coach of Italian deaf volleyball team.

Mohammadreza Davarzani, head of Iran volleyball federation, has already said they want to book a place in the Asian competition's top four.

The 2021 Asian Women's Volleyball Championship will be held in the Philippines in May

The event was Originally scheduled for Aug. 29 to Sept. 5, 2021, but was postponed to May 15 to 22, 2022 due rising COVID-19 cases.

Book telling children about General Soleimani's peace efforts published

TEHRAN – A children's book illustrating General Qassem Soleimani's noble endeavors to secure peace in the region has been published.

"Hajji Qassem and Flying Paintings" has been written by Rahim Makhdumi, the writer of "The Entry-Forbidden Commanders", which carries

stories about 30 Iranian commanders. "Hajji Qassem and Flying Paintings" has been published by Jamkaran with illustrations by Sahar Parirokh.

The story of the book is formed with char-

acters from Yemeni, Lebanese, Palestinian and Iraqi children, introducing Soleimani as the commander of resistance against invading forces in the region.

The story enlightens children as to the endeavors Soleimani made to bring peace back

Children's publishers have released many books about Soleimani since his martyrdom on January 3, 2020, in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad. ▶ Page 8



Iran puts into service new advanced homegrown tank

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Ground Force has put a new upgraded combat tank dubbed Karrar into service on the third day of a massive military drill underway in southern Iran.

The drill, code-named the Great Prophet 17, included a showcase of Iran's newest homegrown arms and equipment. Various forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) began the military drill along the southern coastlines of the country on Monday. ▶ Page 3

POLITICS

DECEMBER 23, 2021 Straight Truth **TEHRAN TIMES**

Iran, Russia, Turkey condemn Israeli continuing attacks on Syria

"There could be no military solution to the Syrian conflict"

"The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey as guarantors of the Astana format:

1. Reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as well as to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and highlighted that these principles should be universally respected and complied with;

2. Expressed their determination to continue working together to combat terrorism in all forms and manifestations and stand against separatist agendas aimed at undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria as well as threatening the national security of neighboring countries. Condemned the increasing terrorist activities in various parts of Syria which result in loss of innocent lives including the attacks targeting civilian facilities. Reiterated the necessity to further continue their ongoing cooperation in order to ultimately eliminate DAESH/ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaeda or DAESH/ISIL, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the UN Security Council, while ensuring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian law. Expressed serious concern with

From page 1 Following is the full text of the the increased presence and terrorist activity of "Hayat Tahrir alSham" and other affiliated terrorist groups as designated by the UN Security Council that pose threat to civilians inside and outside the Idlib de-escalation

> 3. Reviewed in detail the situation in Idlib deescalation area, agreed to make further efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in and around the area. Highlighted the necessity to maintain calm on the ground by fully implementing all agreements on Idlib.

> 4. Discussed the situation in northeast of Syria and agreed that constant security and stability in this region can only be achieved on the basis of preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Rejected all attempts to create new realities on the ground, including illegitimate self-rule initiatives under the pretext of combating terrorism. Reaffirmed their determination to stand against separatist agendas in the east of the Euphrates aimed at undermining the unity of Syria as well as threatening the national security of neighboring countries.

> Expressed grave concern, in this regard, with increasing hostilities and all forms of oppression by the separatist groups against civilians in east of Euphrates.

> Reiterated their opposition to the illegal seizure and transfer of oil revenues that should belong to Syria;

> > (See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Yemeni envoy says Irloo's death is credible evidence of Saudi war against Yemenis

TEHRAN - Yemeni ambassador to Tehran Ibrahim Mohammad Mohammad al-Deilami has called the late Iranian ambassador to Sana'a Hassan Irloo a "real man" and a "divine Mujahid", using an Arabic word for him for his utmost efforts in helping the warstricken people of Yemen.

Ambassador Irloo pronounced dead due to the complications resulting from the Covid-19 complications. He died two days after he flown out of Yemen aboard an Iraqi airplane

the deadly virus. Saudi Arabia deliberately delayed his exit from Sana'a.

Yemen's airspace is controlled by Saudi Arabia, which has been pounding Yemen with Western-supplied modern jet fighters since March 2015.

"The martyrdom of Irloo is the most credible document about the crimes of the Saudi regime being carried out in all these years against the innocent people of Yemen," Ambassador al-Deilami

said during the funeral procession held for Irloo at the Mahalati neighborhood in northeast Tehran.

Pointing to his amity wit Irloo, Ambassador al-Deilami added, "I never thought to participate in the funeral of this great martyr. Martyr Irloo was the best representative for the country of Iran in Yemen, and the people of Yemen will not forget his presence in Yemen and the sacrifices that he did."

While all ambassadors were "fleeing" Yemen, Al-Deilami, he

remained in the country and was helping the Yemeni people "shoulder to shoulder" in all their hardship and difficulties.

Al-Deilami also condolences to the bereaved family of the martyr diplomat who patiently endured his absence at home.

Irloo, a war veteran, was injured by chemical bombs used by Saddam Hussein's army against Iran in the 1980s. When he was returned home on Monday, he was not in good health condition.

JCPOA exit 'was like shooting in one of U.S. legs': Russian diplomat

TEHRAN - In a tweet on Wednesday, Russia's representative in the Vienna talks described the withdrawal of the U.S. from the JCPOA as shooting itself in the leg.

"Indeed! The decision to withdraw from #JCPOA was like shooting in one of US legs. It doesn't matter if it was left or right leg" Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's Permanent Representative to the Vienna-based international organizations wrote on his Twitter account.

He posted this tweet in response to an American journalist who criticized Trump administration's decision to leave the JCPOA unilaterally, saying: "We are where we are because of what I consider one of the worst decisions in US foreign policy in the last decade: Getting out of JCPOA..."

In another tweet, he also announced that he has had a meeting with Sadiq Marafi, Kuwait's representative to the international organizations based in Vienna, to discuss Iran and the Vienna talks.

"Today I met with a good friend of mine H.E. Ambassador Sadiq Marafi of Kuwait. I briefed him about current state of affairs at the #ViennaTalks. We also discussed the prospects of dialogue on



security in the Persian Gulf after the restoration of the #JCPOA," the Russian diplomat said.

Iran and the remaining parties to the JCPOA, namely China, Russia, Germany, Britain and France, began the new rounds of talks in the Austrian capital in April with the aim of lifting the unlawful sanctions imposed against Iran in contrary to the JCPOA.

During the first round of the Vienna talks under President Raisi started on November 29, Iran presented two draft texts which address, separately, the removal of U.S. sanctions and Iran's return to its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA. Tehran also said it was preparing a third draft text on the verification of the sanctions' removal.

The Islamic Republic maintains that its presence at the talks is intended to have the U.S. sanctions removed, which would, in turn, secure a U.S. return to the nuclear deal.

The U.S., which is not allowed to directly participate in the talks as a result of its withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018, claims that it is willing to undo the withdrawal and repeal its "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

Iran argues that the onus is on Washington to return to the 2015 nuclear deal by lifting its illegal sanctions and offering guarantees that it will not exit the pact again.

The newest and last round of talks in Vienna adjourned on Friday. At the end of the talks in the Austrian capital, Iran's chief negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani said that the pace of reaching an agreement depends on the will of the opposite side.

"If the other side accepts the rational views and positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the new round of talks can be the last one and we can achieve a deal in the shortest possible time.

Iran to sue Riyadh for deliberate delay that led to ambassador's death

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Tuesday afternoon blamed some executive bodies in Riyadh for a delay in allowing Iran's late ambassador to Yemen, who was suffering from the COVID-19 infection, to exit the Saudi-besieged country, saying Iran will lodge a formal protest over the delay in accordance with international law.

Ambassador Hassan Irloo, 63, died of COVID-19 complications on Tuesday. He had earlier this week been repatriated from Yemen amid a Saudi-led blockade of the war-torn Arab country to receive treatment at a

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the ambassador's funeral procession in Tehran, Amir Abdollahian said prior to Irloo's death, the Foreign Ministry had been trying for several days to obtain a permission from Riyadh via a third country to send a plane either from Iran or another state to Sana'a to bring back the diplomat home and immediately transfer him to a hospital in Tehran for treatment.

"However, the Saudi side was unfortunately very late in making a decision in this regard and some executive bodies of Saudi Arabia dragged their feet," he added.

"We will formally lodge a protest in accordance with international conventions," he remarked.

Also. he expressed hope that Yemen will be able to get out of this war "as soon as possible through a political solution."

He once again reiterated Iran's stance on the need to resolve the ongoing crisis through political channels, saying Tehran believes all Yemenis should play a role in determining their country's future.

The chief diplomat condemned the military campaign that the Saudi regime and its allies have been waging on Yemen since early 2015.

"The experience of (more than) six years of war showed that the aggressors cannot achieve any victory through military means. Yemen must be left to the Yemenis themselves so that the problems will be solved through the intra-Yemeni talks," he added, according to

Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's former foreign minister and current senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, issued a message on Tuesday offering condolences over the death of the ambassador.

Velayati praised the "indefatigable" efforts of Ambassador Irloo.

"The news of the martyrdom of the revolutionary, kind-hearted, and leading diplomat of our country Hassan Irloo, the ambassador of Iran to the National Salvation Government in Yemen, was very regrettable and tragic," Velayati said in his message.

In a message on Tuesday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bager Qalibaf also condoled martyrdom of Irloo. "The demise of the disabled war victim, the late brave Iranian ambassador Hassan Irloo, the brother of two martyrs of the Iraqi-imposed war, was a very sad news," wrote Qalibaf.

During his two-year mission in Sana'a, Irloo made

efforts to help find a political solution to the Yemen conflict, end the war in the impoverished country and restore stability, security and peace to it, Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian said.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said Irloo was transferred to the country in a "bad state" due to the "late cooperation" of some countries, a reference to Saudi Arabia.

The Wall Street Journal had reported that Riyadh claimed there were no signs the ambassador was seriously ill and that in return for allowing Irloo to leave Yemen, Riyadh had asked the Houthis to release a number of Saudis captured by the resistance forces.

Saudi Arabia controls the airspace around the Yemeni capital, Sana'a. The ambassador was flown out of Yemen aboard an Iraqi military aircraft after negotiations by Oman's government with the Saudi

The death of the ambassador is only an example of hundreds of thousands of deaths who have no voice.

According to the Guardian, the Norwegian Refugee Council's country director for Yemen, Erin Hutchinson, said the Saudi-led attack on Sana's airport "would not change much for the millions of impoverished Yemenis who were already cut off from the rest of the world. Thousands of them die anonymously, waiting for life-saving medical flights promised years ago and never followed through. But it should serve to open the world's eves to the madness that is punishing millions of civilians who have no say in this conflict."

Irloo, a war veteran, had sustained injuries from chemical warfare during Irag's war against Iran in the

He contracted the coronavirus at the place of his mission and passed away early on Tuesday "despite undergoing all stages of treatment to improve his condition", Khatibzadeh said.

Irloo officially began his diplomatic mission to Yemen in November 2020, in defiance of the U.S. opposition to close ties between Tehran and Sana'a.

In December 2020, he was sanctioned by the former U.S. president Donald Trump.

Saudi Arabia, backed by the U.S. and regional allies, launched the war on Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of reinstalling the toppled Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and to crush the popular Ansarullah movement.

The Saudi war has left hundreds of thousands of Yemenis dead, and displaced millions more. It has also destroyed Yemen's infrastructure and spread famine and infectious diseases in the Arab country.

The Yemeni people are still suffering as a substantial humanitarian crisis caused by the longrunning war continues, but efforts to put an end to the fighting have failed.

Despite Saudi Arabia's relentless bombardment of the impoverished country, Yemeni armed forces and the allied popular committees have grown in strength against the Saudi-led invaders.

Russia, Iran, Turkey to hold Syria summit in Tehran in February or March



TEHRAN - Russia, Iran and Turkey have agreed to hold the next Astana format summit in Tehran in February or March 2022, depending on the coronavirus situation, senior assistant to Iranian foreign minister for special political affairs Ali Asghar Wednesday.

"Yes, it [the summit] is planned. We are preparing to hold it early next year. It will depend on the pandemic situation. But in general, we have agreed to hold the summit. Most likely, we will be able to hold it in February or March," the Iranian diplomat said.

Khaji said the issue was on the agenda of talks in Nur-Sultan and will be reflected in a separate provision of the guarantor nations' final statement.

When asked whether the summit

Khaji told TASS in Nur Sultan, on will be preceded by a foreign ministers' meeting, he replied: "Yes, we have agreed on the matter. It will be next year. In January or early February, we will hold a meeting of foreign ministers, and a summit will follow that."

> He also said that the next international Astana format meeting on Syria will be convened within a few weeks after the summit of Russia, Iran and Turkey. "It [the date] depends on the summit, several weeks after the summit," the Iranian diplomat

On July 1, 2020, Russian,

Iranian and Turkish leaders held an online summit dedicated to Syrian regulation, discussing the prospects of a face-toface meeting in Tehran when the epidemiological situation improves.

The 17the round of talks between the Syrian government and the opposition started in Nur-Sultan, the new name of the Kazakh capital that was called Astana until March 2019, started on Tuesday. Special representatives of Iran, Russia and Turkey, as guarantors Syria truce, are mediating between the Syrian government and the opposition.



Why U.S. creates a sense of urgency on Vienna talks

TEHRAN - In a concerted effort to create a sense of urgency in terms of reviving the 20105 Iran nuclear deal, U.S. officials have warned the time is running out to resurrect the deal all while trying to rein in a European push to derail talks in Vienna.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that the window is closing to resuscitate the 2015 deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), underlining the U.S. is exploring other options to deal with Iran.

Speaking at a press briefing, Blinken complained about Iran's nuclear advances, describing them as making it "increasingly problematic" for the U.S. to return to the JCPOA.

"I'm not going to put a time limit on it or give you the number of meters remaining on the runway, except to say, yes, it is getting very, very, very short. Being able to recover the full benefits of the JCPOA, by returning to compliance with it, is getting increasingly problematic by the advances that Iran makes every single day in its nuclear program," Blinken claimed.

He went on to threaten Iran with "alternatives" if talks in Vienna failed to result in a deal soon.

"We're actively looking at alternatives and options and what we will not endure is Iran playing for time at the negotiating table by not engaging in good faith," the chief U.S.

TEHRAN - Yemeni Foreign Minister Hisham

The Yemeni foreign minister considered not

Sharaf called for holding the Suadi-Emirati

alliance accountable for the passing away of

allowing the Iranian ambassador to Yemen to

receive treatment abroad as a humanitarian

crime that requires accountability from the

coalition of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

In an interview with Fars News Agency,

Sharaf expressed his condolences for the

martyrdom of the Iranian ambassador to

Yemen, Hassan Erlu, noting that "the late

Mujahid Hasan Erlu was a factor of solidarity

and steadfastness with his presence to the

He added, "The Mujahid Hassan Erlu

strengthened the bonds and solidarity between

Tehran and Sana'a and was a turning point in

the Yemeni diplomacy's dealings with the world

through Yemeni-Iranian coordination in more

The Yemeni minister added, "He was in

solidarity with the Yemeni cause and worked

as part of the Sanaa team in his dealings with

Sharaf referred to the main reason for

the martyrdom of Hassan Erlu, adding, "Not

allowing him to travel for treatment abroad

helped increase the impact of Corona disease on

Hisham Sharaf stressed the need to hold

the Saudi-UAE alliance and those behind them

accountable because of the late cooperation for

him, and was the main reason for his death."

than one regional and international forum."

besieged and oppressed Yemeni people."

Iran's ambassador to Yemen, Hassan Erlu.

Emirates and those behind them.



The special envoy for Iran also

tried to portray Russia and China

as supportive of the Western

position in Vienna. This is simply

not true. Because Russia and China

have strongly supported Iran over

the course of the talks, which

ran up against difficulties due to

European intransigence, especially

The real reason why Blinken

and Malley set deadlines for the

talks is that they want to put more

pressure on Iran to pocket more

concessions while giving nothing

viable in exchange. Iran has seriously

engaged in the Vienna talks with a

40-strong negotiating team that

presented two draft proposals

carefully crafted in line with the

on the part of France.

terms of the JCPOA.

Also on Tuesday, U.S. special envoy for Iran Robert Malley set the time frame to save the JCPOA at "weeks," threatening that, at some point in the not-so-distant future, the U.S. would abandon the hope of returning to the JCPOA and try to negotiate a wholly different deal.

In an interview with CNN's Becky Anderson, Malley accused Iran of trying to "build more leverage by expanding their nuclear program and hoping to use that leverage to get a better deal. It won't work."

He threatened, "At some point, in the not-so-distant future, we will have to conclude that the JCPOA is no more. And would have to negotiate a wholly different deal. And of course, we'd go through a

have some weeks left but not much there's no deal to be revived."

and other negotiating partners were busy hammering out a draft text for future negotiations, France pushed for the suspension of the talks suddenly under the pretext of charismas holidays.

At the same time, the Europeans together with the Americans sought to put the blame on Iran for the alleged failure of the talks. This blame game was so pervasive that required Malley to rein the Europeans in. "You're no more a cowboy than us! Go harsh, but not too far to risk whole Vienna Talks. Iran Talks are not expendable. Stay on course," he told them, according to Seyed Mostafa Khoshcheshm, an Iranian analyst.

In the meantime, the Israelis sought to exacerbate the situation by doubling down on their anti-Iran bluster, which aims to create confusion and ambiguity. The Israelis first launched a propaganda campaign warning of Iran shortening the breakout time to a few months. They then suddenly extended the alleged breakout to two years. Currently, they are pushing for the notion that Iran's alleged fear of America should be revived through a U.S. saber-rattling against Iran.

The U.S., however, is not in a position to resort to the language of threat against Iran given Tehran's deterrent military capabilities and the U.S. declining military presence in the region best evidenced in the disorderly withdrawal from Afghanistan which invoked another

IRAN IN FOCUS

Straight Truth TEHRAN TIMES

Nazemoshahria satisfied with Iran's friendlies with Italy

TEHRAN - Iran futsal coach Mohammad Nazemoshahria is satisfied with his team's performance against Italy in two friendly

Iran defeated Italy 6-4 in the first tune-up match Monday night and then lost to the Azzurri 4-3 in their second game at the Emilia Romagna Arena in Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy.

"In the first match, we could defeat Italy and showed how strong we are. In the second match, we suffered a close loss against them and I think we lost due to our players' physical fatigue," Nazemoshahria said.

Iran, seventh-place team in the world ranking, failed to qualify for the 2021 FIFA Futsal World Cup semi-finals after losing to Kazakhstan.

Nazemoshahria's side had won a bronze medal match in the previous edition but failed to meet the expectations in Lithuania. The coach fielded several new players in two warm-up matches with the aim of injection of fresh blood to the national team.

"I am satisfied with the results in Italy. The Italian officials had a good hospitability and they have good infrastructure," he added.

"As we negotiated, the Italian team will travel to Iran for playing us in friendly matches," Nazemoshahria concluded.

Jordan goalie Yazid Abu Layla linked with Persepolis: report

TEHRAN - Jordan football team goalkeeper Yazid Abu Layla has been reportedly linked with a move to Iranian football club Persepolis.

The Jordanian newspaper Al Ghad has reported that an Iranian club have shown interest in signing Abu Layla but it has not mentioned the name of the club.

The 28-year-old goalkeeper stole the show in the 2021 FIFA Arab Cup held in Doha, Oatar from Nov. 30 to Dec. 18.

After departure of Croat goalkeeper Bozhidar Radosevic, Persepolis are looking for a replacement and the Iranian media reports suggest that the Reds have set their sight on the custodian.

Abu Layla currently plays in Jordanian club

The local media have reported that Persepolis also eye Portimonense goalkeeper Payam Niazmand.

Iran's Gholizadeh. Hosseini shortlisted for FC International Player of Week

TEHRAN - Iranian international players Ali Gholizadeh and Majid Hossein have been shortlisted for the AFC International Player of

The Iranian duo stole the show in their

respective leagues last week. Which Asian player outside the continent

shone brightest of all? Based on matches from December 14 to 20,

the-afc.com has introduced 10 players.

*Ali Gholizadeh (RSC Charleroi, Iran) 72 minutes, 1 goal, 1 secondary assist, 81%

pass accuracy (2-4 v KRC Genk) 90 minutes, 1 goal, 1 secondary assist, 88%

pass accuracy (4-0 KAS Eupen) Gholizadeh has featured in this column several times in 2021, bur this may have been his best

week for the year.

The Team Melli star scored twice, including a long-range rocket away to Genk - and was involved in the construction of two more goals - taking his tally to seven league goals for the

*Majid Hosseini (Kayserispor, Iran)

90 minutes, 93% pass accuracy, 70% duels won, 15 recoveries (0-0 Gaziantep)

Attacking players regularly catch the eye when assessing Asia's finest exports abroad, but Iranian defender Majid Hosseini has shown the continent also produces top class defenders with his recent performances for Turkish outfit Kayserispor.

Hosseini was outstanding in his latest outing, completing over 50 passes and routinely winning the ball to help his side record a clean sheet.

Kyogo Furuhashi (Celtic, Japan), Tom Rogic (Celtic, Australia), Son Heung-min (Tottenham Hotspur, Korea Republic), Takehiro Tomiyasu (Arsenal, Japan), Saki Kumagai (FC Bayern, Japan), Masaya Okugawa (Arminia Bielefeld, Japan), Lee Jae-sung (Mainz 05, Korea Republic) and Daichi Kamada (Eintracht Frankfurt, Japan)

Nowruz tournament to be held in Iran

TEHRAN - The inaugural edition of Nowruz football tournament will be held in Iran.

The football federations of Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan reached an agreement after a meeting in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, to expand cooperation, conduct appropriate training camps and arrange friendly matches between the member states.

According to the deal, a tournament called "Nowruz" will be held from the next year 2022 with the permanent presence of four member states of CAFA. Also, the senior teams of each country will play in a competition on the occasion of Nowruz and in the days leading up to the celebration of the New Year, for a four-a-side

Hassan Kamranifar, Secretary-General of Iran's Football Federation, who was representing Iran in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, was appointed as the executive director of the first tournament, along with Asian refereeing veteran Roshan Irmatov of Uzbekistan. The period of holding the Nowruz 2022 tournament will be decided by the members of CAFA after further consultations, teammelli.com reported.

The Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) is a subdivision of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) association of the footballplaying nations in Central Asia. Its headquarters is in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and the President is Rustam Emomali from Tajikistan.

The member states of CAFA are Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan.

Niazmand puts Portimonense into the quarters of Portuguese Cup

TEHRAN - Iranian goalkeeper Payam Niazmand helped Portimonense beat Famalicão in the Portuguese Cup Round of 16.

Two teams drew 1-1 after the 120 minutes and Portimonense won the match 4-2 in penalty

Aylton Boa Morte put the Algarve at an advantage in the first half but was sent off on the 51st minute after receiving his second yellow card.

Portimonense held the advantage until the 82nd minute when Bruno Rodrigues scored to bring the side level at 1-1.

The match remained a draw and went into a penalty shootout to determine the winners of

Luquinha, Lucas Fernandes, Carlinhos, and Pedro Sá scored on their attempts, but the goalkeeper of Portimonense was decisive, stopping the shots from Banza and Pickel to put his team into the next phase of the competition.

period of escalating crisis." Iran also announced that reaching Malley pointed that if the Iranians a swift and good deal is possible "continue at their current pace, we if the West shows the will. But the Europeans don't seem willing to

more than that, at which point, I think, the conclusion will be that

achieve such a deal and they prefer negotiating through the media. During the latest round, while Iran Yemen FM calls for Saudi-Emirati accountability on ambassador demise

"Despite the allegations of the aggression's

media that he died injured due to an accident,

what happened to him from the delay in leaving

is considered a humanitarian crime that requires

the accountability of the coalition of Saudi Arabia

and the UAE and those behind them, and even

what happened to the martyr Erlu is considered

a transgression of diplomatic norms in dealing

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman,

Saeed Khatibzadeh, had announced that the

ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran

to Yemen was martyred yesterday morning,

Tuesday, as a result of being infected with

Khatibzadeh pointed out that martyr Erlu

had been injured in a chemical attack during the

imposed war (which Saddam's regime launched

on Iran), and he was infected with the Corona

virus in the place of his mission in Yemen, and

he returned to the country unfortunately

in unfavorable conditions due to the late

cooperation of some countries, and despite the

use of all stages of treatment to improve his

Iran had to submit a request to the Saudi-led

coalition to allow the transfer of the diplomat

to Iran as his acute condition required intensive

However, the coalition's delay in permitting

the envoy's transfer resulted in the worsening

of his health status, as reflected in the Foreign

Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian's words in

health, he was martyred.

with all diplomats during periods of war."

in unfavorable circumstances.

the return of the martyred ambassador to Iran the commemoration ceremony held for the deceased diplomat on Tuesday afternoon.

> "Regarding what happened to martyr Irlou, we waited for a few days to get permission through another country to send a plane from Iran or another country to transport him immediately to a well-equipped hospital in Iran, but unfortunately the Saudis decided too late, and some Saudi officials delayed it," he said.

> He added that Iran will submit an official complaint regarding the matter.

> "We will formally submit our protest in accordance with international conventions, and at the same time we hope that Yemen will be able to get out of this war and tough siege as soon as possible in the direction of a political solution."

> Referring to Irlou's services in Yemen, Amir Abdollahian said during his two years' service in Yemen, the distinguished diplomat sought a political solution to the Yemen crisis as the chief focus of his diplomatic moves, and to help end the war in Yemen and bring stability and security and peace back to the country.

> The foreign minister believes that the experience of 6 years of war has shown that the aggressor side cannot achieve any victory through military means.

"They should leave (the issue of) Yemen to the Yemenis themselves to solve the problems through Yemeni-Yemeni talks," he added.

Yemen must stand against actions that jeopardize its national sovereignty, according to Iran's top diplomat, and at the end it is Yemen that can decide for its future.

Iran puts into service new advanced homegrown tank

Frome Page 1 ▶ In a press briefing on Monday, Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan, the IRGC's deputy chief of operations and spokesman for the drills, announced that various IRGC units such as the aerospace force and the cyber-electronic division would participate in the exercise.

On Tuesday, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami, accompanied by a number of senior generals, paid a visit to the location of the drill.

The drill featured real-time firing of smart bombs, ballistic and cruise missiles targeting fixed and mobile targets. In addition, combat drones dropped bombs with pinpoint accuracy and Su-22 warplanes bombarded mock enemy targets in close air support (CAS) operation.

On Wednesday, the Karrar tank was operationalized during the exercise. Karrar is an upgraded version of the T-72m tanks that come into service for the first time.

medical care.

The version of Karrar used by the IRGC Ground Force is equipped with a camouflage system which provides concealment against thermal infrared radar detection, according to Tasnim.

It is also furnished with an electrooptical fire control system, laser rangefinders, and a ballistic computer.

The ongoing war game covers the coastlines of the southern provinces of Hormozgan, Bushehr and Khuzestan.

During the drill, the IRGC forces also extensively used combat drones with upgraded capabilities.

IRGC Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour said the assault and combat drones in possession of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) are capable of targeting any place and destroying any target.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of Payambar-e Azam 17 (The Great Prophet), the general highlighted the major advances in the military drones used by his forces.

The IRGC's tactical doctrine has changed and been updated proportional to the new threats, he noted, according to Tasnim.

Hailing the production of homegrown drones with advanced technologies, the commander said, "Our assault and combat drones can target any spot deemed necessary, in a way that hitting and detonating any target has become possible with such a tool and after a process in which such aircraft have developed and been equipped."

He also noted that the IRGC's technologies used for electronic warfare have improved quantitatively and qualitatively.

The drill came amid Israeli threats against Iran. Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz has said that he ordered the Israeli army to prepare for a military attack on Iran. Other Israeli intelligence, political and military officials have echoed the same threat. An Iranian security official has told Nour News, a media outlet close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, that relative progress made in the Vienna talks could reinforce Israel's motivation to make "malicious moves."

ECONOMY



Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul freight train launched

From page 1 The length of the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway is 6,500 km, of which 2,570 km is in Iran, 2,000 km in Turkey and about 1,900 km in Pakistan, which takes less than half the shipping time and will also be safer and more economical as compared to road.

ITI freight train will be operated regularly on Tuesday of every week. The freight train had nine wagons initially, said a senior railway official.

As per present arrangement to start the train and the schedule agreed jointly by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, the running time between Drence-Kapikoy (Istanbul) and Zahedan-Tabraiz



(Iran) will be 90 hours each. From Zahedan to Islamabad, the train would take 135.5 hours.

Industry Ministry should set up an independent department for SMEs



TEHRAN- Given the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), at least one independent department should be established in Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade for them so that they will be specifically supported, a board member of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) stressed.

Criticizing the same view toward the SMEs as that toward the large industries, Keyvan Kashefi said: "The rules and regulations are the same for both categories of industries, which puts double pressure on small and medium industries.

Today, about 80 percent of Iran's exports are made by about 1,200 large companies, and this has led to the focus of attention and resources, especially the governmental resources, on these industries; he lamented, adding, "Although large industries are drivers of the economy and should be considered, small and medium industries should not be

He further considered the neglect of small and medium industries as the main harm to the country's economy.

Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade's data show that 31.187 trillion rials (about \$107.5 million) has been paid to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and semi-finished industrial projects with an over 60 percent physical progress during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21).

The mentioned facilities, which are provided for renewing machinery, equipping production units, or completing semi-finished projects, have been paid in the form of bank loans to 917 projects and production units.

The program for offering bank facilities to SMEs and semi-finished projects was kicked off in February 2019 by the Industry Ministry in collaboration with the Central Bank of Iran

According to the Industry Ministry data, under the framework of the mentioned program 2,023 SMEs and semi-finished projects in 31 provinces registered to receive facilities

Gas storage at Shourijeh to be increased by 100% in 3 years

TEHRAN - The amount of gas storage at Shourijeh storage facility will be risen by 100 percent in the next three years, the managing director of Iran Gas Engineering and Development Company announced.

Reza Noshadi said that the daily storage capacity of Shourijeh will rise to 40 million Transmission Company (IGTC)'s Managing cubic meters (mcm) from 20 mcm.

As one of the world's top gas producers, Iran has been following a plan to expand its underground natural gas storage capacity to ensure that enough natural gas is available during peak demand periods to avoid electricity supply shortfalls in the future.

According to the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)'s plans, the capacity of the two storage facilities, Sarajeh and Shourijeh, is planned to increase to over seven billion cubic meters in near future.

As recently announced by Iranian Gas Director Mehdi Jamshidi-Dana, Gas transmission in Iran has hit a new record of over 844 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) as compared to the previous year.

According to the IGTC head, the transmission capacity of the national gas network has currently reached 818 mcm/d.

Colombo to settle \$251m oil import dues to Iran by bartering tea

TEHRAN- Iran and Sri Lanka signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) based on which Sri Lanka will settle \$251 million in oil import dues owed to Iran by bartering tea.

The agreement was inked by Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman Pak and Sri Lanka Minister of Plantation Ramesh Pathirana in Colombo on Tuesday, TPO portal

Announcing the finalization of an agreement for the release of Iran's delayed claim in Sri Lanka, TPO head said, "Nine years ago, about \$250 million of Iranian oil exports to Sri Lanka was blocked and the possibility of payment did not exist. Fortunately, in the recent negotiations, we reached an agreement to return this money and its profit to Iran in the form of goods such as tea."

"During

delegation's visit to Sri Lanka, fortunately, very good talks were held with representatives of the government and the private sector, and the two sides stressed the need to expand economic cooperation. During this meeting, we met with minister of plantation, officials of Trade Development Council, and head of Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka, and the outcome of all negotiations will be positive", the official underlined.

Iran is among the top 10 importing countries of Ceylon Tea for the past several decades.

Due to U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran and with the absence of an accepted payment mechanism through the banking system, Sri Lanka tea exporters found it difficult to receive export proceeds from Iranian buyers.

The proposed scheme is to seek the possibilities of operationalizing a mechanism



to settle the long outstanding debt of \$250,925,169 to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) by Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) through increasing the export of Ceylon Tea, the Ceylon Today reported.

Meanwhile, during the TPO head's meeting with Sri Lankan minister of plantation and the head of Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka, the two sides emphasized establishment of a joint chamber of establishing commerce, Iranian production units in the field of dairy and food industries in Sri Lanka with the aim of re-exporting to countries without tariffs, exporting tractors and Iranian petrochemical products to Sri Lanka in order to develop trade relations between the two countries.

During this visit, Peyman Pak, while explaining the industrial capacities of the country and the measures taken to develop Iran's trade interactions with the countries of the region, introduced Iran's achievements in the field of medical equipment, medicine and knowledgebased products.

He also considered the establishment of relations between Iranian and Sri Lankan businessmen as the best way to develop trade relations between the two countries and suggested the establishment of a joint Iran-Sri Lanka Chamber of Commerce.

The Sri Lankan minister for his part referred to Iran's admirable achievements in various fields of industry, mining and knowledge-based products, and expressed his country's full readiness and welcome to import knowledge-based products, establish assembly lines for Iranian products and cooperate with the Iranian side in exploration and production of minerals.

Over 2.184m applicants register in National Housing Action Plan



TEHRAN- As announced by Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, 2,184,530 applicants have already registered in the National Housing Action Plan.

Registration started on October 20, 2021 and will wrap up on January 5, 2022.

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

Nearly half of the total number of the said houses will be constructed in Tehran's suburban "new towns" such as Parand and Pardis, respectively located in the west and east of the city.

Back in March, former Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami had announced

that 510,000 residential units will be provided for the applicants under the framework of the National Housing Action Plan during the current year.

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

Applicants in Sistan-Baluchestan, Qom, North Khorasan, and South Khorasan provinces registered first and those from

Kordestan, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, and Golestan came in the second stage, while from Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Hamedan, and Yazd provinces came in the third

In mid-November, Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi said the construction of 700,000

affordable housing units has begun across the country under the framework of the new phase of the National Housing Action Plan.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the second meeting of the government's Supreme Housing Council, Qasemi said the land for the construction of 2.4 million housing units has been prepared and allocated.

Pursuing the National Housing Action Plan, which is aimed to provide people with affordable housing units, the new government has defined a comprehensive program to construct such housing units all over the country.

The official noted, "In the first phase of our new program for the National Housing Action Plan, the construction of two million housing units has been started across the country and the share of each province has been determined."

National **Housing Action** Plan is aimed to provide people with affordable housing units

Housing Action Plan."

the end of the current [Iranian calendar year] year (late March 2022)," the minister He further mentioned a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed with the Mostazafan Foundation, noting: "According to the signed memorandum, 900 hectares of the foundation's lands throughout the country will be handed

"In today's meeting, which

was attended by governors

of different provinces in the

form of video conferences.

it was decided that the land

allocations for the construc-

tion of four million housing

units will be determined by

TEDPIX climbs 40,000 points on Wednesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of for the upcoming year. Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 40,652 points to 1.359 million on Wednesday.

As reported, over 5.534 billion securities worth 43.65 trillion rials (about \$150.517 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 34,305 points and the second market's index gained 67,655 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 of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Company, Social Security Investment Company, National Copper Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

As stated by a capital market analyst, the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 21, 2022) indicates that the government has a more positive view on the market

According to Peyman Hadadi, the allocation of a separate budget for the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund shows that the government is taking the necessary measures to provide stronger support for the market and to ensure its growth in the future.

"The allocation of a budget line for the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund is considered one of the most important points of the [Iranian calendar year] 1401 budget bill," Hadadi

The expert also pointed to the imposition of tax on rival markets including the housing market as another important and influential change in the next budget bill and said: "Taxation of luxury cars and expensive housing, along with taxation of bank deposits of legal entities, is also one of the important issues that should be appreciated about the budget bill."



He also mentioned the elimination of subsidized foreign currency allocations and noted that this would create huge changes in the market and will be the starting point for some positive progress in some industries active in the market.

The elimination of subsidies on foreign currency is not only beneficial for the country's macro-economy but also has a positive effect on the capital market transactions, the analyst said.

Meanwhile on December 18, Head of Iran's Capital Market Development and

Stabilization Fund Amir-Mehdi Sabaei said the National Development Fund of Iran (NDF) is going to deposit 120 trillion rials (about \$510 million) into the fund to support the stock market.

"According to a recent decision of the government's Economic Coordination Headquarters, 120 trillion rials of new deposits will be made by the National Development Fund, which will be gradually transferred to the account of the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund," Sabaei said.

Sabaei noted that the fund can also be financed through the money and capital markets; while other proposals such as the transfer of government assets worth 500 trillion rials (about \$1.68 billion) to the fund have also been suggested to strengthen the fund's financing capacity.

As IRNA reported, allocation of financial resources from the National Development Fund to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund is one of the measures that the government has been taking since the stock market started a downward trend.

over [to the Transport Ministry] free of

charge to be allocated for the National

Following the 13th government's new strategies to improve the stock market, the Government Economic Coordination Headquarters convened a meeting on November 2, chaired by President Ebrahim Raisi, during which a decision was made to inject new resources from NDF into the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund.

The allocation of the above-mentioned funding is also part of the outcomes of the November 2 meeting.

Based on the statute of Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund, the resources of this fund can be provided from three main sources, the first is the government investment which should be foreseen in the national budget bill, the second is the allocation of one percent of the NDF resources for this fund, and the third source would be the allocation of a part of the trades commission received by the Securities and Exchange Organization

Sophisticated people know Iran has no plan to build nuclear weapon: American scholar

From page 1 ► No, I am seeing no realistic movement in the talks. President Biden is in political trouble in the United States at present, and is facing furious attacks from Republicans. If Biden gives in to Iranian demands, he will be opening the door to further attacks and will be weakened further. Iranian leaders are declaring that they are not feeling pressured to make any concessions to the United States and are willing to wait indefinitely. Additionally, Iran is seeking economic relief from China, Russia, and India who are willing to circumvent American sanctions. European partners in the JCPOA are not willing or able to pressure either the United States or Iran to budge from their locked-in positions. China and Russia are not in a position to persuade the United States to act, since they themselves are under U.S. sanctions and political attack. So while talks continue in a cosmetic fashion, there has been no breakthrough, and no prospect of one.

Biden was able to start the discussions to revive the JCPOA sooner but he is moving too slowly for domestic reasons and now the negotiations are in a stalemate. What is your comment?

This is my view as well. I would go further. Neither Biden nor the Iranian leadership feel confident enough in their domestic strength to be able to make any concessions



to the other side without losing power domestically. This situation is a formula for stalemate.

Some observers argue the JCPOA can never meet Iran's economic demands because no one in the West, including the U.S., is ready to invest in the country, especially as there is no guarantee the U.S. would not quit the deal again. Do you agree with this idea?

I don't believe this to be true. In fact, there are hundreds and hundreds of companies that are anxious to do business with Iran. Iran's largest trading partner at one time was Italy. Italy is ready and willing to resume trade with Iran. Many American companies, especially petrochemical companies, are anxious to work with Iranian concerns. Iran has many things going for it-immense natural resources,

remarkably well-educated a well-developed population, a infrastructure, and a government that is willing to facilitate trade and

Why do the Iranians and their American counterparts fail to reach a common logic when it comes to nuclear talks?

economic development.

There must be a win-win solution to this problem, or it will not happen. The United States does not "need" Iran as much as Iran needs the lifting of trade sanctions by the United States. Frankly, sophisticated people know that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program and will not manufacture a nuclear weapon. So for the United States the chief value in returning to the JCPOA is to demonstrate American facility in diplomacy, and to have a political "win" for

President Biden. On the other hand, Iranians have an economic escape route in dealings with China and Russia, and the cosmetic "lever" of increasing or decreasing nuclear enrichment as a negotiating device, however inconsequential. Iran can afford to wait, and the United States is under no real pressure to negotiate or make concessions. Hence the stalemate.

The U.S. is defying Iran, Russia, and China simultaneously. Is it reasonable to confront all of them at the same time?

It is a serious balancing act that at present the United States is not handling very well. The fact that Iran, Russia, and China are all involved in the JCPOA negotiations makes things even more complicated. While the United States is on bad terms with China and Russia they might as well not be participating at all in the JCPOA talks, because their differences with the United States make it impossible for them to be persuasive.

Moreover, they themselves are not going to make any concessions to make return to the JCPOA possible. Can anyone imagine that Russia would say: "We will pull our troops back from the Ukraine border," or that China would say: "We will honor Hong Kong's political independence," "if the United States eliminates sanctions on Iran"? That is beyond the realm

New analysis further links Israeli spyware to Khashoggi's murder

New forensic analysis has revealed that operatives of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) installed the Israeli Pegasus spyware on the mobile phone of the wife of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi just months before his torture killing.

The analysis, conducted by the Canadabased Citizen Lab privacy and security research laboratory, further exposed that executives of Pegasus' maker - NSO group - lied when they claimed last summer that Khashoggi and his associates, including his Emirati wife, Hanan Elatr, were targeted by the spyware in a surveillance operation on behalf of the UAE government, The Washington Post reported on

According to the report, a forensic investigation of two Android cellphones owned by Elatr discovered that an unknown individual used one of the phones to visit a website that uploaded the Israeli spyware onto the phone. This occurred after UAE security agents at Dubai's airport confiscated the phone from Elatr just months prior to Khashoggi's murder in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. Further analysis by the Citizen Lab also suggested the website was controlled by NSO group on behalf of "a customer" in the UAE.

Phone numbers belonging to Elatr and to Khashoggi's Turkish fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, were also found in a list of 50,000 numbers in a data leak that revealed potential targets of the Pegasus spyware, the report adds.

The list also contained numbers belonging to hundreds of more government officials including French and South African presidents, the Pakistani prime minister and several Africabased US embassy officials - along with a total of 180 journalists that included major US and European news outlets.

The reported data leak was part of a larger investigation by a coalition of news outlets around the world. The investigation, branded The Pegasus Project, exposed a massive targeting of journalists, human rights activists and politicians.

According to the daily, the international probe found that authoritarian governments have used Pegasus against journalists, human rights defenders, diplomats, lawyers and pro-democracy opposition leaders, with new revelations continuing to roll out. France found traces of the spyware on the phones of five of its ministers. After initial denials, Hungary also admitted using the spyware.

The deep technical sophistication of surveillance exploits developed by the Israeli spyware company was recently revealed in a blog post from Project Zero, a Google security research group. The post offered details of a "zero-click" exploit for iMessage in which a target's cellphone would be compromised simply by sending them an SMS message containing a link, without the need for the target to open or

NSO's operations have long been shrouded in secrecy. In the face of growing evidence of the company's willingness to assist repressive and authoritarian regimes around the world, including the surveillance of some American officials, however, the US government has begun to take action against the Israeli company.

According to the report, the Israeli regime's military requires NSO to get its approval before selling Pegasus to a country to ensure that the sale is in line with interests of the occupying regime. NSO says it has sold Pegasus to 60 government agencies across 40 countries.

NSO was recently placed on a blacklist by the US Department of Commerce, forbidding US companies from providing NSO with goods or services. Even a group of US lawmakers has urged the imposition of stricter sanctions on NSO Group and other spyware firms, which would freeze bank accounts and bar their employees from traveling to the US.

The UAE, a federation of monarchies in the Persian Gulf, has been one of NSO's most notorious clients, the report underlines. The despotic regime has used Pegasus against antiregime activists, journalists and even a royal princess attempting to escape her father, the

international media investigation and others have found. In October, a British court revealed that NSO Group ended its contract with the UAE because Dubai's ruler had used it to hack the phones of his ex-wife and her lawyer, a member of Britain's House of Lords.

In the past, the UAE has also denied allegations that it used Pegasus against human rights activists and other civil society figures.

The UAE, meanwhile, remains a close ally of Saudi Arabia. In 2013, the two countries signed a mutual security agreement promising cooperation on intelligence and law enforcement matters. The UAE has spied on Saudi dissidents abroad and sent them to Riyadh, according to human rights groups and a recent lawsuit filed in a US federal court in Portland, Oregon, on behalf of an imprisoned Saudi human rights activist.

According to The Post, Elatr - Khashoggi's fourth wife after his three divorces - feels forgotten in the wake of her husband's murder. "She found out he had disappeared via Twitter after waking up from a long flight, alone in her apartment in Dubai. While she was dealing with the likelihood he had been murdered, she was also learning that he was planning to marry another woman."

At the time, Khashoggi's new fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, was waiting for him outside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. He had gone there to obtain a document necessary to marry her. Instead, he was murdered with the approval of Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman, US intelligence later

Elatr, meanwhile, has struggled for attention. Many of Khashoggi's friends in Washington did not know about his marriage to her in Virginia in June 2018.

"Nobody knew her. Jamal had kept it a secret," said Sarah Leah Whitson, a longtime human rights advocate and the executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), a Mideast-focused organization founded by Khashoggi. "I don't know what was going on in

(Source: Press TV)

million) at risk of malnutrition.

population (16.2 million) face acute hunger,

with half of the children under five (2.3

INTERNATIONAL

Straight Truth TEHRAN TIMES

Russia calls on NATO to back off

From page 1 Shoigu says they were equipping firing points in residential buildings and socially significant facilities, training the Ukrainian military, and carrying out other activities. He also said that containers with unidentified chemical components had been delivered near the Russian border to stage provocations in the latest deployment of Western weapons.

Meanwhile, addressing high-ranking Russian military officers, Putin has outlined where his country's defense priorities are. Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned NATO and the United States against the further deployment of heavy weapons in neighboring Ukraine. He says the weapons are reaching Russian borders and Moscow has nowhere to retreat to; before questioning "Do they think we'll just watch idly?" Putin has warned NATO's "unfriendly" eastward expansion "steps" will reach a point where Russia will be forced to

He pointed out that Moscow needs guarantees from Washington that rule out any potential intrusion on Russian borders, he says these guarantees must be "long-term" and they must be "legally binding."

Assurances by the United States are not enough

Putin says that even if the U.S. were to offer assurances that rule out any further NATO expansion, it would be difficult to trust any American officials sticking to their words, given what he labeled as Washington's track record. He cited examples such as America pulling out of international treaties once it was no longer "interested" in respecting them. Putin pointed to the Open Skies Treaty, which Washington unilaterally withdrew from last year. The agreement was highly praised by the international community as it provided transparency about the movement and deployment of each country's nuclear weapons. He also noted America's decision to leave the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, an agreement clinched in 1972, designed to limit the scale of prospective missile defense systems. He says Washington simply cannot be trusted anymore to honor its promises.

The Kremlin has already sent out two documents, one for NATO and the other for the U.S. which laid out a wide range of assurances aimed at strengthening the security of all parties involved in the escalation of tensions. The proposals focus on the movement of military personnel and hardware. Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sounded the alarm by expressing Moscow's concern over a significant number of the bloc's weapons, including American and British hardware, being moved closer to Russia. The top diplomat warned that this could lead to an all-out provocation.

The Russian President has warned about the possibility of advanced NATO military hardware being deployed to Ukraine, saying that if Western missile systems are stationed on Ukrainian territory, "their flight time to Moscow will be reduced to 7-10 minutes, and it hypersonic weapons are deployed to just five [minutes]."

The build-up of troops and weapons in Ukraine has been a bone of contention between Russia and NATO. Moscow accuses the North Atlantic Alliance of planning to send intermediate-range nuclear missiles to Kiev. This month, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova condemned Washington's broken pledges, arguing that "since the end of the Cold War, Russia has been repeatedly assured that NATO's jurisdiction and military forces will not move an inch eastwards." However, she says "all these promises have been forgotten and not fulfilled. The result is the current sad state of European security."

There is heightened concern over advanced American weapons systems being delivered to Kiev such as American-made Javelin rocket launchers



being tested and handed to forces in the war-torn Donbas region. Russia says NATO is also planning to send intermediate-range nuclear missiles to

Following Putin's speech, Shoigu also spoke and revealed that Russia's new high-tech hypersonic missile, capable of flying through the air at around nine times the speed of sound, has finished testing and will begin shipping to the military in 2022. He also noted Moscow will be investing \$3.5 billion into upgrading the arsenal in the coming years saying "by 2026, the number of carriers of highprecision, long-range weapons will grow by 30%, and the supply of cruise missiles of various types will double." Shoigu also says that U.S. private military firms are preparing a chemical weapons "provocation" in eastern Ukraine. He claimed that containers with "unidentified chemical components" have been delivered to two cities in the Donbas region.

Last month, Putin highlighted the importance of developing and implementing technology "necessary to create new hypersonic weapons systems, high-powered lasers and robotic systems that will be able to effectively counter potential military threats, which means they will further strengthen the security of our country."

Tensions have been escalating in the east of Ukraine for several months, with Western officials accusing Russian forces of building up their presence near the demarcation line. Western officials claim Moscow has plans to invade its neighbor. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied the allegations as baseless, saying it has taken steps to beef up its defensive positions in the face of NATO's growing military presence near Russia's eastern borders. The Kremlin says Western accusations of a Russian "invasion" are growing anti-Russian "hysteria." Moscow has also accused the West of encouraging Ukraine to provoke Russia and trigger a military conflict in Donbas.

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov warned that "if the West cannot hold back Ukraine - and actually encourages it - of course, we will take all necessary steps to ensure our security." He has also told Russian media that Moscow and Washington will hold the first round of talks on Security Guarantees in January saying "It was agreed that at the very beginning of next year, the first round would be a bilateral contact between Russia's and U.S.' negotiators, they have already been named, they are acceptable for both sides."

According to the top Russian diplomat, the reaction of his American colleagues to the Russian proposals was "business-like."

Analysts say the United States has shown a tendency to scare-monger the neighbors of superpowers in regions well beyond U.S. borders. Among some of the reasons they cite, is America's economic decline as well as its declining image around the world following military interventions that ended up embarrassingly badly for Washington. The scare-mongering is to maintain America's position as a reliable security partner against a threat (which in reality does not exist) and to keep the American military-industrial complex continuing to function. Essentially critics argue; America's existence is based on wars and threats and escalating military tensions around the world threats and escalating military tensions around the

UN to cut food aid to Yemen due to lack of funds

TEHRAN - The World Food Programme has said it has been "forced" to cut aid to Yemen due to a lack of funds and warned there will be a surge in hunger in the wartorn country in the coming months.

Nearly eight years of fighting between Saudi-backed government forces and Houthi rebels in Yemen has created what the United Nations has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The food-assistance branch of the United

Nations has announced that it will reduce food rations for millions of Yemeni people from next month due to funding shortage, as a protracted Saudi-led bombing campaign pushes more people into hunger in the impoverished country.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the World Food Programme (WFP), which feeds 13 million Yemenis, said eight million will receive a reduced food ration from January, while five million at immediate risk of slipping into famine conditions will remain on a full ration.

Families on reduced handouts will receive barely half of the WFP's daily minimum ration, it added, warning that food assistance and child malnutrition

programmes are also at risk of further cuts. "Every time we reduce the amount of

food, we know that more people who are already hungry and food insecure will join the ranks of the millions who are starving. But desperate times call for desperate measures and we have resources and prioritize, focusing on people who are in the most critical

state," said Corinne Fleischer, WFP Regional Director for the Middle East and North

More than half of Yemen's 30 million

More than half of

Yemen's 30 million population (16.2 to stretch our limited million) face acute from donors.

hunger.

Earlier, UN agencies, including the WFP, had warned of programme cuts in Yemen after they received only \$2.68 billion of \$3.85 billion requested

"The Yemeni people are now more vulnerable than ever, reeling from

relentless conflict and the deepening economic crisis that has pushed millions into destitution," Fleischer said.

"WFP food stocks in Yemen are running

dangerously low at a time when budgets for humanitarian crises around the world are stretched to the limit. We desperately need donors, who were so generous in the past, to work with us to avoid this looming hunger catastrophe."

The WFP has estimated that it needs \$813 million to continue to help the most vulnerable in Yemen through May and \$1.97 billion during 2022 to keep delivering food assistance to families on the brink of

Saudi Arabia launched the devastating military aggression against its southern neighbor in March 2015 in collaboration with a number of its allied states and with arms and logistics support from the US and

several Western states.

The aim was to return to power the former Riyadh-backed regime and crush the popular Ansarullah movement which has been running state affairs in the absence of an effective government in Yemen.

The war has stopped well shy of all of its goals, despite killing tens of thousands of Yemenis and turning entire Yemen into the scene of the world's worst humanitarian

Meanwhile, Yemeni forces have in recent months gone from strength to strength against the Saudi-led invaders and left Riyadh and its allies bogged down in Yemen.

TOURISM

DECEMBER 23, 2021 Straight Truth TEHRAN TIMES

Iran prepares for influential presence at Fitur 2022

TEHRAN - Tens of Iranian exhibitors, travel insiders, and cultural heritage experts have discussed ways that Iran could experience an influential attendance at Fitur 2022 scheduled to be held from January 19 to 23 in Spain.

A meeting was held on Tuesday to formulate strategies needed for a "strong" presence of the Iran pavilion at the Fitur international tourism fair, CHTN reported.

Digitalization of advertisements, preparation of 3D videos, holding Iranology meetings and workshops, presenting investment packages in the field of the tourism industry, utilizing the capacities of Iranian media in Spain, using exhibition wall screens, and creating visual attractions were among elements agreed by the participants to attain the goal, the report said.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister has tasked the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TACI) to organize the country's pavilion at the prestigious event to promote tourism attractions, handicrafts, and traditions of Iran.

The Madrid Tourism Fair is the global meeting point for professionals in the sector and the leading fair for receptive and issuing markets in Latin America. It is also the biggest event in Spain around the tourism business, with more than 250,000 attendees



from all over the world, as well as in terms of innovation and the promotion of new tourism segments, technological leadership in tourism management, and knowledge transfer

According to its organizers, this annual event represents an economic impact of 330 million euros, with the consequent direct impact on the recovery of tourism and the invigoration of sectors linked to tourism in

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in

Journey to Faith: Iran pushes heritage agenda at UNESCO, seeks status for Razavi pilgrimage

From page **1** ► The architectural design of the complex has also complied with these traditions and rituals to address the needs of people and the urban landscape. Every year, over 20 million pilgrims visit the holy shrine and perform a set of traditions, one of which is the upper mentioned salutation rituals.

Historical data suggests that the complex has been developed in different stages of time according to the needs of the people and rituals associated with the holy shrine, yet the structure, design concepts, forms, material, tangible and intangible aspects, morphology, entering circumstances, praying rites and the spirit of the complex retained its authenticity and integrity the whole time and with legal and religious support of authorities and people.

Going through the authentic

literature on the initial status of the holy shrine elucidates that the shrine has also had a dome and court composition for the complex at its early stages. During the history of Iran, all the stances, saluting, Tawaf, conse-

governments have had the concern to preserve and maintain the holy shrine as a value for all the generations and people and as an origin to retain the concepts constantly throughout centuries.

According UNESCO, the holy shrine is the most significant ment giving identi-

The city is of exceptional exam- of the area, a practice which later ples formed based on the Shia transferred to the other pilgrim-

and pilgrimage culture. From a spiritual point of view, the complex has significance regarding the traditions, view rites to the holy shrine, approaching circumcration, etc.

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which the city of

Mashhad was cre-

ated according to

the needs of this

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grimage center.

The relation of the

city and the holy

shrine during dif-

The holy shrine boasts architectural and artistic elements of the Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Safavid, Qajar, and the contemporary period.

lead to a unique ty to the urban area of Mashhad. experience in the urban planning

ferent

age cities by visitors especially Shias.

This way, the complex features a continuous artistic architectural style whose progress spreads over centuries, representing a unique masterpiece of creating a sacred space. It boasts architectural and artistic elements of the Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Safavid, Qajar, and the contemporary period. A great number of important structures of the region, including schools, mosques, the memorials of the mystics. Especially in great Khorasan, have been inspired by this complex.

Regarding the cultural, historic, and architectural aspects, as mentioned by UNESCO, the complex could be comparable with several other religious complexes such as "Saint Peter's Tomb" in the Vatican, "Mahabodhi Temple" in India, "Mount Emei" in China and "Lumbini" in Nepal.

Permanent crafts exhibit opens near majestic Rayen fort



TEHRAN - A permeant sales exhibition of indigenous handicrafts has opened to the public in Rayen, which is home to a Sassanid-era fort of the same name.

The exbibit embraces six stalls dedicated to personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious stones, traditional knives and textile, metalwork, leatherwork amongst some other crafts.

Experts say the history of life in Rayen goes back to the times of the Sasanian dynasty (226-651) and even deeper.

Rayen is famed for its handmade knives and blades which are both practical and decorative.... And it is home to 45 workshops in which some 120 craftspeople practice the art, a local official said.

A top tourist destination, the adobe fortress is still standing tall after tolerating several earthquakes and other natural disasters, which have been flattened similar near-

Covering an area of about 20,000 square meters, the castle was inhabited until 150 years ago and some experts believe it is at least 1,000 years old.

Narratives say, marble mines, which are scattered near the city, have a worldwide reputation. Such marbles have been used to decorate the holy shrine of Imam Ali (AS) and to build the Taj Mahal.

Agriculturally speaking, Rayen is a rich area in producing various fruits such as pistachios, walnuts, pomegranates, grapes, pears, strawberries, cherries, peaches, and

Paleontologists believe that Rayen is the undetected treasure that can divulge untold secrets of the past. Rayen requires and deserves more exploration and examination.

Raven is situated inside the big and sprawl ing Kerman province, which has long been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers.

Iranian celebrations, music festival one step closer to UNESCO register

TEHRAN - Iranian celebrations and festivities of Yalda, Chaharshanbeh-Suri, Mehregan, and Sadeh as well Regional Music Festival of the country are closer to being inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Heritage list, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

The reason behind this is their recent registration on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage alongside the Silk Roads, which significantly paves the way for becoming UNESCO listed in the future, the report added.

Registration for these festivals took place at an online world summit hosted by the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP) in South Korea, and the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) in Samarkand on December 10.

The Regional Music Festival of Iran was selected as the only music festival at the meeting.

The festival, which has been held regularly for 14 years, brings together dozens of different types of Iranian music, such as Kurdish, Lori, Bakhtiari, Turkmen, Baluchi, Qashqai, Khorasani, Gilaki, Mazandarani, and others.

The diversity of Iranian instruments and music, and the possibility of establishing cultural exchanges with neighboring countries through regional music are just a few of the important factors that Iran presented for inscribing this festival as a World Heritage.

Yalda

Yalda (the birth of a new sun) and Noruz or Persian New Year (the birth of a new day) are amongst the most popular ancient Persian festivals, which are also celebrated by some countries in western and central Asia.

Also called. Yalda Night, the occasion is celebrated on the eve of the winter solstice, which falls on the last day of Azar (the last month of autumn in the Iranian calendar year). On that graceful night, the winter chill is vanguished and the warmth of love embraces the entire family. It's a time for pleasant family reunions that entails laughter, merriment, and good cheer.

According to the UNESCO website, Yalda



ceremonies, in the best way, point to cultural diversity and human creativity, especially when one considers the wide range of the communities that celebrate it.

Chaharshanbeh-Suri

As every last Tuesday of the Iranian calendar year comes, millions of Iranians make bonfires at sunset to jump over the fire till midnight to observe Chaharshanbe-Suri, just days before Noruz, the New Year hol-

The festival is held on the night before the last Wednesday of the year when families and friends gather by bunches of open fires and keep them lit till dawn.

Narratives say that ancient Iranians originally observed such time-honored fire festivity in a bid to ward off all the misfortunes and bad omens with hopes that their wishes would come true.

In ancient Persia, the fire was considered a sacred element, a belief that modern Zoroastrians still adhere to. The fire has been supposed to give people its warmth and energy and take away their paleness, sickness, and problems in return.

Mehregan

Meheregan, the largest Iranian festival after Noruz, marks the autumnal equinox when day and night are equal and it dates back to ancient times when the start of autumn brought the start of the new year.

Mehregan typically brings together clusters of Iranian Zoroastrians in celebration of Mithra, an ancient goddess of friendship, affection, and love. The celebrations are usually opened up with keynote speeches by Zoroastrian religious figures and officials, followed by Shahnameh recitations, exciting contests, and other joyful custom-

A key feature for the event is large

spreads in purple laden with various ingredients, dishes, and elements each on behalf of a particular belief. Fruits, vegetables, dried nuts, sweets, rosewater, grilled lamb meat, lotus seeds, and silver coins, and a scale are typically placed, the latter symbolizes autumnal equinox.

Mehregan falls on the 196th day of the Iranian calendar year that usually equals October 2 in the Gregorian calendar. The festivity was used to be a traditional autumn harvest festival with several accounts of its origins.

Jashn-e Sadeh, which usually falls on January 30, is named after the number one hundred (Sad in Farsi). The event marks 50 days and 50 nights before Noruz (the beginning of the Iranian calendar year on March 21). The common belief emphasizes that it is a mid-winter ritual to celebrate the date when the earth starts warming up.

The festivity is nowadays more popular among Iranian Zoroastrians in the cities of Yazd, Tehran, Shiraz, and Kerman. Narratives say that the feast is to remember the mythical discovery of fire. That's why they set fire to a big pile of wood when the event reaches its climax.

The origins of the festival are somewhat ambiguous and there is no trace of this ceremony in the Zoroastrian holy texts. However, some historians suggest the ceremony existed even before Zoroastrianism. the world's oldest monotheistic religion.

Some say Sadeh is a festivity to honor fire and to defeat the forces of darkness, frost, and cold. Several mythological accounts, however, connect the festival to the origins of human beings. According to Persian mythology, Houshang, the second king of the world, discovered the fire when he tried to hit a dragon with a stone. He reportedly threw a flintstone that struck against another flint stone causing a spark and generating fire.

The time-honored Zoroastrian rituals are widespread in Iran. Noruz, Yalda Night -which takes place on the longest night of the year, and Chaharshanbeh Souri - in praise of the spring, are examples of such ceremonies that even nowadays nearly all Iranians observe.

Niavaran museum displays rarelyseen objects of treasure trove

TEHRAN - Tehran's Niavaran Museum has put on show sets of rarely-seen relics associated with Yalda Night from its treasury, CHTN reported on Wednesday.

Bringing together intangible and tangible heritage rooted in Iranian culture and preserving a traditional ritual in a cultural and historical setting is part of the reasons for setting up the Yalda Night spread in this museum.

One of the highlights is a special spread traditionally used to decorate a Korsi, featuring historic silver dishes as well as Iranian handmade products, which is displayed in the collection, the report added.

Korsi is a 50-centimeter high four-legged table with a heater underneath it, and blankets and comforters are thrown around it. It is usually decorated with a piece of jajim or kilim carpet. Some cushions and poshti (a kind of cushion leaning against the wall) are also put around Korsi.

In the past, the heating source was a fire pan in which, the coals are put when fired. Families with lower income made a hole beneath Korsi and put the coals in that. However, Korsi was not a mere heater in Persian culture. Its pleasant warmth brought all the family together. They ate winter goodies and listened to each other. During nights, grandparents told stories and narrations while all families sat at Korsi.

Korsi had a crucial part during the Yalda celebration. Also called, Yalda Night, the occasion is celebrated on the eve of the winter solstice, which falls on the last day of Azar (the last month of autumn in the Iranian calendar year). On that graceful night, the winter chill is vanquished and the warmth of love embraces the entire family. It's a time for pleasant family reunions that entails laughter, merriment, and good cheer.

Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex, covering an area of about eleven hectares, is composed of several landmark buildings, museums, and monuments constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries during the Pahlavi and late Qajar eras. The history of the palace complex stretches back to about 280 years ago when Fath-Ali Shah of the Qajar Dynasty ordered for a summer residence to be built over the then countryside area of the capital. The two-story Ahmad Shahi Pavilion is one of the highlights of the complex.

Centuries-old Quran manuscript restored

TEHRAN - A historical manuscript of the Holy Quran underwent some rehabilitation work in the western province of Kordestan, the provincial tourism chief

Being kept in the village of Mulanabad, the 300-year-old script needed urgent restoration to regain its original state in the



hands of experienced experts, Yaqub Guylian announced on

That copy of the Holy Quran is considered to be one of the finest in the country, made of paper and covered in leather.

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

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

School renovation budget up by 17%

TEHRAN - The national budget bill for the next [Iranian calendar] year (starting on March 21, 2022) has proposed a 17-percent rise for the renovation of schools.

A total of 28 trillion rials (nearly \$102 million) was proposed for school renovation in the budget bill, which is 17 percent higher than that of the current year, Mehrollah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said.

Since 2017, the government has contributed more than 60 trillion rials (nearly \$218 million) to school-building donors, he added.

President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1401, to the Majlis on December 12. The proposed budget amounted to about 36.31 quadrillion rials (about \$123 billion).

Supplying basic goods, treatment, and medical equipment; securing livelihood; supporting production and employment; promoting and supporting non-oil exports and knowledge-based companies are the focal points of the bill.

School building benefactors

Last year, school building benefactors have allocated a sum of 33 trillion rials (around \$781 million



at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to construct educational spaces across the country, IRNA reported.

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

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

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

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

ment, Renovation, and Equipping

107,000 schools need renovation nationwide

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

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

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

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

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

A total of 28 trillion rials (nearly \$102 million) was proposed for school renovation in the budget bill.

Glaciers in Himalayas melting at 'exceptional' rate, scientists warn

Glaciers in the Himalayas are shrinking far more rapidly than glaciers in other parts of the world, threatening the water supply of millions of people in Asia, new research warns.

The study, led by scientists at the University of Leeds, found that in recent decades, Himalayan glaciers have lost ice 10 times more quickly than they have on average since the Little Ice Age, when glaciers expanded around 400-700 years

The ice loss is occurring so quickly, the research team described the rate as "exceptional", the Independent reported.

The researchers reconstructed the extent and ice content of 14,798 Himalayan glaciers to reveal how large they were during the Little Ice Age. The model revealed that the glaciers we see today have now lost around 40 per cent of their area, shrinking from a maximum of 28,000 square kilometres to around 19,600 sq km today.

During that period, they are believed to have lost up to 586km cubed of ice - the equivalent of all the ice contained today in the central European Alps, the Caucasus, and Scandinavia combined.

Dr Jonathan Carrivick, one of the study authors and deputy head of the University of Leeds School of Geography, said: "Our findings clearly show that ice is now being lost from Himalayan glaciers at a rate that is at least 10 times higher than the average rate over past centuries.

"This acceleration in the rate of loss has only emerged within the last few decades, and coincides with human-induced climate change."

The Himalayas are home to the world's third-largest amount of glacier ice after Antarctica and the Arctic, and are often referred to as the world's "Third Pole".

The researchers warned that the acceleration of melting of Himalayan glaciers has "significant implications" for hundreds of millions of people who depend on Asia's major river systems for food and energy.

These rivers include the Brahmaputra, Ganges

and Indus.

The team used satellite images and digital elevation models to produce outlines of the glaciers' extent 400-700 years ago and to reconstruct the

DECEMBER 23, 2021 Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

The satellite images revealed ridges that mark the former glacier boundaries and the researchers used the geometry of these ridges to estimate the former glacier extent and ice surface

Comparing the glacier reconstruction to the glacier now, the researchers determined the volume and hence mass loss between the Little Ice Age and now.

Himalayan glaciers are also declining faster where they end in lakes, which have several warming effects, rather than where they end on land. The number and size of these lakes are increasing so continued acceleration in mass loss can be expected, the scientists said.

Similarly, glaciers which have significant amounts of natural debris upon their surfaces are also losing mass more quickly: they contributed around 46.5 per cent of total volume loss despite making up only around 7.5 per cent of the total number of glaciers.

Dr Carrivick said: "While we must act urgently to reduce and mitigate the impact of human-made climate change on the glaciers and meltwater-fed rivers, the modelling of that impact on glaciers must also take account of the role of factors such as lakes and debris."

Co-author Dr Simon Cook, senior lecturer in geography and environmental science at the University of Dundee, said: "People in the region are already seeing changes that are beyond anything witnessed for centuries.

"This research is just the latest confirmation that those changes are accelerating and that they will have a significant impact on entire nations and regions."

The research is published in the journal Scien-

97% of population aged 6-10 are literate

TEHRAN - The average literacy rate for the age group of 6-10 years is 97 percent, according to the latest national census.

Also, the literacy rate among the urban popu-

lation is 98 percent and that of the rural population is 92 percent, Shapour Mohammadzadeh, head of the Literacy Movement Organization, stated.

Before the [1979] Islamic revolution, according to a census conducted in 1976, over 52.5 percent of the people were illiterate, he said, adding, only 24 percent of women in the country

were literate. Also, the illiteracy gap between ru- cover up to 70 percent of the education cost, and ral and urban areas was 35 percent.

In the past Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), the average literacy rate of women and men was reported 96 and 98 percent, respectively, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Some 50 percent of the activities of the Literacy Movement The average Organization are focused on literacy empowerment so that literacy rate is there is no return to illiteracy.

> The Organization plans to educate more than 30,000 illiterate foreign nationals residing in the country, Mohammadzadeh said in December 2020.

In deprived areas, we will all our efforts are to solve the problem of illitera-



cy across the country, he highlighted.

The average literacy rate of the youth (15-24 years old) in Iran is estimated at 97.4 percent, which is almost 6 percent higher than the global

Iran develops two vaccines of rotavirus, pneumococcus

From page **1** Pneumococcus

Diseases caused by Streptococcus pneumoniae (the pneumococcus) are a major public health problem worldwide. In the developing world, young children and the elderly are most affected; it is estimated that about one million children die of pneumococcal disease every year.

Streptococcus pneumoniae is an encapsulated bacterium with a polysaccharide capsule an essential factor in virulence. About 90 distinct pneumococcal serotypes have been identified throughout the world, with a small number of these serotypes accounting for most diseases in infants. Pneumococci are transmitted by direct contact with respiratory secretions from pa-



tients and healthy carriers.

almost 6 percent

higher than the

global average.

Rotavirus prevalence

Infection by rotaviruses is one of the major causes of childhood diarrhea with an associated high mortality rate (440,000 deaths/year) and is responsible for 25 million medical visits and 2 million hospitalizations every year, especially during the cold season.

The prevalence of rotavirus infections in Iran has been estimated

prevalence is reported to be 39.9 percent. According to a WHO report, in Iran, 42 percent of gastroenteritis are caused by rotaviruses which are estimated to have inflicted approximately 2000 and 270 deaths in 2008 and 2013, respectively.

This pattern indicated that the rate of rota-

tavirus infection is BCG, polio, varied in different regions of Iran. For hepatitis instance, this rate

B, measles, rubella, and mumps (MMR) vaccines are injected to infants and children in Iran.

as 30 -50 percent while the mean Eastern Mediterranean region. The

Pasteur Institute of Iran and Indian Bharat Biotech inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to

prevalence of ro-

is 6.3 percent for

Birjand in South

Khorasan province

and 79.2 percent

In June 2021, the

for Tehran.

virus-caused diarrhea for Iranian transfer technical knowledge of the children is similar to the rate in the rotavirus vaccine. IRNA reported.

No mountain high enough: study finds plastic in 'clean' air

From Mount Everest to the Mariana Trench, microplastics are everywhere - even high in the Earth's troposphere where wind speeds allow them to travel vast distances, a new study has found.

Microplastics are tiny fragments - measuring less than 5mm - that come from packaging, clothing, vehicles and other sources and have been detected on land, in water and in the air.

Scientists from the French national research institute CNRS sampled air 2,877 metres above sea level at the Pic du Midi Observatory in the French Pyrenees, a so-called "clean station" because of the limited influence exerted on it by the local climate and environment.

There they tested 10,000 cubic metres of

air a week between June and October of 2017 and found all samples contained microplastics, the Guardian reported.

Using weather data, they calculated the trajectories of different air masses preceding each sample and discovered sources as far away as

The study's main author, Steve Allen of Dalhousie University in Canada, told AFP that the particles were able to travel such distances because they were able to reach great altitudes.

"Once it hits the troposphere, it's like a superfast highway," he said.

The research also points to microplastic sources in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

ENGLISH IN USE

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\$22m earmarked for equipping technical-vocational schools

A total budget of 900 billion rials (nearly \$22 million) has been requested to develop and equip technical-vocational high schools across the country in the current Iranian calendar year (ending March 20, 2019), Mohsen Hosseini, an official with the Ministry of Education has announced.

Describing some of the programs and priorities of the technical and vocational training organization affiliated to the Ministry, Hosseini pointed to improvement of technical and vocational training plans as the Ministry's main priority.

Competency-based education and assessment is among the most important programs of the technical and vocational organization, which must be well implemented in all career and technical education high school, he added, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

تخصیص ۹۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای تجهیز هنرستان های کشور

مدیرکل فنی و حرفهای دفتر متوسطه وزارت آموزش و پرورش از تخصیص ۹۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای تجهیز هنرستانهای کشور در سال جاری خبر داد. به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر، سیدمحسن حسینی مقدم در دیدار با مدیران هنرستانهای فنی و حرفهای شهر شیراز و برخی از مناطق استان فارس با تشریح برخی از برنامهها و اولویتهای وزارت آموزش و پرورش در بخش فنی و حرفهای، گفت: کیفیت بخشی برنامههای دفتر فنی و حرفهای اولویت اصلی آموزش و پرورش است.

حسینی مقدم اظهار کرد: آموزش و ارزشیابی مبتنی بر شایستگی از مهمترین برنامههایی است که در آموزشهای فنی و حرفهای دنبال می شود و باید این شیوه آموزش به خوبی مراقبت شده و در همه هنرستانها اجرا شود.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 22

New cases	2,103
New deaths	44
Total cases	6,177,885
Total deaths	131,211
New hospitalized patients	344
Patients in critical condition	2,821
Total recovered patients	6,016,324
Diagnostic tests conducted	40,082,066
Doses of vaccine injected	114,651,066

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DECEMBER 23 2021

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Wealth converts a strange land into homeland and poverty turns a native place into a strange land. Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:03 Evening: 17:15

Dawn: 5:42 (tomorrow)

Sunrise: 7:12 (tomorrow)

Iran: Persian literature

Every lover knows that the test of separation is inevitable, befalling him inexorably. The envious drove Shams away, and Rumi's intense poems become the salve on the wound of separation.

His magnum opus, Masnavi-ye Manavi, an immense and somewhat unruly masterpiece, begins on a note of separation.

The poem consists of six books, containing three to four thousand distiches each. It remained unfinished upon Rumi's death in 1273.

A long succession of spiritual tales, interspersed with digressions of a doctrinal nature, in turn illustrated by stories, the poem was first recited in declamatory style in public sessions, where ecstatic dances were held.

As Sufism matured it tended to become institutionalized in orders. This was not accomplished by Jalal ad-Din but by his son and successor, Soltan Walad.

Author of a number of works, he is the true founder of the Molavieh order. As previously mentioned, Ebn al-Arabi lived in Konya; and Molavi died there in 1273.

Sadr ad-Din Qunawi, who died here as well in 1274, knew both masters. Eraqi of Hamadan (d. 1289), who had returned from Multan in India, also settled in Konya.

He knew Qunawi, and his poetry and his didactic work in prose, Lamaat (Flashes), were influenced by the doctrines of Ebn al-Arabi.

Eragi contributed to the eastward expansion of Persian Sufism, which was then flourishing in Anatolia. Ghazals by Eraqi are among the most often sung today. However, Eraqi's spiritual contribution is linked to the specifically Iranian tradition that developed from Hallaj and such

masters as Ahmad Ghazali. Classical literature in its maturity: the work of

Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207-1273) and Sadi (ca. 1209-91) lived in the same century. Sheltered in Konya, Rumi had imported spirituality from Khorasan.

Sadi lived in Fars, a province spared by the Mongol Hulegu. Under the government of the Salghurids, Fars had not therefore experienced the cultural rupture and social turmoil experienced by other provinces.

Sadi's work represents a peak in the historical development of Persian literature. The 13th century also brought the first phase of the successful propagation of Persian literature in India; and, with Joveyni as a prime example, it was the great century of Persian prose as used by historians in the service of the Mongols.

Sadi's work in Shiraz is at the confluence of different literary genres and approaches, narrative, moral, and political, as well as the most classical literary expression of Sufism.

His major works, the Sadinameh (later named the Bustan) and the Golestan, are a faultlessly seamless tapestry of anecdotes and stories with commentary.

Without the ghazals of his Divan, we would not have those of the following century, especially of Hafez. Without the ribaldry of his facetious remarks (Khabitat), Obeyd-e Zakani would not have had a worthy predecessor.

During his lifetime his reputation extended far beyond Fars. With Sadi, a seemingly effortless but meticulously crafted diction, influenced by Arabic but firmly grounded in the everyday Persian of the time, rediscovered its authentic power and verve and served as a model of clarity and aesthetic virtuosity for the subsequent generations.

Like Nezami, Sadi, was a fervent believer in the power of speech and the inestimable value of

His work was in ways a summation of the cultural achievements of the previous three centuries. For a long time, the cultured Iranian individual recognized himself in the mirror of Sadi, the sage.

Sadi's work contains several personal references and biographical details. Yet, here as elsewhere, as pointed out before, one must differentiate between the man and the literary persona conjured up by the writer.

This character, let's say Sadi, would have visited the length and breadth of the Islamic world, from North Africa to India to Khotan.

He would have even been a prisoner of the Franks, or so this seasoned and well-traveled writer (jahandideh) tells us. Sadi studied in Baghdad, made the pilgrimage to Mecca, met great spiritual masters.

Wisely he returned to Shiraz at the outset of the Mongol invasion in 1256; and two years later, he dedicated the Bustan and then the Golestan (undoubtedly the fruit of many years' labor) to Abu Bakr b. Sad, the Salghurid ruler.

We sense his involvement in the ordinary lives of the citizens in Shiraz, visiting the court and its patrons, and maintaining links with spiritual personalities in the capital.

More classical in form than the Golestan, the Bustan is a long didactic poem in nine chapters, dealing successively with the justice of the prince, his kind deeds, human and divine love, humility, acceptance of fate as determined by Providence, education, recognition, and finally repentance.

But all this is woven into a sea of stories told in a most beautiful language. The Golestan conveys similar lessons delivered in a lighter style in the form of sessions.

Written mainly in prose, these are in general anecdotes drawn from daily life and illustrate a lesson distilled in one or two beautiful distiches. The work belongs to the magamat tradition and had many imitators.

For Sadi two characters predominate in society: the prince and the dervish. They represent the two pillars of society: political power and religious institutions.

Traditional Iranian thought opposed the Greek vision of the prince-philosopher but later revised it with the proviso that no prince can act wisely without an advisor.

This became the political justification for Persian literature itself, as it manifested its own potentials and scope as just such an advisor.

A second classical period of Persian literature

In the founding period we have just examined, Persian literature revealed the breath of its expression, and the possible paths for its future were delineated.

With the Mongol power on the wane, a new period begins in the 14th century, enabling local dynasties to flourish. Tabriz, Shiraz, Kerman, and Baghdad became the seat of power for princes who competed with each other as generous patrons of the arts, friends of Sufi circles, and supporters of religious schools.

In literature, the achievements of the founding period were consolidated and became the norm. Sufism became the principal form in Persian literary expression, and the ghazal became the favorite lyrical medium.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica To be continued

Marcela Sabio, Leila Ebrahimi share top prize at Iran's Intl. Storytelling Festival

TEHRAN - Narrators Marcela Sabio from Argentina and Leila Ebrahimi from Iran shared the top prize at the 23rd edition of Iran's International Storytelling Festival on Tuesday.

Winners of the festival, which was organized online due to the pandemic, were announced in a physical ceremony at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA - Kanoon), the organization behind the event.

Canadian storyteller Shayna Jones and Iranian narrator Davud Reyhani also shared the runner-up prize, while Qamar Gholamian from Iran took third place in the international competition category.

Experienced Lebanese storyteller Sara Kasir was accompanied by Iranian media experts Mansur Zabetian and Giti Khameneh on the jury.

In a video call screened at the ceremony, Kasir said, "In my view, your festival was great. As an international storyteller, I attend many festivals and I always talk about your festival wherever I go. It is a professional event and I see your desire to listen to a story."

The jury also expressed its thanks to the Mumbai Storytellers Society for its contribution to the festival.



Iranian storyteller Leila Ebrahimi (C) accepts her prize during the 23rd International Storytelling Festival in Tehran on December 21, 2021. (Kanoon/Behzad Khezerlu)

Maryam Zare' came first in the national competition category, followed by Roya Havasbeigi. Faranak Hayati took third place. Leila Khalifeh-Sagga won the special jury prize.

In the National Traditional and Folktale Competition, no one earned the first prize, but Hossein Gholami won second prize, while Shirin Keikhai won third place.

The final session of the festival was held on Yalda Night, which fell on December 21 this year, the last day of autumn, the evening of which is celebrated by Iranians as an ancient tradition. Storytelling by parents and grandparents is a key element of the celebration.

"We intend to cement the foundation of storytelling in the country by organizing this festival," Kanoon managing director Mehdi Ali-Akbarzadeh said at the ceremony.

He added, "Storytelling can help improve parent-child relations and consequently helps to strengthen the foundation of families."

"Good stories train good children and storytelling helps to attract children and parents to reading," Ali-Akbarzadeh noted.

Dozens of overseas storytellers, including Patrick Mohr from Switzerland, Nor Azhar Ishak from Malaysia, Veronica Antipolo from Canada, Beatriz Quintana Valle from Cuba, participated in the festival.

Book telling children about General Soleimani's peace efforts published



Cover of the book "Hajji Qassem and Flying Paintings" written by Rahim Makhdumi.

Frome Page 1 > One of the books is Mohammad-Ali Jaberi's "Uncle Qassem", which reflects Soleimani's regard for children.

Published by Ketabak, the book contains 20 stories that provide a truly deep insight into the character of Gen. Soleimani, and enjoin children to think of the martyred commander's personality as a role model.

The book has been translated into French, Spanish and several other languages.

Another example is "I Am Qassem Soleimani" published by Mobasher Publications. It is a biography authored by Mohammad-Hossein Khani.

"I'm Qassem Soleimani" has been published by Nur uz-Zahra. In this book, writer Arezau Agbabaian has fictionalized the life story of the commander for children.

Ali Babajani and Taher Khosh have also

novelized Soleimani's life story for children in "Hajji Qassem Soleimani: From Childhood to Martyrdom" published by Armaghane

Before his martyrdom, Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force, the overseas arm of IRGC, had a regular program to visit his soldiers' children.

In addition, he frequently paid visits to the children of his comrades who had been martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq

His exemplary conduct toward children also became the subject of the short documentary "Green Zone" by young filmmaker Behnam Bahadori.

"A Hero" makes Oscars 2022 shortlist for international feature films

TEHRAN - Iranian drama "A Hero" has been shortlisted in the international feature film category as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences on Tuesday announced the shortlists in 10 categories for the 94th Oscars.

Directed by two-time Oscar winner Asghar Farhadi, the film was shortlisted earlier for the Best Picture - Non-English Language category at the 79th Annual Golden Globe Awards.

The film, which is a co-production between Iran and France, follows Rahim, who is in prison because he was unable to pay a debt. During a two-day leave of absence from prison, he attempts to have his creditor withdraw his complaint over part of the sum owed. But things don't go as planned.



acts in a scene from "A Hero".

Amir Jadidi

aequo) at Cannes 2021 is competing with 14 other films, which have been acclaimed at international events.

Japanese director Ryusuke Hamaguchi's drama "Drive My Car" is a chief rival in the category. The film was named best picture by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association on Monday.

The film is about Yusuke Kafuku,

The winner of the Grand Prix (ex a stage actor and director who is happily married to his playwright wife. Then one day she disappears.

> Finnish drama "Compartment No. 6" is another main contender in this

Directed by Juho Kuosmanen, the film follows two strangers, which share a journey that will change their perspective on life as a train weaves its way up to the Arctic Circle.

The shortlist also features "Great Freedom" from Austria, "Playground" from Belgium, "Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom" from Bhutan, "Flee" from Denmark, "I'm Your Man" from Germany and "Lamb" from Iceland.

"The Hand of God" from Italy, "Hive" from Kosovo, "Prayers for the Stolen" from Mexico, "The Worst Person in the World" from Norway. "Plaza Catedral" from Panama and "The Good Boss" from Spain are other films on the shortlist.

Nomination voting begins on January 27, 2022, and concludes on February 1. Nominations for the 94th Academy Awards will be announced on February 8. The 94th Oscars will be held on March 27 at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood & Highland in Hollywood and will be televised live on ABC and in more than 200 territories worldwide.

Soren Kierkegaard's "The Lily of the Field" appears in Persian

TEHRAN - Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard's book "The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air: Three Godly Discourses" has been published in Persian.

Published by Shabgir, the book has been translated into Persian by Elham Delavar. The book was first published in 1849.

An English rendition of the book was released in 2016 by Princeton University Press.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his followers to let go of earthly concerns by considering the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Soren Kierkegaard's short masterpiece on this famous gospel passage draws out its vital lessons for readers in a rapidly modernizing and secularizing world.

Trenchant, brilliant and written in stunningly lucid prose, "The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air" is one of Kierkegaard's most important books.

This profound yet accessible work serves as an ideal entrée to an essential modern thinker.

"The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air" reveals a less familiar but deeply appealing side of the father of existentialism, unshorn of his complexity and subtlety, yet supremely approachable.

As Kierkegaard later wrote of the book, "Without fighting with anybody and without speaking about myself, I said much of what needs to be said, but movingly, mildly, upliftingly.

Kierkegaard was a prolific 19th-century philosopher and theologian. Kierkegaard strongly criticized both the Hegelianism of his time and what he saw as the empty formalities of the Church of Denmark.

Much of his work deals with religious themes such as faith in God, the institution of the Christian Church, Christian ethics and theology, and the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with life choices.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Soren Kierkegaard's book "The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air".

His early work was written under various pseudonyms, who present their own distinctive viewpoints in a complex dialogue.