

# Stark Warning

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## Opinion

### Research, technology highlighted in oil industry

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN - In the recent years, especially after the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions, Iran has seriously pursued strengthening and developing knowledge-based, research and technology activities in all sectors, with the aim of empowering domestic production and nullifying the sanctions.

One of the sectors with very outstanding performance in this due is the oil industry, as many measures and endeavors in this regard has already led to a high amount of self-reliance in all parts of this sector, including oil, gas, petrochemicals, digging, distributing, etc.

A recent measure in this field was the four memorandums of understanding (MOUs) Iranian Oil Industry Innovation and Technology Park signed last week with the country's knowledge-based companies to cooperate in a variety of areas.

The MOUs covered cooperation in areas like providing capital for innovative companies and market development, using the infrastructure of Iran's National Tech Market network in creating and developing the oil industry technology market, supporting and empowering businesses to meet the needs of the petrochemical industry, and artificial intelligence, as well as Internet of Things (IoT). ▶ Page 4

## Report

### Unprecedented open-ended UN probe against Israel

TEHRAN - In yet another sign of mounting international anger at the Israeli regime, the United Nations General Assembly voted in favor of a resolution that backs an open-ended investigation into Israeli practices against the Palestinians. This is the first time ever the world body has backed such a probe, in its history.

A massive majority of 125 countries voted in favor of a budget for the investigation that will be handled by the United Nations Human Rights Council. For the first time, it gives the council an indefinite mandate (a permanent commission of inquiry) to report and monitor Israeli violations against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip. The probe was initially set up by the UN rights council after the 11-day Israeli onslaught in May on the besieged Gaza Strip that killed more than 60 Palestinian kids.

Israel tried to significantly deduct funds allocated to the UN commission that will be responsible for the investigations, but that backfired after the UNGA gave an overwhelming response with its resolution.

Palestine's Permanent Ambassador to the UN, Riyad Mansour, praised the vote and all the countries that rejected Israel's proposal. He also thanked the UNGA for approving all budgets of the programs relating to the Palestinian cause, including his request to increase funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). ▶ Page 5

## Self-sufficient Iran plans to power nuclear plants

TEHRAN— Mohammad Eslami, the director of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), has told Sputnik that his country can create nuclear fuel on its own and will soon begin using it at the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

He also told Ria Novosti that the second and third power units are around 23 months behind schedule when the correspondent asked when will the reconstruction process begin. Eslami said that Iran anticipates that Rosatom would boost the implementation of the project to compensate for all the delays.

"We owe Moscow money for these two

blocks (second and third power units in the Bushehr nuclear power plant), and the amount has already been calculated. Given the financial terms we agreed on and the loan we took out to do so, we have almost balanced them.

We anticipate that Rosatom will speed project implementation with an agreed-upon plan to compensate for all delays. Block 2 is currently being concreted, and the process of guaranteeing the structure's strength is in progress. Concerning the third block, I can report that the soil is being strengthened and that preparations for concreting the founda-

tion are currently ongoing," he noted.

In response to a question posed by Ria Novosti about the IAEA inspectors being thoroughly frisked before entering a nuclear facility and whether it is possible that among them are spies and saboteurs who have been duped by countries wishing to attack Iran's nuclear program, the nuclear chief said that the protocol dictates that the inspectors should not bring anything with themselves when entering a vital institution. ▶ Page 2

## Interview

### Legal expert Vakil accuses Iranian clubs of negligence

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Persepolis, Esteghlal and Gol Gohar football teams are on the verge of being banned from the 2021-2022 AFC Champions League. Amir Saed Vakil, an Iranian sports legal expert, accused the clubs of negligence.

The Iranian giants have failed to meet the criteria to obtain the club licensing required to enter the AFC Champions League competition. The license is given after a club meet criteria in five sections - Sporting, Infrastructure, Personnel, and Administrative, Legal and Financial.

So many Iranian media and news agencies have recently reported that Persepolis, Esteghlal and Gol Gohar have been removed from the prestigious tournament by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). At that time, the football federation's official stated that the AFC had granted the ▶ Page 3

## Raisi praises successful military drill

TEHRAN — The success of "the Great Prophet 17" maneuver shows Iran's military capability in protecting the interests and security of its nation, President Ebrahim Raisi said in a message on Saturday.

"Any hostile action by our enemies will face a comprehensive and definitive response from the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran that would change the strategic equations significantly," Raisi, head of the Supreme National Security Council, said upon the successful holding of the military drill.

On Friday and in the last day of the five-day

maneuver, the IRGC simultaneously fired 16 precision guided missiles at a predetermined target. The firings were conducted at the presence of senior military commanders, including IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Mohammad Baqeri.

Major General Baqeri said the maneuver had been planned before but military threats against Iran by the Zionist regime in the recent days made Iran to hold the drill earlier.

## Amir-Hossein Rahmati finishes first at Iran's Nationwide Quran Competition

TEHRAN - Amir-Hossein Rahmati, a reciter from Golestan Province, took first place on Friday at the 44th edition of Iran's Nationwide Quran Competition.

This position qualifies him for participating in international Quran competitions across the world, the organizers said at the closing ceremony for the contest held at the Sureh Hall of the Art Bureau in Tehran.

Masud Nuri won the runner-up prize followed by Hamidreza Nasiri. Fourth and fifth positions were taken by Mohammad-Hassan

Movahedi and Mojtaba Mohammadbeigi.

Speaking at the ceremony, Hojatoleslam Seyyed Mehdi Khamushi, the director of the State Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization, the main organizer of the event, said, "The grandeur of the Holy Quran continues to flow in our time."

"With contributions from the Islamic revolution, we see that today, people across the world pay special attention to Islam and understanding the message of Quran," he added. ▶ Page 8

## National webinar to address history, arts of western Iran

TEHRAN - Tens of historians, archaeologists, as well as cultural heritage and art experts have been invited to discuss western Iranian civilizations in a national webinar on Monday.

Organized by Iranology Foundation, the event is set to shift the focus on the history, arts, and culture of the provinces of Ilam, Kordestan, and Kermanshah, ILNA reported.

The webinar is part of larger series that addresses every corner of Iran, which its outcome is expected to signal a turning point in Iranian studies and to help strengthen national identity, according to organizers. Soaked in history, culture and natural beauties, many western Iranian cities are still considered as lesser-known or less-favored travel destinations.

Home to almost half of the country's UNESCO sites, western Iran is home to hospitable people, wild extremes, and wilder history, and it may be an independent traveler's adventure playground. The region also witnessed the rise and fall of many great empires once bordering Mesopotamia, Ottoman Turkey, and Czarist Russia.

Experts say that western Iran is heaven for off-the-beaten-track lovers. Last year, UNESCO registered Iran's Uramanat cultural landscape to its list of world heritage sites. It boasts

dense and step-like rows of houses in a way that the roof of each house forms the yard of the upper one, a feature that adds to its charm and attractiveness.

Stretched on the slopes of Sarvabad county, and shared between the provinces of Kordestan and Kermanshah in western Iran, Uramanat embraces hundreds of villages, 106,000 hectares of land, and 303,000 hectares of surrounding properties.

Over the past couple of years, western Iranian provinces have held several meetings to discuss ways to expand tourism, bringing together local officials, hoteliers, travel agents, and tour operators from provinces of Lorestan, Ilam, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Kermanshah, Kordestan, Hamedan, Zanjan and East Azarbaijan, amongst others.

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

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## Interview

### Domestic politics affecting Washington's foreign policy: Turkish expert

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - A Turkish expert in international relations says domestic struggle at home significantly affects Washington's foreign policy.

"I think that the dynamics of U.S. domestic politics have a more significant impact on U.S. foreign policy and regional policies than before, which does not affect U.S. interests well," Oral Toga tells the Tehran Times.

The Turkish expert also believes that U.S. pressure policy would have a unifying effect among people of the region.

"There is an interesting aspect of the culture of both Turkey and Iran. In these countries, all kinds of external pressure cause a unifying effect among the people."

Toga believes that any policy of repression will yield the expected result in the Middle East (West Asia).

"The pressure of the U.S. only causes other actors to find the opportunity and find a broader place on the stage. Operating diplomacy and finding a common way within the framework of mutual understanding will always yield more effective results."

Following is the text of the interview:

**How do you evaluate U.S. pressure policy on West Asian countries, like Iran and Turkey? Do you think it can be a successful in West Asia?** ▶ Page 5



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## Odor of life: Daffodil harvest offers jobs, opportunities in southern county

Photo collection depicts rural families collecting daffodils in various gardens scattered across Khafr county of Fars province, southern Iran. Many of the natives make a living through the cultivation of flowers in the semi-arid mountainous region. In Persian culture and literature, the daffodil symbolizes the eye, usually the eye of the beloved.



## Iran says committed to political resolution of regional issues



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (R) meets with Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa al-Harthi, the Omani Foreign Ministry's under-secretary for diplomatic affairs, in Tehran on December 25, 2021. (Photo by IRNA)

TEHRAN – Iran is committed to dialogue and adoption of political solutions to resolve bilateral and regional problems, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said on Saturday, underlining Tehran's readiness to hold talks with regional countries to boost ties.

Amir Abdollahian made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on Saturday with Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa al-Harthi, the Omani Foreign Ministry's under-secretary for diplomatic affairs, according to Press TV.

Reiteration by Tehran to ameliorate ties with neighbors, especially Arab nations, comes as Iran and Saudi Arabia, which have been at loggerheads over a number of issues including the Yemen crises, were to hold a new round of talks in Baghdad on Saturday with the mediation of Iraq.

The foreign minister said improving relations with neighboring countries is a foreign policy priority of the Ebrahim Raisi administration, noting that Iran attaches great importance to its ties with Oman as a neighbor.

He also underscored the need for bilateral efforts to enhance the volume of trade between the two countries so that it reaches the level of friendly relations between the two sides.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the top Iranian diplomat expressed hope that the efforts made by all regional countries, especially Iran and Oman, would pave the way for an end to the Yemeni crisis.

For his part, al-Harthi also hoped that the Yemeni crisis would end as soon as possible, adding that his country welcomes peaceful, diplomatic ways to reduce regional issues.

The Omani diplomat is in Iran for a meeting of the Iran-Oman joint strategic consultative committee.

In recent years, Iran has sought to expand its trade relations with regional countries, defying U.S. plots to isolate the country through sanctions.

The Raisi administration has especially focused on developing closer relations with neighboring countries.

Trade between Tehran and Muscat has steadily increased in 2021.

Meanwhile, Iran and Oman held a joint military drill in the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman earlier this month, with Iranian Navy Chief Rear Admiral Shahram Irani praising the two country's "stable relations."

## Research blames U.S., including Iran sanctions, for spread of COVID-19

TEHRAN – In a joint research report titled "U.S. Responsible for Global Spread of COVID-19", Washington is blamed for the global spread of COVID-19.

The research is jointly conducted by the Intelligence & Alliance Think Tank and the Taihe Institute.

The research study, published on Saturday on the Xinhua website, blames the United States as "most responsible for the fast global spread of the virus."

It says Washington's "political manipulation of the disease has made the global anti-pandemic efforts particularly difficult and challenging."

It cites Washington's refusal to lift sanctions on Iran during the pandemic era, and even intensifying sanctions, added to the pains of the Iranians.

This an excerpt of the research:

As the pandemic continues to rage across the world, the United States refused to lift sanctions on some countries out of its geo-political considerations. This made it hard for those countries

to get access to medical supplies and humanitarian assistance, crippling their abilities in containing the virus.

Take Iran as an example. The U.S. not only turn a deaf ear to the request from the international community to ease sanctions on Iran, but introduced more in the COVID-19 era. This resulted in a burst of infections during the early stages of the pandemic. Iran once ranked No. 9 in global confirmed cases.

Due to U.S.-imposed sanctions, Middle East, Latin-American and African countries with weak public health systems, suffered a huge loss and severe humanitarian crisis.

U.S. political maneuvering has taken the world further and further away from overcoming the epidemic. From the very beginning of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. politicians have placed

geopolitics above science. The United States has given the pandemic a "Cold War" narrative, "Cold War" language and political overtones of "Cold War" attacks, smearing and vilifying China and seriously disrupting international origins-tracing and global anti-pandemic cooperation.

## 360-degree maneuverability of ballistic missiles is main feature of IRGC exercise: general

TEHRAN – Attack on enemy from all sides with a 360-degree maneuverability by ballistic missiles were the leading features of the last stage of the IRGC military exercise, IRGC aerospace commander Ali Hajizadeh boasted on Thursday.

The IRGC started a drill in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and southern coastal provinces of Khuzestan, Hormuzgan and Bushehr on Monday that lasted until Friday. Different branches of the IRGC were involved in the military exercise.

"Thank God, we witnessed that all launches were precise and all missiles and drones hit the specified targets precisely," Hajizadeh stated.

Directing ballistic missiles from different sides that have maneuverability is a capability that has made it "very difficult by the enemy" to counter Iran, the commander said.

By mastering this the technology, enemies can no longer predict from which side they will be attacked even if they spend hundreds of billions of dollars, he explained.

# Self-sufficient Iran plans to power nuclear plants



From page 1 ▶ "You should not bring anything with you when entering a vital public institution. We did not breach any of our inspectors' protocols. In this aspect, the reverse is true - they must abide by them. They must abide with our guidelines. It will be the same everywhere you go in the world. We treat them according to the same principles and will never accept inspectors who are employees of foreign intelligence services masquerading as Agency inspectors," he noted.

The Russian journalist then asked Eslami about the enrichment program and whether it would exceed the level of 60% if the parties to the Vienna talks fail to reach a deal, and Eslami replied that Iran's uranium enrichment is aimed to fulfill the industrial needs, and Iran will not go beyond the 60% enrichment.

The nuclear chief reiterated, "No, not at all. All of our uranium

enrichment aims are to fulfill our industrial and production needs, as well as the needs of our consumers for the things that our country and people require today. All of our atomic activities are carried out in accordance with the International Atomic Energy Agency's agreements, statutes, and regulations."

He then added that Iran is planning to produce 17 thousand megawatts of nuclear energy.

"During the construction of new power plants, we are aiming for 10 thousand megawatts of energy. Today, we need at least 17 thousand megawatts. Iran's energy policy is structured so that renewable energy sources are utilized to the fullest extent

possible, so that Russia can also join this development partnership. Besides inviting foreign investors to participate in the construction of this attractive 10,000 MW project in Iran, as Russia has invested in other countries," he noted.

The AEOL chief added that Iran can already produce nuclear fuel.

"We held talks with Rosatom and we hope that within the framework of our interaction, as well as on the basis of the plans and contracts that we will conclude with it, we will be able to start using Iranian fuel in the reactor itself in Bushehr," he reiterated.

The interview came just a few days before Iran and the P4+1 (Russia, China, France, UK, and Germany) plan to resume the talks in Vienna intended to lift sanctions

imposed on Iran.

Iran has time and again dismissed reports that it seeks to enrich uranium to 90%, saying it is "a bold lie." Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian vehemently dismissed such a claim in his phone call with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell earlier in December. IAEA chief has also rejected such a rumor.

The P4+1 and the United States are creating a media hype that Iran is enriching uranium to weapons-grade level to influence the talks to gain more concessions, but this media hype is doomed to fail, as Iran has no plans to enrich uranium beyond 60%. The AEOL chief made this very clear that even if the Vienna talks fail, Iran will stick to 60 percent enrichment to provide radiopharmaceuticals for cancer patients, agricultural uses, industries and more importantly to run nuclear power plants.

Iran is planning to produce 17 thousand megawatts of nuclear energy

## UK spreading misinformation: Iranian ambassador

TEHRAN - The Iranian ambassador to London said on Friday that the United Kingdom is spreading misinformation about the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, that confirms the 2015 nuclear program.

"These countries should be reminded several times that Resolution 2231 speaks of missiles designed to 'carry nuclear weapons,'" Mohsen Baharvand wrote on his Instagram page.

The ambassador added that the Iranian missiles are not designed to carry nuclear weapons, but are designed to "defend Iranian territory and respond aggressively to aggressors."

"Resolution 2231 has many provisions that you did not implement and ignored. Your ability and honesty to identify threats to international peace and security is questionable, as if you imposed two major wars on the region on the pretext that you confessed after killing thousands of civilians that it was wrong," he clarified.

The ambassador then lamented the UK hypocrisy, saying, "If you are honest, condemn the Zionist regime only once, which, contrary to the explicit text of the UN Charter, routinely threatens Iran with the use of force, so that your honesty will be clear to everyone."

The Iranian diplomat was referring to a statement by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office which denounced Iran's use of ballistic missiles.

"We condemn Iran's use of ballistic missiles in a test launch confirmed to have been conducted today. The launch is a clear breach of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which requires that Iran not undertake any



activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons - including launches using ballistic missile technology," the statement said, adding, "These actions are a threat to regional and international security and we call on Iran to immediately cease its activities."

The UK reaction came after the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) simultaneously fired 16 precision-guided missiles at a predetermined target.

### Iran rejects UK hypocrisy over UNSCR 2231

Late on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh also rejected the British Foreign Office's interventionist attitude on Iran's defense capability, stating that the Islamic Republic acts within the framework of international law and in accordance with its own defense needs.

Such words and postures, according to Khatibzadeh, are not just interference in Iran's internal affairs, but also evidence of London's continued use of double standard policies.

He went on to say that the UK is in a never-ending race to sell the most destructive weapons to West Asia and other crisis-ridden

regions of the world, and that it signs military treaties like AUKUS in violation of non-proliferation rules, while also being concerned about Iran's routine military exercises.

The official emphasized that "the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program is peaceful, as proven by hundreds of hours of inspections and many reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency."

He also stated that Iran has not used and has no ambitions to use nuclear technology for military purposes, including designing missiles.

Khatibzadeh further stated that the British understand well that Iran's missile program has nothing to do with Resolution 2231 and its terms. He underlined that Britain is the one that has breached the resolution by interpreting its contents as it sees fit.

Khatibzadeh slammed British officials' attempts to portray Iran as a threat to the region, claiming that what had fueled instability and insecurity in the region, including the humanitarian disaster in Yemen, was Britain's and other European countries' insatiable appetite to sell large quantities of advanced weapons to some countries while fully aware that they are violating international law, particularly humanitarian law, by using these weapons. According to Khatibzadeh, Britain and other European countries must be held accountable in front of the oppressed people of the region and the world community for the rise in instability and insecurity in the region.

Finally, the diplomat emphasized that the Islamic Republic does not seek approval for its defense program and does not negotiate on the matter.

**NO HONOR IN THE WEST**

1. In 2019, NSO Group - an Israeli corporation - has faced intense scrutiny.
2. A leaked database from NSO's Pegasus project reveals the phones of 13 heads of state had been targeted for surveillance by using Pegasus spyware.
3. On Dec. 4, 2021, iPhones of at least nine U.S. State Department employees were hacked by the NSO spyware.
4. NSO has long claimed it only sells its products to law enforcement to help them to monitor threats and is not involved in surveillance.
5. The Commerce Department's recent decision to place the Israeli company on an entity list makes it harder for U.S. companies to do business with NSO Group.

www.theguardian.com  
www.voanews.com

TEHRAN – In a clear warning to Israel, two senior Iranian generals have announced that the recent military exercise staged by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) was intended to respond to brazen Israeli threats against Iran.

In remarks made at the final phase of the drill, code-named the Great Prophet 17 (Payambare Azam 17), Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri and IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami made it clear on Friday that whom the drill was meant to deter: Israel.

Underlining that the missile part of the drill is carrying “very clear and obvious messages,” General Salami said, “The message of this drill is a serious, real, and field warning to threats by the Zionist regime’s officials that they should take care not to make mistakes and faults and if they make mistakes, we will cut off their hands.”

The IRGC Commander-in-Chief said that the difference between the actual operation and the IRGC’s missile drill was only in changing the angles of launching the missile. “Therefore, enemies must watch their words,” the general said.

General Bagheri further amplified the warning by hinting that Iran expedited the timing of the drill due to Israel’s bluster against Iran. “This



exercise was planned in advance, but the many yet empty threats by the leaders of the Zionist regime [Israel] caused this exercise to take place at this time, and thank God, it was one of the most successful missile exercises of the Islamic Republic of Iran so far,” he said.

General Bagheri stressed that such threats are unacceptable to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Great Prophet 17 drill began along the southern coastlines of the country on Monday last week with the participation of various forces of the IRGC such as the aerospace force and the cyber-electronic division.

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.

The IRGC’s Ground Force also put a new upgraded combat tank dubbed Karrar into service on the third day of the war game. The Karrar tank was operationalized during the exercise. It is an upgraded version of the T-72m tanks that come into service for the first time.

On the last day of the drill, the IRGC simultaneously launched 16 ballistic missiles of various types that hit a mock sensitive target with 100-percent precision. Perhaps, this was the most remarkable part of the drill as Iran’s state-run TV showed the missiles roaring up into the sky and then raining down on a mock target very much resembling Israel’s Dimona nuclear plant which is thought to harbor Israeli nukes. The target was totally razed to the ground after it was hit with the

missiles, possibly creating a scene of how the real Dimona would look like in case there was an Israeli attack against Iran.

Israeli officials have unleashed a campaign of military threats against Iran in recent weeks. 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.”

Many believe that Israeli threats against Iran are primarily meant to force Iran into making more concessions in Vienna. In reality, observers say, Israel is unable and incapable of mounting an effective military strike to take out Iran’s sparse and heavily-fortified nuclear plants.

Iran’s latest military drill showed what Israel would face if it dared to attack Iran. The drill also was indicative of the gravity of the situation. Iran has said Israel won’t dare to attack. But at the same time, Iranian military leaders highlighted their combat readiness to respond to any hostile move by Israel.

## British anger at Iran ballistic missiles understandable: Veep

TEHRAN – Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, Iran’s vice president for parliamentary affairs, has reacted to a British statement criticizing missiles firing by Iran during a massive military drill.

“British anger at the firing of ballistic missiles during the Great Prophet 17 drill. British Foreign Office: ‘We condemn Iran’s use of ballistic missiles,’” Hosseini said on Twitter.

He added, “England’s anger, which once was omnipotent in the region, at the might of the Islamic Republic is understandable. But they should forcibly admit that the time when they were all-powerful [in the region] has elapsed.”

The Iranian official was referring to a statement by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office which denounced Iran’s use of ballistic missiles.

“We condemn Iran’s use of ballistic missiles in a test launch confirmed to have been conducted today. The launch is a clear breach of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which requires that Iran not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons – including launches using ballistic missile technology,” the statement said, adding, “These actions are a threat to regional and international security and we call on Iran to immediately cease its activities.”

The UK reaction came after the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) simultaneously fired 16 precision guided missiles at predetermined target.

The firings were conducted at the presence of senior IRGC commanders including Major General Hossein Salami and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Mohammad Baqeri.

Major General Baqeri said the maneuver had been planned before but military threats against Iran by the Zionist regime in the recent days made Iran to hold the drill earlier and this was among

“the most successful missiles exercises of the Islamic Republic so far.”

Baqeri said as the images of the firings of missiles will be shown to the world “all missiles hit a specified target with complete precision and they completely destroyed the designated target from very long distance.”

“This is a small part of Iran’s missile power,” the top military official added. “It means all these 16 missiles that simultaneously hit the target are a small part of hundreds of missiles that can simultaneously hit any” object that is targeted at Iran.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has rejected the UK statement. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has rejected the meddling stance of the British Foreign Office on Iran’s defense capability, saying the Islamic Republic acts within the framework of international law and in accordance with its own defense needs. Khatibzadeh added that such remarks and stances are not only interference in Iran’s internal affairs, but also indicate the continuation of adopting double standard policies by London.

He added that the UK is in a never-ending race to sell the most destructive weapons to West Asia and other crisis-stricken regions of the world and signs military pacts such as AUKUS in violation of non-proliferation rules and at the same time it is also concerned about Iran’s routine military exercises.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman stressed that “the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran is peaceful, as verified by thousands of hours of inspections and numerous reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency. He added that Iran has not had and does not have plans on using nuclear energy for military purposes for which it wants to design its missile program. The British know better than anyone else that Iran’s missile

program has nothing to do with UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and its provisions. He added that it was Britain that, in interpreting UNSCR 2231, was in effect violating its provisions.

Khatibzadeh also said the British know better than anyone else that Iran’s missile program has nothing to do with UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and its provisions.

The missile launch was part of the massive drill code-named the Great Prophet 17, which 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 that lasted until Friday.

In a press briefing last week, 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.

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.

During the drill, the IRGC’s Ground Force put a new upgraded combat tank dubbed Karrar into service. 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.

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

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

## Iran FM congratulates Christians on Nativity

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has issued a message congratulating all Christians around the world on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ and Christmas.

“The Angels said, ‘O Mary, God gives you good tidings of a word from Him. His name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, well-esteemed in this world and the next, and one of the nearest,’” Amir Abdollahian said in the message, referring to Verse 45 of Ale-Imran Sura of the Holy Koran.

He added, “I congratulate [all Christians], especially my decent and patriotic fellow countrymen, on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, a prophet of peace and reconciliation, and the flagbearer of kindness and altruism, and on Christmas, which is a period of festivity for Christians

all around the world, especially my decent and patriotic Christian fellow countrymen.”

He concluded, “Under the current tough circumstances emanating from the coronavirus pandemic, all mankind is, more than ever, in need of friendship and the realization of spiritual messages of divine prophets. We hope for peaceful coexistence among followers of divine faiths, and the elimination of tyranny, oppression and injustice. I wish all people around the world, particularly followers of Christianity, a year full of health, happiness and prosperity.”

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh also wished a happy Christmas to all those celebrating it around the world.

“As many around the world, incl our Christian compatriots (on a

bit different date), celebrate birth of Jesus (pbuh), I wish a merry Christmas for all who observe it. May the new year bring peace, health & prosperity,” the spokesman said on Twitter. He also published a photo of an Iranian monastery designated as World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi also issued a message addressed to the Pope Francis. “I am delighted to offer my sincerest congratulations to Your Holiness and all Christians around the world on the birthday of Jesus Christ, the Prophet of Peace and Kindness, as well as the start of year 2022,” Ayatollah Raisi said in the message.

He noted, “The birthday of Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the will and power of God, and the spiritual position of Saint Mary shows the

greatness of the status of women in the ontology of the divine religions; ‘And remember when the angels said, ‘O Mary! Surely Allah has selected you, purified you, and chosen you over all women of the world.’ Celebrating this blessed birthday is an opportunity to honour Saint Mary (PBUH), and to recall the moral qualities of the model of altruism and the herald of the salvation of the oppressed, Jesus Christ in standing against the tyranny of the oppressors and giving them hope for a better future.”

The Iranian president concluded, “I thank you for your efforts to bring closer the hearts and views of the followers of the Abrahamic religions, and I pray to God Almighty for your health and success, and the happiness and pride of all the servants of God and all human beings.”

## SPORTS

### Legal expert Vakil accuses Iranian clubs of negligence

From Page 1 ▶ licenses to Esteghlal, Persepolis and Gol Gohar clubs on a conditional and three-month basis and had ordered the clubs to resolve other remaining issues during this period.

However, last Thursday, it was reported that both clubs were certainly removed from the current season of the Champions League.

The final deadline for resolving the remaining problems regarding the club licensing is on Monday.

Vakil believes that the mismanagement was the main factor that led to such a crisis for Iranian football.

“There are two main reasons why this happened to the Iranian clubs,” Vakil told Tehran Times. “First, mismanagement in both Esteghlal and Persepolis clubs since they were not able to solve the previously mentioned problems. Second, the mismanagement of the federation’s club licensing committee officials that have done unprofessional interviews about such an important, sensitive and confidential issue.

“AFC has repeatedly challenged the ‘joint ownership’ of the two Iranian clubs by the Ministry of Sports and Youth. Moreover, financial debts and tax issues have been another challenging issue for the Iranian clubs in recent years,” the Iranian expert added.

If true, it would be devastating news for Iranian football. Esteghlal and Persepolis are among the strongest clubs to have taken part in Asian club competitions. Esteghlal have won the Asian championship two times, and Persepolis have reached the final twice in 2018 and 2020.

“Speaking about three-month and conditional opportunity to meet the criteria was another unprofessional behavior by the club officials and the managers of the club licensing committee. I think they did it mostly to manage public opinion when in practice it was not truth at all,” concluded Amir Saed Vakil.

### I want to overtake Lasha Talakhadze: Alireza Yousefi

TEHRAN – Iranian weightlifting prodigy Alireza Yousefi says he is going to overtake Georgian weightlifter Lasha Talakhadze in the super-heavyweight category.

He registered a new record in the 2021 World Weightlifting Championships on Dec. 17 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The 18-year-old weightlifter made 238kg in the clean and jerk in the +109kg and bettered the world junior record by one kilogram set by his compatriot Ali Davoudi in the 2019 Asian Weightlifting Championships in Ningbo, China.

Georgian Lasha Talakhadze made 225-267-492 to win the gold medal in the weight category. Armenian Varazdat Lalayan won the silver with 457kg and the bronze medal went to his countryman Gor Minasyan who lifted 448kg in total.

Iranian weightlifters Ayat Sharifi and Alireza Yousefi came sixth and seventh respectively in the weight category with 424 and 421kg.

Now, Yousefi says he is ready to break the record in the senior category.

“I’m satisfied with what I did in Tashkent. My first goal was to break the junior’s record. From now on, I want to better the record in senior level,” Yousefi said.

“It was very important for me to show my potential in the world championships. In the upcoming years, I will do my best to lift the heavier weights,” the 2018 Summer Youth Olympics gold medalist added.

### Newcastle now interested in signing Azmoun

TEHRAN – Newcastle United are chasing a January deal for Zenit St Petersburg striker Sardar Azmoun as his contract in Russia winds down.

Sky Sports report that Azmoun is one of the names on Newcastle’s list having been looking at him with admiration.

Eddie Howe unsurprisingly wants a new striker to help Callum Wilson in the Newcastle attack.

A number of names have been linked and Azmoun is the latest to add to the list.

What’s interesting is that Azmoun’s contract expires next summer, meaning Newcastle could secure an absolute bargain.

Tottenham wanted Azmoun last summer according to the man himself, but his destination could end up being Newcastle instead.

Azmoun was known as the ‘Iranian Messi’ earlier in his career having been tipped for stardom.

The striker has been a goal machine in Russia, turning out for Rubin Kazan, Rostov and Zenit St Petersburg. Azmoun has hit 10 goals in 21 games this season, and his total record for Zenit stands at an impressive 62 goals in 104 games.

Iranian coach Dragan Skocic has claimed that Azmoun is ‘devastating’ inside the penalty area, and that’s what Newcastle fans would love to see.

### Two Iranians in IFFHS Men’s AFC Team of Year 2021

TEHRAN – Hossein Kanaanzadegan and Sardar Azmoun are selected in the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS) Men’s AFC Team of the Year 2021.

Kanaanzadegan, who joined Al Ahli Doha in August, helped Persepolis win Iran league title in 2021 season.

Azmoun also played a key role in Zenit success in Russian Premier League and also stole the show in the UEFA Champions League.

Porto striker Mehdi Taremi and Kayserispor defender Majid Hosseini are included the substitutes team.

#### IFFHS MEN’S AFC TEAM OF THE YEAR 2021

(4-3-3)

Mathew RYAN (Australia/Arsenal FC/Real Sociedad)

Takehiro TOMIYASU (Japan/Bologna FC/Arsenal FC)

Hossein KANAANIZADEGAN (Iran/Persepolis/Al Ahli SC)

Abdel Karim HASSAN (Qatar/Al Sadd)

Yasser AL SHARANI (Saudi Arabia/Al Hilal FC)

Takefusa KUBO (Japan/Real Madrid CF/Getafe CF)

Yuya OSAKO (Japan/Vissel Kobe)

WU Li (China/Espanol Barcelona)

Ali MAKBHOUT (UAE/Al Jazira Club)

Sardar AZMOUN (Iran/Zenith)

SON Heung Min (South Korea/Tottenham)

COACH – Leonardo JARDIM (coach Al Hilal FC)

### Iran’s Zob Ahan handed transfer ban

TEHRAN – Zob Ahan football club have been banned by world governing body FIFA from signing players at the transfer window.

The Iranian football club have been banned due to unpaid debts to their former striker Darko Bjedov.

The Serbian forward played 32 matches for the Isfahan-based club and scored 10 goals for them.

Bjedov joined Zob Ahan in late January of 2020 but the Iranian club failed to pay his wage.

Zob Ahan have announced that the ban will soon be lifted.

## Loading, unloading of goods in ports up over 15% in 9 months yr/yr



TEHRAN - Loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 15.2 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), as compared to the same period in the previous year.

As announced in a report by Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), loading and unloading of goods in the country's ports reached 109.09 million tons in the mentioned period, while the figure stood at 94.72 million tons in the past year's same time span.

During the said seven months, unloading and loading operations in the container sector reached 17.19 million tons, for dry bulk the figure stood at 35.01 million tons, in liquid bulk the figure was 3.05 million tons, while for general cargo (general and miscellaneous goods) it was 15.25 million tons, and for the petroleum products loading and unloading

volume amounted to 38.59 million tons, the PMO report said.

The report noted that the loading and unloading operations in the container sector rose by 11.5 percent in the mentioned period compared to the last year's same time span, while in the dry bulk sector the figure grew by 16 percent, in the liquid bulk sector increased by 21 percent, in the general cargo sector the growth was 10.7 percent, and the petroleum sector also experienced a growth of 17.1 percent compared to the same period last year.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition, to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that PMO has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in a course of five years.

## ICCIMA Energy Committee holds meeting to discuss consumption issues

TEHRAN - The members of Energy Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) gathered on Saturday in a meeting attended by the Head of Iran's Energy Exchange (IRENEX) Ali Naghavi to discuss energy-related issues.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, offering Energy Saving Certificates (ES-Certs) at IRENEX was one of the major subjects discussed in the mentioned meeting.

Speaking in the gathering, Head of ICCIMA Energy Committee Arash Najafi mentioned some of the existing issues regarding the government policies in energy consumption management and asked the IRENEX head to explain some of the exchange's plans and policies to improve the situation.

Naghavi for his part noted that so far, the government's major policy with regard to energy consumption management has been tariff-based, which means that the government has only increased or decreased energy tariffs to manage consumption in various sectors.

The government and the ministries of oil and energy, as the major entities in charge of energy in the country, have been looking to manage consumption by reforming the tariff system. But what is common in the world, and is also designed in the Iranian energy exchange, is a system based on pun-



ishment and reward, Naghavi explained.

One of the main policies of the Iran Energy Exchange, however, is to communicate with market stakeholders; we have had collaborations with ICCIMA and positive cooperation has been also started with the electricity market, the refining industry, and so on, he said.

Mentioning the offering of ES-Certs at the market, the official said: "This tool has two types: the certificate of energy-saving; based on which the industries who have saved energy are given bonds equivalent to their saving and they can offer this as ES-Certs in the market."

"The second type of certificate is a financing certificate; If a company or industry wants to implement a new technology to save energy, it will publish this certificate in the market for financing the project for implementing this technology," he added.

## 392 idle mines revived in 9 months

TEHRAN - The director of the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's program for reviving and developing small mines has said that 392 idle mines have been revived across the country during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21).

According to Reza Azimi, the total number of revived mines has reached 791 since the launch of the program in late March 2019 until December 21, 2021, IRNA reported.

From the beginning of this year to the end of the Iranian calendar month of Azar (December 21), clinical operations were conducted on 415 mines in collaboration with provin-

cial working groups, and necessary measures were taken which include the removal of administrative barriers, providing investment, and resolving local conflicts, Azimi said.

According to the official, reviving the mentioned mines have created potential jobs for 3,104 people and the production capacity of the mines has also increased by 18,000 tons.

"During the first 9 months of this year, more than 7,100 mineral areas have been monitored and assessed in 21 provinces," the official stressed.

Concluding 37 memorandums of understanding (MOU) for investment, and scientific-research co-

operation with knowledge-based companies, as well as the introduction of 124 projects to Mining Investment Insurance Corporation (IRANMICRO) for receiving facilities, and the support and coaching of knowledge-based companies and startups have also been among the measures taken under the framework of the mentioned program, according to Azimi.

The official noted that the reviving of the mentioned 791 mines has increased the country's total annual mineral production capacity by 29 million tons.

Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) is in charge of

# Research, technology highlighted in oil industry

From page 1 ▶ The mentioned MOUs were signed with Iran National Innovation Fund (INIF), Pardis Technology Park, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGSIC), and Parsian Data Processing Group Company, in a ceremony attended by senior officials including Oil Minister Javad Oji, and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari, in addition to Science, Research and Technology Minister Mohammad Ali Zolfogol.

Also in mid-November, Oil Ministry had signed an MOU with the Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology to cooperate in establishing new technology parks and development of a network for technological collaboration between the two entities.

The MOU, signed by Oji and Sattari at the place of Oil Ministry, is aimed at developing the oil industry's innovation and technology bases and expanding the capacity of knowledge-based companies and start-ups active in the oil and gas industry.

Investment and financial support of the start-ups and knowledge-based companies in order to encourage them to meet the tech-

nological needs of the oil industry are also among the goals of the mentioned MOU.

Under the framework of the MOU, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology is also going to define special incentives for supporting knowledge-based and creative companies in various areas including the registration of domestic and international patents, domestic and international trademarks, regulating national and international standards, approvals, and certificates, and insurance of technological products, as well as participating in domestic and international exhibitions.

In Addition, in mid-July, Iran's Research Institute of Petroleum Industry signed two deals with domestic knowledge-based companies for commercial production of newly indigenized oil equipment.

Many research projects are also underway in the oil sector, and the number is noticeably increasing, for example National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) has tripled the number of its research projects in the current year, as compared to the last year.

The oil minister, has recently



said that the new plan of the ministry for the development of oil and gas fields will be well-centered, and emphasized: "We believe that more than 700 of these wells can be brought to high efficiency and productivity in less time by using the power of knowledge-based entities."

And Managing Director of National Iranian Oil company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr has said, "If we want to turn existing resources into wealth, we must use science and technology."

Although all these efforts and approaches are admirable, the final goal of research and technology in the oil sector is to end selling raw materials (crude oil and natural gas), and producing and exporting final products instead, which has not been still materialized.

As announced last week by Science, Research and Technology Minister Mohammad-Ali Zolfogol, Oil Ministry has contracts worth over 10 trillion rials (about \$34.482 million) with the universities of Science Ministry and has entrusted them with more than 40 large national projects.

He said, "Selling raw materials is not appropriate in the national

movement program, the country that sells raw materials has not invested properly in science and technology."

The minister also reiterated boosting value added through science and technology.

Oil minister has also lamented that about 50 percent of export is in the form of raw or semi-raw materials, which is a great weakness for the country, and emphasized the necessity of benefitting from the knowledge-based entities to tackle this weakness.

And Sattari has recently stated that the entry of oil industry into the field of research is a unique event.

Noting that great progress has been made in Assaluyeh (petrochemical hub in the southwest of Iran) in the last 20 years, he said: "Considerable investments are being made in the field of research, but we have not been able to achieve product production as much, and this is a problem and a challenge."

The official again highlighted the entry of oil industry into the research field, and appreciated the endeavors of oil sector under the sanctions condition.

## Positive changes in budget bill to ensure stock market growth

TEHRAN - The government has applied several new changes in the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 21, 2022) which according to experts and analysts will ensure the stock market's stability and growth in the coming years, IRNA reported.

Reducing taxes on production units active in the stock market, strengthening the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund, eliminating subsidized foreign currency allocations, and stabilizing the ownership interest of the mines are some of the measures considered in the budget bill to support the capital market.

Allocating a 20-percent tax on legal entities is considered in next year's budget bill which is less than the previous years. Reducing the taxes imposed on production units will make them more profitable and therefore their performance in the stock market will improve.

Also, the direct taxes collected from production units is expected to be injected into the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund in order to be used to improve and develop the market.

Based on the next year's budget bill, no sub-

sided foreign currency will be allocated to special entities to import certain goods. Experts and analysts believe that this decision is going to have a very positive impact on the stock market since it will prevent rent and unrealistic pricing.

The draft of the national budget bill also indicates that the government will be less reliant on the stock market to compensate deficits and fund various development projects which is another positive aspect of the mentioned bill since the stock market will be less affected by the politics and will follow a normal trend created by supply and demand.

Earlier this month, Market Analyst Peyman Hadadi had said that the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year indicates that the government has a more positive view of the market for the upcoming year.

According to 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 Cap-

ital Market Development and Stabilization Fund is considered one of the most important points of the [Iranian calendar year] 1401 budget bill," Hadadi said.

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.

He further pointed to the reduction of taxes on manufacturing companies and added: "The important action of the government in reducing the tax on production units from 25 percent to 20 percent will largely offset the increase in energy costs."

## Government has a more positive view of stock market for next year

## Govt., Tehran private sector discuss agricultural issues



TEHRAN - The 82nd meeting of the dialogue council of the government and the Tehran Province's private sector was held on Saturday, in which the attendees discussed issues related to the province's agricultural sector, the TCCIMA portal reported.

The meeting was attended by Governor General of Tehran Province Mohsen Mansouri and Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari, as well as the representatives of the province private sector.

During the gathering, the government and private sector representatives an-

alyzed the province's agricultural sector and called for reforming the water consumption in agriculture as well as focusing on services and exports of agricultural products in the province as priorities for this sector.

In this meeting, it was stated that due to the water crisis and the issue of land subsidence, increasing the areas under cultivation is not a good option for supplying the province's agricultural needs and policies should be aimed at improving productivity and using new appropriate cultivation methods

Speaking in this meeting, Khansari also mentioned the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2022) and noted that some decisions made in the budget bill like reducing the government costs and eliminating the allocation of subsidized foreign currency are expected to have positive impacts in the country's economy if approved by the parliament.

## TEDPIX gains 26,000 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose

26,511 points to 1.385 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

Over 6.804 billion securities worth 42.714 trillion rials (about \$155.32 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 23,823 points, and the second market's index gained 39,556 points.

TEDPIX rose 66,000 points (5.1 percent) to 1.359 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

# Domestic politics affecting Washington's foreign policy: Turkish expert

From page 1 ▶ There is no monotype U.S. policy out there today. While Republicans have a political agenda, Democrats have an opposite agenda. Not just for the Middle East (West Asia) but also for Europe and Asia. The Democrats' constructive policies towards Iran regarding the nuclear negotiations and the Republicans' opposite policies are good examples. We can also see the same political divergence in Turkey-U.S. relations as well. Secondly, the Turkey-U.S. relationship does not have the same dynamics as the Iran-U.S. relationship. Therefore, although there are strong links, the policies of the U.S. should be evaluated separately instead of a single "Middle East Policy".

What happened today between Turkey and the U.S. is not the first. Turkey has had various disagreements with the U.S. for 70 years. There were even days when the U.S. imposed harsh embargos on Turkey. But at the end of the day, Turkey and the U.S. are allied countries and both countries are among the most important components of NATO. Therefore, somehow common ground has always been found by the two countries. However, relations between Iran and the U.S. have had different dynamics since 1979.

I think that the dynamics of U.S. domestic politics have a more significant impact on U.S. foreign policy and regional policies than before, which does not affect U.S. interests well. On the other

hand, there is an interesting aspect of the culture of both Turkey and Iran. In these countries, all kinds of external pressure cause a unifying effect among the people. What happened during the Iran-Iraq war is a good example of this situation. I do not believe that any policy of repression will yield the expected result in the Middle East (West Asia). The pressure of the U.S. only causes other actors to find the opportunity and find a broader place on the stage. Operating diplomacy and finding a common way within the framework of mutual understanding will always yield more effective results.

**Do you think there is a link between the crash of local currency in Iran and Lebanon to the fall of lira in Turkey?**

I think that the current situation in Turkey has quite different dynamics from the situation in Iran and Lebanon. However, if there is an attack behind the scenes, it is not possible for us to know.

**Do you predict regional powers in West Asia, like Iran and Turkey, besides Russia will use domestic currencies in their trade to dodge U.S. sanctions and pressure policy?**

This is an issue that has come up occasionally for the past fifteen years. If I speak



**Oral Toga believes U.S. pressure policy would have a unifying effect among people in the West Asia region.**

from Turkey's point of view, Turkey's biggest trading partners are Europeans. It's the same for Iran too. Iran's biggest trading partners are also the Europeans. In addition, another issue that should not be forgotten is that Turkey has not yet given up on its desire for EU membership and is still a NATO country. In the past ten years, Turkey has first faced severe attacks by ISIS and PKK. And also, millions of refugees came to Turkey. Afterward, it experienced a coup attempt and a state of emergency. Now it is fighting for its rights in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean. All these events increased Turkey's security concerns. Today, a securitization understanding prevails in Turkey, and it causes a security paradox. For this reason, there are many disagreements and misunderstandings between Turkey and the West. However, it should not be forgotten that Turkey's relations with the West did not start yesterday. I do not expect Turkey to leave NATO membership, EU candidacy and its biggest commercial partners with a sudden decision and chart a new path. There is still a strong group in Turkey that defends trans-Atlantic and European values. It is an undeniable fact that Russia and Iran are precious

and important neighbors and commercial partners for Turkey. However, I don't think the current situation will change in a short time.

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

Contrary to what is believed, violent mass protests did not occur in Turkey. There were protests by small groups in several places in Istanbul and Ankara. Of course, although the criticism has risen, a large part of the society still follows and tries to understand what is going on. Erdogan has a determined stance that he will continue today's policies. He has said many times that he will not change his stance. So, I don't expect any change either.

**Do you think Iran and Turkey can alleviate the effects of U.S. pressure through developing their ties with China and Russia and maybe joining regional markets and blocs?**

These countries are already collaborating at the maximum level under current conditions. Even though there are many issues that Turkey cannot agree on with Russia, both countries maintain an active dialogue and good relations. I believe we have to wait for many more years to see how much influence China will have, Russia's attitude towards this influence and Iran's position. Then the picture will become much clearer.

## Unprecedented open-ended UN probe against Israel

From page 1 ▶ Israel on the other hand has strongly condemned the resolution, accusing the UN of anti-Israel bias, among other things.

In May this year, the UN's Human Rights Council voted to create the investigation after the UN rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, said Israeli forces committed potential war crimes in the 11-day bombardment on what is regarded as the world's largest open-air prison. The Human Rights Council held a special session on "the Grave Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" and adopted the resolution "Ensuring respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel."

The Rights Council decided to "urgently establish an ongoing, independent, international commission of inquiry to investigate, in the occupied Palestinian

and the relations between Israel and the Palestinians. The Special Rapporteur added that "If this resolution had been actually enforced by the international community, and obeyed by Israel, we would most likely be on the verge of a just and lasting peace. Instead, Israel is in defiance of the resolution, its occupation is more entrenched than ever, the violence it employs against the Palestinians to sustain the occupation is rising, and the international community has no strategy to end the world's longest military occupation."

The Special Rapporteur noted that "in the 20 reports delivered to the Security Council since the Resolution was adopted, the Secretary-General or his representative have stated on each occasion that Israel has not complied with any of the directions of the Security Council," Lynk said. "Is it not clear by now that the Israeli political leadership has no interest, and no incentive, to end the occupation?"



territory including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up and since 13 April 2021."

This begs the question if the inquiry involves "alleged rights violations" against Israel; what is the regime so concerned about?

Perhaps the establishment of facts.

As the year comes to a close, the international consensus for 2021, as reflected by UN resolutions is that Israel is the world's worst human rights violator. According to the number of resolutions the United Nations General Assembly made in 2021, the regime accounts for a massive 74 percent (two-thirds) of total UN resolutions that have condemned the regime. While UNGA resolutions are non-binding, they are extremely symbolic and give a glimpse of what the international community thinks about Israel's human rights violations.

It comes as a UN Human Rights expert says the international community must hold Israel to account for its decades old occupation of Palestine, five years after the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for an end to all settlement activities in Palestinian territories. Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 says "on the fifth anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 2334 by the United Nations Security Council, the international community has to take its own words and its own laws seriously."

Lynk warned that "without decisive international intervention to impose accountability upon an unaccountable occupation, there is no hope that the Palestinian right to self-determination and an end to the conflict will be realized anytime in the foreseeable future." Resolution 2334, adopted by the Security Council in late December 2016, stated that Israeli settlements constitute "a flagrant violation under international law" and said that all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds, must "immediately and completely cease."

The resolution declared that the expansion of settlements threatens the viability of a solution to what is widely regarded as West Asia's biggest source of instability and international law must govern the occupation

The UN expert noted that "one statistic above all illustrates the remarkable unwillingness of the international community to enforce its own directions respecting the Israeli occupation, in 2016, when Resolution 2334 was adopted, there were an estimated 400,000 Israeli settlers in the [occupied] West Bank and 218,000 in East Jerusalem [al-Quds]. Five years later, there are 475,000 settlers in the [occupied] West Bank and 230,000 in East Jerusalem [al-Quds], an increase of 12 percent. This dynamic reality on the ground is racing far ahead of the international community's tepid criticism of Israel's unlawful conduct."

"Only an approach based on accountability, equality, and full rights for all can create the possibility of a prosperous and shared future for Palestinians," said Lynk.

**UN Human Rights expert says the international community must hold Israel to account for its decades old occupation of Palestine.**

Meanwhile, Church leaders in occupied Jerusalem al-Quds have accused Israel of bias against Christians living in the holy city. They say the regime has allowed attacks and vandalism against Christian cities and clergy to go unpunished with the aim of driving, like the Muslims, all Christians also out of the holy city and Judaizing it. They say "radical groups continue to acquire strategic property in the Christian Quarter, with the aim of diminishing the Christian presence." The remarks come as Christians mark the holy occasion of Christmas in the occupied lands. The comments have also been backed by the highest-ranking cleric in the Church of England. The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby says there is a "concerted attempt" by the regime to force the Christian community away.

In joint remarks with Anglican Archbishop in occupied Jerusalem al-Quds, Hosam Naoum, published by British media, they speak of a "steady decline" among Christians in the holy city. They are also quoted as saying "church leaders believe that there are now fewer than 2,000 Christians left in the Old City of Jerusalem." They said an "escalation of physical and verbal abuse of Christian clergy, and vandalism of holy sites by fringe, radical groups" was a "concerted attempt" to drive Christians out.

In 1967, Israeli forces launched a wide scale military offensive against Palestinians of all faiths in the holy city and went on to annex the territory; a move that has not been recognized by the international community.

## Western powers call on Libya to set election date

The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and the United States have urged war-torn Libya to set a new date for delayed presidential election quickly.

"We call on the relevant Libyan authorities to respect the aspirations of the Libyan people for prompt elections by swiftly determining a final date for the polling and issuing the final list of presidential candidates without delay," a joint statement from the five nations said on Friday.

The authorities overseeing Libya's first presidential election said earlier this week holding it on Friday as scheduled would be "impossible".

The vote was intended to mark a fresh start for the oil-rich North African country, a year after a landmark ceasefire and more than 10 years after its 2011 revolt that overthrew and killed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi.

But speculation of a delay had been mounting for weeks. There were bitter disputes over the vote's legal basis, the powers of the winner and the candidacies of several deeply divisive figures.

On Wednesday, the chairman of the parliamentary committee overseeing the vote wrote to the assembly's speaker saying that "after consulting the technical, judicial and security reports, we inform you of the impossibility of holding the elections on the date of December 24, 2021".

It did not propose an alternative to Friday, a date set last year during the United Nations-led peace talks in Tunis.

The country's electoral commission,



the HNEC, later on Wednesday suggested delaying the vote to January 24.

Libya's parliament is to meet on Monday to debate a new timeline for elections.

The election, intended to go hand-in-hand with parliamentary polls, was part of a UN-led peace process, yet UN special envoy Jan Kubis resigned just weeks before the ballot.

One point of contention was a presidential election law controversially passed by speaker Aguila Saleh, which critics say bypassed due process and favoured a run by his ally, renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar.

Another candidate is Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam – a divisive symbol of the old regime wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over war crimes allegations.

Libya's parliament said in September it would not recognise the interim Government of National Unity (GNU) beyond December 24, but the statement by France, Germany, Italy, Britain and the US said it should stay in place.

The statement pointed to agreements at an international meeting last month to say power would not be transferred until after the results of the elections were announced.

The British embassy later said on Twitter that it continued to recognise the GNU and would not endorse any attempt to set up a breakaway government.

Libyans voiced anger at the delay.

In Benghazi, Wahbi Tarkhan, 81, said he and his wife had both registered for the election and were disappointed by the collapse of the process.

"We were eagerly waiting for this day in our minds," he said.

UN special adviser Stephanie Williams said on Thursday that during meetings across Libya she had consistently heard people voicing a desire for elections.

"I call upon the concerned institutions to honour and support the will of the 2.8 million Libyans who registered to vote," she said.

Any fresh effort to resume the electoral process will have to weigh the dangers inherent in a delay against the risks of again attempting an election without consensus on the rules.

Libya's last election in 2014 was the trigger for rival eastern and western factions to split apart into warring parallel administrations.

Musa al-Sulaimani, who has registered to stand for the parliamentary election, said he felt very frustrated by the delay.

"This was something the Libyan street resented," he said.

## Walkway to connect Cyrus the Great's tomb to nearby caravanserai



TEHRAN – Visitors to the UNESCO-registered Pasargadae will soon find a special walkway that connects the tomb of Cyrus the Great to a nearby caravanserai, the director of the World Heritage site has said.

"At this stage, a path with a width of approximately two and a half meters will be constructed from the entrance of the [majestic] mausoleum to the entrance of Mozaffari Caravansaray," Afshin Ebrahimi explained.

"Moreover, we plan to make a concrete flooring to connect the caravanserai to the current asphalt road."

It is interesting to know that wall stones of the caravanserai have been taken from the remains of Pasargadae. The caravansaray has a courtyard area of 208 square meters in front of it with large and small rooms for

travelers.

Situated about 50 km north of Persepolis, Pasargadae was the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire, founded by Cyrus II the Great, in Pars, the homeland of the Persians, in the 6th century BC.

Its palaces, gardens, and the mausoleum of Cyrus are outstanding examples of the first phase of royal Achaemenid art and architecture and exceptional testimonies of Persian civilization.

The UNESCO World Heritage site is also home to a complex water supply system for the time that comprises cisterns, tunnels, underground canals, and ducts, which are locally known as qanats.

Pasargadae became a prototype for the Persian Garden concept of four quadrants formally divided by waterways or pathways, its architecture characterized by refined details and slender verticality.

The offer as an exceptional witness to the Achaemenid Achaemenid Empire, which extended from the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt to the Hindus River in India, is considered the first empire to be characterized by a respect for cultural diversity of its peoples.

Pasargadae represents the first phase of this development into a specifically Persian architecture which later found its full expression in the city of Persepolis.

## Virtual exhibit offers chance to get overwhelmed with royal arts

TEHRAN – The UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in Tehran is displaying its exquisite tilework through an online photo exhibit, Tehran's deputy tourism chief has announced.

The week-long exhibit is intended to showcase the designs and images of the Haft-Rang ("Seven-colored") tiles of the Qajar period (1789-1925) that are part of the Golestan Palace, Morteza Adibzadeh said on Saturday.

The exhibition presents 20 selected photos of painted tiles with images of birds, a lion hunting an animal, a battle between a lion and a dragon, and western or Persian-style mansions, the official added.

The name Haft-Rang does not imply an exact number of colors but it shifts the focus on special technics needed to make the tiles.

Today, Haft-Rang tiles are mainly made in 15 by 15 cm in almost seven colors: blue, turquoise, red, yellow, fawn, black, and white. The technic prevents the colors to be mixed into each other because they are separated by lines of a special kind of ink with oil and magnesium components.

Haft-Rang tile reached its perfection in Shiraz. Haft Rang tiles of Shiraz differ from other cities in the quality and chemical components of their glaze.

One of the best examples of using Haft-Rang tiles is Nassir ol-Molk mosque that is also called the Pink Mosque. Other architectures of Shiraz that have benefited from Haft Rang tiles are the Vakil mosque, Narenjestan mansion, and Afif Abad Garden. Moreover, a top example of Haft-Rang tiles can be found in the Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran.

A destination for domestic and international travelers, Golestan Palace is located in the heart and historic core of Tehran. The palace complex is one of the oldest in the Iranian capital, originally built during the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) in the historical walled city.

Following extensions and additions, it received its most characteristic features in the 19th century, when the palace complex was selected as the royal residence and seat of power by the Qajar ruling family. At present, the Golestan Palace complex consists of eight key palace structures mostly used as museums and the eponymous gardens, a green shared center of the complex, surrounded by an outer wall with gates.

UNESCO has it that the complex exemplifies architectural and artistic achievements of the Qajar era including the introduction of European motifs and styles into Persian arts.

## Inmates attend craft course to take on new job

TEHRAN – A training course in the field of Givah-bafi is currently being held in the central prison of Zanjan, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

Due to the proper support for the production of this handmade product in this region, it is hoped that in the future, the inmates will be among the givah producers in the province as a result of holding these workshops in male and female prisons, Elnaz Khodaifard said on Saturday.

In addition to providing employment, this free workshop will provide an income source for the prisoners, the official added.

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, the course is being held following strict health protocols and social distancing rules, she noted.

Back in August, the official announced that prisons across

the northwestern province have offered handicraft training courses in a bid to empower the inmates.

The courses consisted of practical workshops in the fields of leatherwork, traditional jewelry, as well as cutting precious and semi-precious stones, she explained.

The courses, which have been held by the experienced handicrafts masters, are also intended to generate employment for inmates in the post-prison period and become a source of income for them, the official mentioned.

This traditional footwear, which is produced in the Iranian plateau for millennia, is very light and durable. However, it was more common in the past and was worn by farmers and villagers. This clothing has very unique features. For example, it is highly suitable for arid and mountainous climates, it is very light which decreases

the sweating of the feet. It does not have a left foot or right foot, both of them are the same. These features have given the footwear international popularity and made it a unique product.

The upper part of Givah is usually made from cotton yarn, while the sole is made of textile, leather, or plastic. Making the upper is completely done by women in their homes. They sew the upper using a kind of needle that is called "Javaldooz". But it is men that make the soles because it needs more strength. This part is usually done in workshops.

In the past, givah did not have specific sizes, but they were made in 3 general sizes of small, medium, and large. They are most commonly white. However, sometimes the craftsman makes them in colors like blue, red, or black based on his own taste or at the request of the buyer.

TEHRAN – The Head of the Association of Air Transport and Tourist Agencies of Iran believes that newly-declared travel restrictions have caused many problems for the ones who are arranged to visit Iran.

Following the new travel laws announced a few days ago and the ban on foreign tourists entering Iran, some foreign travelers stayed outside Iran's borders and failed to enter the country, ISNA quoted Hormatollah Rafiei as saying on Saturday.

Due to the outbreak of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, Iranian authorities have prohibited the direct and indirect entry of passengers from eight African countries and four European ones for 15 days, while the entry of the nationals of other countries is only allowed for those with business, student, work, and medical visas.

Several tourists were kept behind Iran's borders after this decree was issued and implemented so suddenly, Rafiei said.

"None of the tourist-friendly countries have implemented such restrictions and bans," he said, calling the new regulations and instructions 'unprofessional' and 'wrong'.

"While we support the ban on the entry of citizens of the few African countries that were sources of the new variant of the coronavirus, we object to the suspension of tourist visas for all foreign nationals."

The travel and tourism industry has not been a major cause of the outbreak of the coronavirus, especially when it is done legally and in a controlled manner, he noted.

The decision is wrong and will cause damage to the country once again as well as create distrust towards Iran on the global

# Tourism activist laments new regulation's pause for arrivals



tourism market, he lamented.

Some experts, however, believe that preventing the spread of new variants of the virus and maintaining public health are preferable to the benefits of tourism.

To control and slow down the spread of the new variant of the coronavirus, tourists from Botswana, Swatini, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Namibia as well as England, France, Norway, and Denmark are banned from entering the country, ISNA reported on Thursday.

However, activists for Iranian tourism urged the three ministries of interior, tourism, and foreign affairs to facilitate travel to Iran for foreign tourists from the mentioned countries who have obtained tourist visas and are en route to Iran or about to visit it.

Moreover, direct and indirect entry of the nationals of other countries is only allowed for those with business, student, work, and medical visas who present valid vaccination cards and follow protocols approved by the Ministry of Health.

A health certificate with a negative coronavirus PCR test result, issued at most 72 hours before arrival, is also required for travelers.

The new regulations and restrictions on travel to Iran have been put into place just two months after the visas were issued for foreign visitors after almost 19 months of suspension.

Last month, Iranian officials announced that in addition to providing proof of vaccination or a negative PCR, inbound passengers must have coronavirus insurance, which differs from the

routine insurance coverage purchased by all tourists before the coronavirus era.

Iranian Tour Operators Director Ebrahim Pourfaraj said earlier in November that the restoration of tourism flow to the country is very important for Iranian tour operators and travel insiders. "At the moment, we are not thinking about revenues, but we are looking for the beginning of the tourist flow to the country and renew our links [with international fellows]," Pourfaraj said.

His comments came after months of steep recession triggered by massive coronavirus restrictions which led many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators towards bankruptcy, unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level.

As mentioned by Pourfaraj, Iran has made its best to maintain contact with global tourism markets and companies that worked with Iran in the past, especially since virtual communication and meetings have thrived.

"Following the resumption of the tourist visa, visitors from Russia and France have traveled to Iran and we are currently expecting a smaller number of tourists in Iran due to the current situation in the world," he explained.

Last November, the World Tourism Organization announced that international tourist arrivals to Iran plunged 72% during the first eight months of 2020 when compared to 2019, highlighting the severe impact of COVID-19 as the main factor.

Iran is potentially a booming destination for travelers seeking cultural attractions, breathtaking sceneries, and numerous UNESCO-registered sites.

## Relics to be loaned to Chinese exhibit on Persia

TEHRAN – A selection of Persian relics discovered in Liar-Sang-Bon, an archaeological site and cemetery in the Amlash region, northern Gilan province, are to be loaned to a major exhibition in Beijing, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

The collection consists of Parthian-era (247 BC – 224 CE) and Sassanid period (224–651) objects unearthed in the recent excavations carried out at the archaeological site, IRNA quoted Vali Jahani as saying on Saturday.

The official, however, did not offer more details about the exhibit, which he described as devoted to Iranian arts and culture during the Persian Empire (c. 550–330).

One of the reasons for displaying these valuable objects is to introduce visitors to the culture, civilization, and history of the people of the northern region of Iran, he noted.

Liar-Sang-Bon was initially identified in the Iranian calendar year 1391 (March 2012–March 2013) while its related mapping and demarcating projects were completed in 1393 and its first season of excavation commenced in 1395.

The site has undergone several archaeological surveys since then and the result



has been the discovery of about 100 ancient tombs, a considerable number of historical objects, and very important information about the style and custom of burial of the people of that period.

However, the site was partly looted by antique seekers during a two-year gap in archaeological seasons.

Amlash, now a county in Gilan province, was a small village in southeastern Gilan in 1959. The name originates from the nearby Alborz valleys where archaeological artifacts

were discovered during excavations. The artifacts range in date from the late second millennium BC through the Partho-Sasanian period, but most of the objects are dated to the 9th-8th century BC.

Dating and meaning of the known objects (bronze weapons and animal figurines, human statuettes of terra cotta and bronze, pottery animal effigy vases, and burnished black, gray, or orange pottery vessels) are complicated by insufficient archaeological contexts.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, Gilan, in the far past, was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

Sophisticated Rasht, capital of Gilan province, has long been a weekend escape for residents of Tehran who are looking to sample the famous local cuisine and hoping for some pluvial action – it's the largest, and wettest town in the northern region. Gilan is divided into a coastal plain including the large delta of Sefid Rud and adjacent parts of the Alborz mountain range.



## Vacancy Notice

**The Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in I.R.Iran, intends to recruit a Programme Analyst, Reproductive Health/Humanitarian NOB level for its office in Tehran, Iran.**

Details of the Re-Advertised vacancy can be found on UNFPA website on the following link:

<https://iran.unfpa.org>

**Please apply online by 20 January 2022, 5 PM Tehran Time. This vacancy is open only for Iranian Nationals.**

### Important Note:

- There is no application, processing or other fees at any stage of the application process
- UNFPA does not solicit or screen for information in respect of HIV/AIDS or disabilities and does not discriminate on the basis of HIV/AIDS status or disabilities

# 130 wildlife species in danger of extinction

TEHRAN – There are 1,300 species of animals in the country, 130 of which are endangered and threatened, Hassan Akbari, deputy head of natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment (DOE), has said.

Asiatic cheetahs, great bustard, Siberian crane, Persian onager, and some reptiles and amphibians are among the endangered and threatened species, he said.

Significant smuggling and habitat destruction are the main threats to the species, and promoting a culture of kindness to the environment and strengthening social participation is one of the most important and effective strategies in protecting the environment, he further explained.

The availability of large quantities of weapons and ammunition to the poachers is another risk factor for wildlife populations, Akbari added.

"Four types of areas, amounting to 309, have been designated for preservation and protection, including, national parks, wildlife refuges, protected areas, and natural national monuments. Currently, the supervised areas reached about 18.5 million hectares.

The strategy and priority of the DOE are to protect endangered



species through preservation of natural habitats, but in some cases, it is necessary to pursue species reproduction in captivity or by species displacement," he noted.

Some species of reptiles and amphibians, became extinct due to the lack of sufficient information about this species, he further lamented, IRNA reported on Saturday.

"Many articles have been published about the country's biodiversity, which is scattered and attempts are being made to compile and use these researches by creating a database.

So, a database has been launched in the field of environmental research in order to im-

prove the quality of nature protection," he also stated.

## Biological diversity protection

Iran has a high diversity of species due to geographical conditions, climatic diversity, huge water resources of the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf, and the Sea of Oman in the south.

According to the latest studies, about 1,300 species of vertebrates, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and aquatic fish, about 30,000 species of invertebrates, and 8,000 species of plants have been identified in the country.

Unfortunately, over the past two decades, human activities have led to alarming degradation

of ecosystems, deletion of genes, species, and biological capabilities; Human threats to biodiversity have accelerated the most over the past 50 years over the entire history of human life.

According to the United Nations, three-quarters of the Earth's environment and about 66 percent of the marine environment have been altered by human activities, and the latest report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) states that more than one million species of animals and plants are in danger of extinction.

Therefore, any planning and action in the direction of optimal and principled management of biodiversity protection in the country, interaction and continuous cooperation of responsible bodies, and benefiting from international opportunities and their financial and professional resources can play a very important and key role in maintaining biological diversity alongside sustainable development.

We hope that with the common determination of officials and policymakers, the people, the media, and environmental activists, will preserve and protect this valuable asset for future generations.

## Long-term rainfall down by 34% in autumn

TEHRAN – While the country received 40.3 mm of rain during the autumn (September 23-December 21), it experienced a 34.5 percent decrease compared to the long-term average of 61.6 mm.

The Meteorological Organization has reported that the precipitation rate during autumn was not very favorable, being considered one of the driest seasons in the past 50 years.

The amount of rainfall that poured over the country in the past month (November 20-December 21) was 17.9 mm, which shows a decrease of 44.2 percent compared to the long-run average of 32 mm, according to the national center for drought and crisis management.

## More drought predicted over next 5 years

According to the World Meteorological Organization's multiannual forecast, in the next five years, Iran's average rainfall will decline by 75 percent, and the temperature rises by 50-75 percent compared to the long-term average.

Accordingly, the adoption of national policies to adapt to low rainfall and reduce the consequences of drought is inevitable, and the Seventh Development Plan should be prepared on the basis of drought and climate change, Vazifeh said in May.

A large part of the country has been hit by severe drought during the past 12 months. Forecasts indicate that we will not have significant rainfall in the remaining months of the current water year, so that, we face severe to very severe drought in most parts of the country, he stated.

## What would be the consequences

Climate change is a fact that cannot be run over, whether the temperature raises over 2 or 6°C, natural incidents such as flooding, droughts, and severe storms are among the main consequences of climate change.

Moreover, water and food shortages, water-borne illnesses, cold or heat-related deaths will come up as the results of temperature variations. In tropical areas also the risk of floods will raise.

Heavy rain and other extreme weather events will become more frequent, which can lead to floods along with decreasing water quality, but also decreasing availability of water resources in some regions.

Climate change will also bring extreme wet and dry seasons, which mainly causes rainfall fluctuations and water scarcity. While there have been prolonged droughts nationwide in past recent years leaving people scrambling for water.

So, nations must take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the future, preventing the emissions peak, otherwise, they might not be able to breathe on the planet in the future, or migrate to other places if found.

The study may also come efficient when it comes to making the people aware of climate change impact in their own city, within their lifetime, to avoid experiencing an entirely new climate that is beyond human experience.

## Wildfire in natural areas decreases by 49%

TEHRAN – The occurrence of wildfire in natural areas has declined by 49 percent since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21) compared to the same period last year, deputy commander of the protection unit of the Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization, has said.

This year, with the implementation of protective measures and increasing public participation and equipping protection units, the burnt areas in natural resources have decreased by 46 percent compared to the previous year, IRNA quoted Ali Mohammadi Moghaddam as saying on Saturday.

The highest rate of wildfires occurs in forests and woodlands, he highlighted.

During this period, over 3,000 vehicles carrying smuggled wood and coal have been confiscated; and 4,500 land grabbers in natural resources were arrested, he lamented.

Currently, 5,000 rangers are active to protect natural resources, however, one protection force is needed for every 2,000 hectares of forest and one protection force for every 10,000 hectares of pasture, which has not been achieved in the country due to lack of manpower.

According to Mohammadi Moghaddam, there are currently 135 million hectares of forests and pastures in the country, with one ranger per 6,000 hectares of forest, and one ranger per 30,000 hectares of pastures.

Due to the hot season and the increasing risk of wildfires, fire prevention procedures will be prepared and announced to all the provinces, Jamshid Mohabbat Khani, commander of the protection unit of the Department of Environment (DOE), said in April.

Rainfall this year was lower than in previous years, so wildfires start sooner so that the most important and effective way to reduce wildfires



is to inform the public and raise awareness, he highlighted.

Mohabbat Khani pointing out that wildfires are mostly caused by unintentional human error, said that over 90 percent of wildfires are ignited by humans unintentionally while setting fires in nature, smoking, and releasing plastic and glass containers.

Every fire causes a lot of damage to the environment and ecosystem; It is not only the plants that are destroyed but also the living organisms that are trapped in the fire, he lamented.

## The highest rate of wildfire occurs in forests and woodlands.

## UK supports refugee programs in Iran

TEHRAN – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has said it welcomes the United Kingdom's donation of GBP 2 million (equivalent to some \$2.7 million) to protect and assist Afghans fleeing to Iran seeking safety.

The United Kingdom's contribution will go towards procuring basic food items and tents, blankets, and jerry cans, to be distributed to new arrivals, allowing them to meet their basic needs in dignity.

"As the situation in Afghanistan remains volatile and while Afghans continue to cross into Iran to seek asylum, UNHCR is maintaining a heightened state of preparedness. The United Kingdom's contribution will be crucial in pre-positioning life-saving items in border areas, ensuring newly arriving asylum-seekers get emergency assistance," said Ivo Frijsen, the UNHCR Representative in Iran.

"We are pleased to help Iran support the large numbers of Afghan refugees who are choosing to leave Afghanistan. This contribution enables the dispatch of essential supplies to the Iran-Afghan border to support these refugees. The UK stands with the people of Afghanistan and regional partners in pursuit of a stable, peaceful future for the country" said Simon Shercliff, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Iran.

According to preliminary estimates by the Government of Iran, up to 500,000 Afghans have fled to Iran this year, with UNHCR having so far been able to speak to some 2,000

heads of households who told us they desperately need shelter and food assistance.

This contribution demonstrates the United Kingdom's efforts to fulfill the spirit of responsibility-sharing, international cooperation, and solidarity outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and spearheaded by the Core Group for the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), of which the UK is a prominent member. This international agreement aims to ensure that refugee-hosting countries get the support they need from the international community, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation.

The Afghan displacement situation is the most protracted and third largest in the world. Even prior to the recent events in Afghanistan driving renewed displacement, Iran was already hosting some 3.5 million Afghans and providing them with education and health services. The situation in Afghanistan remains volatile and sustained international support for UNHCR's programs will be needed in 2022 and beyond – both to ensure adequate emergency support for new arrivals and continue helping Afghan persons of concern who were already in Iran.

Previously, it was announced that Italy and Finland each contributed €1.5 million to the UNHCR to support Afghans residing in Iran.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 25

New cases	1,121
New deaths	42
Total cases	6,182,905
Total deaths	131,348
New hospitalized patients	265
Patients in critical condition	2,781
Total recovered patients	6,024,211
Diagnostic tests conducted	41,388,312
Doses of vaccine injected	116,039,355

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## \$3b approved for improving safety of schools

The sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021) has predicted a total budget of \$3 billion to be allocated for rebuilding and retrofitting old schools across the country, director of the organization for renovation, development and equipment of schools has said.

There are some 107,000 schools nationwide with 530,000 classes, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards, ISNA quoted Mehroolah Rakhshanimehr as saying on Wednesday.

"However, after 2 years the budget has not been allocated yet," he lamented. He went on to explain that 30 percent of the schools nationwide are old, of which some 12 percent must be completely rebuilt and 18 percent must be retrofitted.

Renovation of schools and meeting the necessary standards requires a considerable amount of budget, however, current government funding and annual budgets are by no means enough, he added.

## درخواست تخصیص ۳ میلیارد دلار برای ایمن سازی مدارس

رئیس سازمان نوسازی، توسعه و تجهیز مدارس کشور با اشاره به وجود ۱۶۰ هزار کلاس درس ناایمن در سطح کشور خواستار تخصیص بودجه سه میلیارد دلاری تصویب شده در قالب برنامه ششم توسعه برای ایمن سازی مدارس شد.

مهرداد رخشانی مهر در گفتگو با ایسنا با بیان اینکه حدود ۱۰۷ هزار مدرسه با ۵۳۰ هزار کلاس درس در کشور داریم اظهار کرد: از این میزان، ۳۰ درصد مدارس نیازمند مقاوم سازی و تخریب و بازسازی اند که به تفکیک می توان گفت ۱۸ درصد مدارس باید مقاوم سازی و ۱۲ درصد تخریب و بازسازی شوند.

وی افزود: به عبارت دیگر ۳۳ هزار مدرسه مشتمل بر ۱۶۰ هزار کلاس درس در سطح کشور ناایمن بوده و باید مقاوم سازی یا بازسازی شوند.

رئیس سازمان نوسازی، توسعه و تجهیز مدارس کشور با بیان اینکه حجم نیازها بسیار بالاست اما اعتبارات فعلی دولتی و بودجه های سنواتی به هیچ عنوان پاسخگوی نیازها نیست گفت: تاکنون و با گذشت نزدیک به دو سال از تصویب قانون برنامه ششم محقق نشده است.



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## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If you overpower your enemy, then pardon him by way of thankfulness to Allah, for being able to subdue him.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon: 12:05 Evening: 17:18 Dawn: 5:43 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:13 (tomorrow)

## Iran: Persian literature

Part 22

A decisive factor intervenes during the mid-16th century: the Safavid princes' gradual loss of interest in Persian poetry, imbued as it was with Sufi teachings.

In Persia, Shiism sought to guide literature towards its own goals and aspirations. The consequence of this was a kind of internationalization of Persian literature, toward India, as well as towards Ottoman-dominated countries and Central Asia. However, this process had already started owing to the widespread popularity and circulation of works by Jami in these cultural spheres.

India distinguished itself mainly because the courts of the Mughal princes attracted and welcomed many a poet from Tabriz, Shiraz, and Isfahan.

It all began when Homayun, who had spent some time in exile in Persia, was able to regain his throne in Delhi. A typically Indian style of Persian literature, *sabk-e hendi*, began to emerge.

This style is characterized by its penchant for realism, the use of popular diction, and a complex interplay between imagery and a mode of intellectualism with refined expression akin to mannerism.

According to Ehsan Yarshater, this represents the break away from classical poetry. Many official histories of the Mughal era began to appear, written in Persian, and major texts from Indian literature were also translated into Persian.

Among the many poets of the time, a few will be mentioned in this summary. Through the impact of his work, Feghani from Shiraz (d. 1519) is the poet who marked the literary transition between the Timurid period (he was acquainted with Jami in Herat) and the subsequent era.

Orfi (1555-91), also from Shiraz, was one of the first poets to settle in India, where his accomplished poetry was highly esteemed even as far as the court of Akbar.

Saeb (d. about 1670), born to a family originally from Tabriz, was drawn to the court in Isfahan at the time of Shah Abbas the Great.

A seven-year stay in India under the rule of Shah Jahan made him an innovator in the Indian style. He returned to settle in Isfahan, where he became poet laureate to Shah Abbas II. A prolific poet, he especially favored the *ghazal* and showed much originality in its composition.

In Baghdad, Fozuli (d. 1556) was an eminent man of letters, primarily a Turkish poet but also recognized today for the quality of his lyrical poetry in Persian.

As for the Safavids, they encouraged the composition of *qasidas* in praise of the Prophet and the Imams, as well as a rich strophic poetry of a popular religious type, often recited as elegies in Shia ceremonies.

In this context, quatrains also became important and experienced a revival. The decline of the dynasty began gradually after the reign of Shah Abbas II (1662), and the literary world suffered owing to the deteriorating political conditions.

The time was yet to come when, by turning to the literature of the earlier centuries, hopes for a revival of Persian letters were to materialize.

### (3) Modern Persian Literature Fiction: traditional forms

This article deals with all kinds of stories written for specifically literary purposes up to the time when narrative prose in the modern style, derived from the West, was introduced in Persia.

Excluded from this survey are folklore and fairy tales, unless they play a part in classical works. The general Persian word for a narrative is *dastan*.

In the *Shahnameh*, the major stories are called *dastans*, and the same term serves in later narrative poetry to indicate the actual story as opposed to the introductory sections (usually designated as *aghaz-e dastan*). In modern usage the word came to mean a novel or a short story (*dastan-e kutah*).

The Arabic words *hekayat* and *qesseh* are usually restricted to short anecdotes and tales which were used as illustrations in didactical works (on the original meanings of these Arabic terms).

Other terms, like *afsaneh* (most often used in the sense of a fairy tale) and *rewayat*, were also used in classical literature, but without much consistency.

The concept of "fictionality," in the sense of narrative not based on reality, was not much discussed in traditional criticism. However, in the literatures of the Muslims in general, a tendency may be noticed to disapprove of fiction if it could not be linked to what was considered to be historical fact, which of course included sacred traditions like the stories told in the Quran, the lives of prophets and Sufi saints, and legendary accounts of ancient history.

In classical Arabic literature, this led to the virtual exclusion of the narrative, although the Arabs did produce a rich novelistic literature of a semi-popular kind. In Persia, on the other hand, narration has always been fully accepted as a form of polite literature.

If the notion of fictionality is nevertheless taken into consideration here, this is because it is needed to distinguish properly between stories which should be discussed as specimens of classical Persian fiction and stories occurring in historical and biographical works in which accordance with real events and situations is a basic assumption.

This distinction cannot always be made with absolute certainty. For instance, stories told in works which we now would classify as works of literary art may very well have been accepted as "true stories" by the writers and their audiences, even if their legendary nature is apparent to modern readers.

This applies in particular to the epic, which in the past has probably been read as an account of history merely embellished by rhetorical art.

The same problem arises with regard to works of the mirror for princes genre. In this case, conformity to actual history was an essential precondition of the genre, because of the force this added to the exemplary function of the stories.

In general, didactic literature cannot be left out of the discussion, for much Persian fiction was not meant to be merely *belles-lettres* but had a moral intent as well.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica  
To be continued

# Amir-Hossein Rahmati finishes first at Iran's Nationwide Quran Competition

From Page 1 ► He noted that elite reciters usually compete in the large Quran contests and added, "However, our main competition should focus on the utility of the messages of the Holy Book on our life. Competitions such as these should lead us to embellish our lives with the Holy Quran."

"We plan to change the competition into an event for introducing the Quranic paradigm for everyday life," he added.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaili also attended the ceremony.

He pointed to a call by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, for plans to raise the number of Quran memorizers in the country to ten million and regretted that we are lagging behind the Leaders demand.

First prize in the men's memorization of the entire Quran section went to Sina Tabbakhi. Hossein Khanbigdeli was selected as runner-up, while Ali Gholam-Azad won third place. Alireza Sameri and Mohammad-Rasul Takbiri took fourth and fifth places respectively.

Mohammad-Javad Javari was



Amir-Hossein Rahmati, the top winner of the 44th edition of Iran's Nationwide Quran Competition, recites during the closing ceremony of the event in Tehran on December 24, 2021. (Mehr/Saeidreza Razavi)

awarded first prize in the men's *tartil* category, while Mohammad-Hossein Haddadzadeh won second prize. Mohammad Pursina, Hossein Azizi and Mojtaba Qadbeigi came third, fourth and fifth respectively.

In the female's recitation category, the best reciter prize went to Zahar

Purtahmasb, followed by Atefeh Naseh. Ghazaleh Soheili won third place and Marzieh Mirzaipur and Nasibeh Karami took fourth and fifth places.

Fahimeh Asgharzadeh, Adeleh Sheikh, Elnaz Hemmati, Naziheh Jenami and Mansureh Aqahassani

were the winners of the *tartil* recitation section.

The winners of the female's memorization of the entire Quran section include Hajar Mehralian, Roya Fazaeli, Zahra Mohebi, Fatemeh Ebrahimi and Azam Mohammadi.

## Disabled children join able-bodied in Tehran music festival



A visually-impaired boy participated in a musical festival at Tehran's Shafaq Cultural Center on December 24, 2021.

TEHRAN – A number of children with Down's syndrome, autism and blindness came together on Friday at Tehran's Shafaq Cultural Center to compete with a group of able-bodied children in a music festival.

Eight autistic children, two children with Down's syndrome and four visually-impaired children and 13 other children participated in the festival organized by Ailin Agahi, a social activist who has established the *Downtism Café*, which is managed by a number of young persons with autism and Down's syndrome.

"This is the first time in Iran a group of disabled children with their able-bodied counterparts entered a musical competition," Agahi said.

The festival was organized to demonstrate that children with such challenges as autism can compete with other people in all activities," she added.

She also noted that the festival was intended to raise people's awareness of the challenges facing the disabled. "If they change their views of people with autism and Down's syndrome, this can help a person have a happier life in

society," she added.

Jury member Majid Behbahani, who is also the director of the Honare Parseh Musical Education Center in Tehran, said, "I have a long career in musical education, so I know that teaching music to people with disabilities is really a labor of love."

"I came across a video on the internet showing a musical performance by the students of Ms. Agahi," Behbahani said, and added, "When she asked me to join her in the music festival, I enthusiastically agreed."

Masud Nemati, another member of the jury who also teaches at the Tehran Conservatory, said, "Organizing such a festival helps increase the children's motivation and can improve people's perceptions of children with autism and Down's syndrome."

Winners will be determined in the final session of the festival in the upcoming weeks.

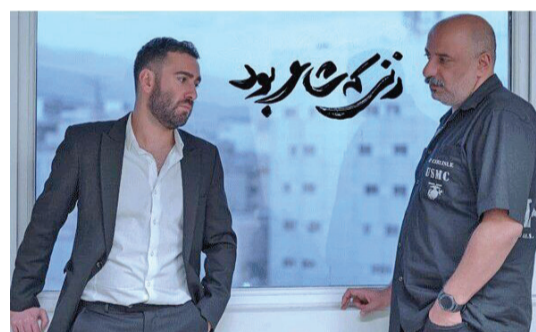
## "A Poetess" named best foreign film at California festival

TEHRAN – "A Poetess," a drama by Iranian filmmakers Sahra Fathi and Saeid Dashti, has been selected as best foreign film at the California Women's Film Festival.

The film follows Sara who is hesitant to choose between aborting their child and immigration, or staying in her country considering the arguments and issues with her husband. By realizing the truth about her husband, she makes up her mind and plans for a new future.

The California Women's Film Festival operates as a biannual event. The winter season will be held from January 7 to 9 and the summer season will be held in July.

"Free, Dead or Alive" directed by Erik



A poster for "A Poetess" by Sahra Fathi and Saeid Dashti.

Bernard was picked as best feature.

It is about a young girl who makes a perilous journey from South/Central America to the United States unaware of the real dangers that lie ahead.

The award for short film went to "40ish...". Directed by Traci Hays the

film tells the story of a 40-year-old actress who refuses to give up her dream of "making it" in Hollywood, but 20 years later, she won't face the reality, that age and how many followers you have, dictates the rules for talent and when she lands her big break, she struggles to tell the truth,

when casting demands to know her "real age," before they'll hire her for the role.

Directed by Kay L. Sumner, "Survivors" was named best feature documentary. In the film, real-life testimonials of Opioid addicted "everyday people". What got them there and how they successfully overcame a potentially tragic outcome and rebuilt their lives.

The award for best animation was given to "I'm Here" by Jennifer Hathaway.

It is about Jenna, a thirteen-year-old bullying victim, who is brought to the brink after being beaten up, and decides to end her life, but her Golden Retriever, Maizey, has other plans.

## "Leave Your Mind Behind" at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – "Leave Your Mind Behind" by Matthew McKay and Catharine Sutker has been published in Persian.

Sara Pasandian is the translator of the book published by Rabo.

We typically have little control over our thoughts, but we often invest them with a lot of authority, even when they contradict what our experiences tell us to be true.

Take a moment right now and think there's a hungry grizzly bear sitting next to me. Chances are you didn't take that thought literally and run screaming from the room.

But what if instead you had thought, I'll never get a better job, I'm boring, or no one loves me? Just like that terrifying grizzly, these more garden-variety thoughts are just words and pictures that pop into our minds.

But often we take thoughts like these literally and let them trick us into avoiding the lives we really want to live.

"Leave Your Mind Behind" offers a collection of light-hearted practices readers can use to learn to observe their thoughts without getting

caught up in them.

Each practice is grounded in a component of the new acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) called cognitive defusion: the process of de-fusing or not identifying or becoming one with your thoughts.

Sometimes downright strange—imagine yourself hearing your thoughts in the voice of a headless monster!—these activities don't seek to stop or control problematic thinking.

Instead, they work to show readers how to observe thoughts without judgment and learn to live with the confounding and marvelous word-making, story-telling machine that is the human mind.

McKay, is a professor of psychology at the Wright Institute in Berkeley, and author of more than 30 professional psychology and self-help books, which have sold a combined total of more than 3 million copies.

He is co-founder of independent self-help publisher, New Harbinger Publications. He was the clinical director of Haight Ashbury Psychological Services in San Francisco for twenty-five years.

He is the current director of the Berkeley CBT Clinic. An accomplished novelist and poet, his poetry



Front cover of the Persian edition of "Leave Your Mind Behind" written by Matthew McKay and Catharine Sutker.

has appeared in two volumes from Plum Branch Press and in more than sixty literary magazines.

His most recent novel, "Wawona Hotel", was published by Boaz Press in 2008.