

Artificial Deadlines Hamper Progress at Vienna Talks

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Report

Iran's GDP stands at \$1tr despite economic war

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has put the Islamic Republic of Iran's GDP at 1 trillion dollars in the year 2021.

According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook report released in October 2021, Iran is even ranked higher than regional countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey as two heavyweight economies, which are members of the G-20 group.

The statistics come as Iran has been under the heaviest illegal sanctions in history when Donald Trump officially withdrew the United States from the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – in May 2018 under his “maximum pressure” campaign against the Islamic Republic.

When Trump abandoned the JCPOA, his top hawkish diplomat Mike Pompeo said the U.S. will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on Iran. Also in November 2018, John Bolton, who was the White House national security advisor at the time, said, “It's our intention to squeeze them (Iranians) very hard... until the pips squeak.”

The Trump administration imposed as many sanctions as possible to the extent that his treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin announced that the U.S. is running out of options for more sanctions on Iran.

However, the data by the IMF proves that the illusions were wrong.

The chief reason may be that Iran has built an economy based on resistance with the least reliance on oil incomes. In other words, Iran has turned into a self-reliant economy with a primary focus on domestic capacities and knowledge-based companies.

Iran has gradually taken a departure from “addiction” to oil money to import goods. It mostly produces what it's needed, though with a lower quality. However, it has set the bedrock for continued economic development. ▶ Page 2

Sassanid seal depicting unique animal motif unearthed in northern Iran

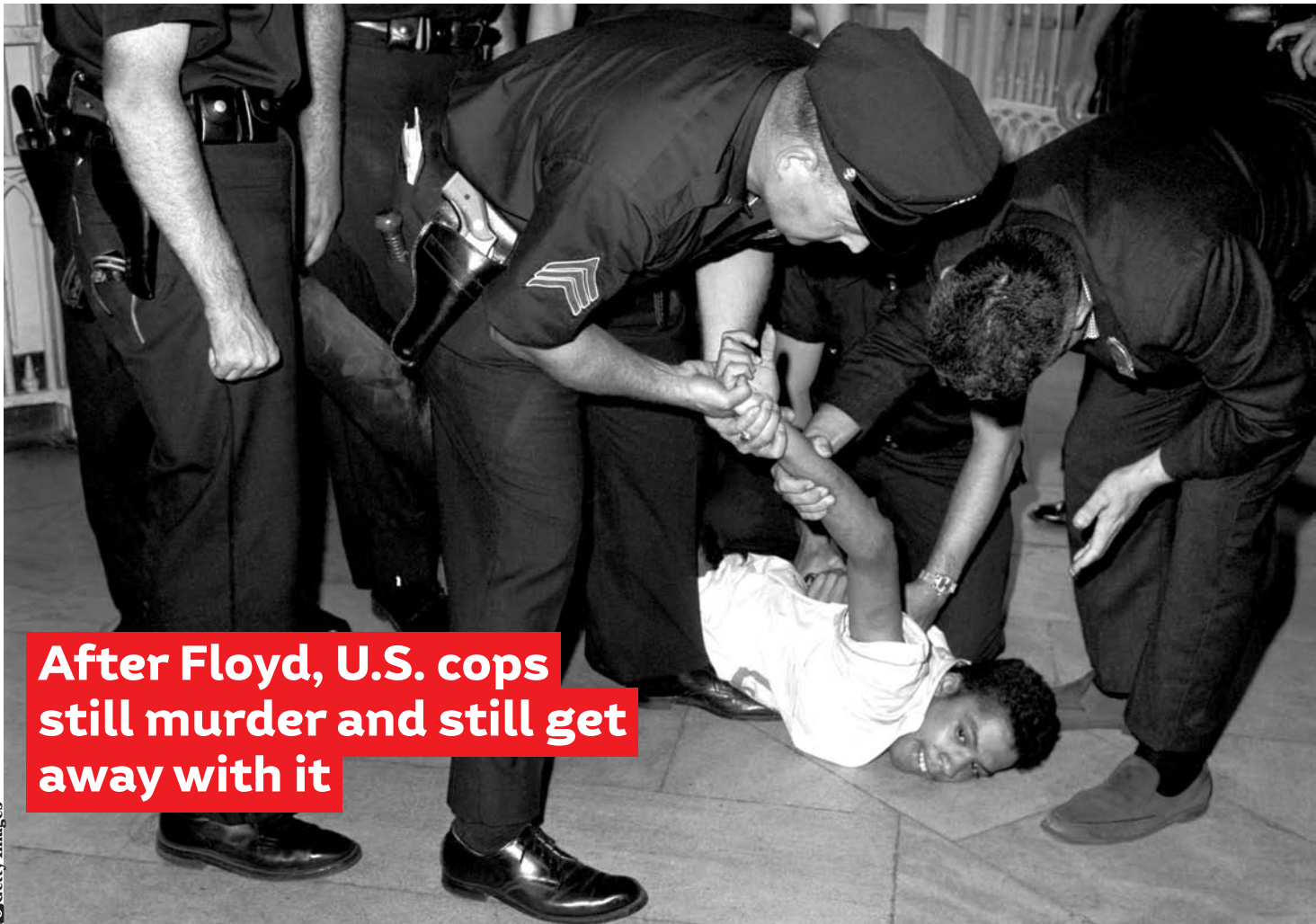
TEHRAN – Archaeologists have discovered a rare stone seal that depicts a unique animal shape during their recent excavation in northern Iran.

Estimated to date from the Sassanid era (224 CE–651), the object along with other relics including potteries and archeological remnants of the same epoch were found in a stratigraphy project, which is currently underway in Sorkhrud county of Mazandaran province, CHTN reported on Sunday.

Up to the moment, remnants associated with the Iron Age, Parthians, Sassanids, and early Islamic era have been identified inside trenches carved to determine boundaries of the archaeological site, archaeologist Mey-sam Fallah said.

“Moreover, a Sassanid bas-relief carving and several clay seals bearing animal and geometric motifs mark the most important relics discovered at the site so far.”

Under Sassanid's rule, Persian arts and architecture experienced a general renaissance. However, it made its way well beyond the vast borders of the longest-lived Persian dynasty, which at its greatest extent encompassed all of present-day Iran and Iraq and stretched from the eastern Mediterranean (including Anatolia and Egypt) to Pakistan, and from parts of southern Arabia to the Caucasus and Central Asia. ▶ Page 6



After Floyd, U.S. cops still murder and still get away with it

TEHRAN – Despite the state-to-state outcry in the United States and beyond over the daylight public execution by police of black American George Floyd in Minneapolis last

year over an alleged 20-dollar counterfeit bill; a monitoring group says U.S. police are still using similar levels of lethal force and they are still not facing the consequences.

There are, in essence, three issues raised from the research that will sound the alarm among rights groups and international human rights organizations that ▶ Page 5

Bank loans to economic sectors increase over 59%

TEHRAN- Iranian banking system has paid 17.274 quadrillion rials (over \$58.1 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), registering a 59.2-percent rise from the same period in the previous year, IRNA reported.

According to the data provided by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the country's banking system

paid 11.481 quadrillion rials (about \$38.65 billion) of facilities to various economic sectors in the previous year's first eight months.

As reported, working capital loans paid to different economic sectors in the mentioned eight months were above 11.48 quadrillion rials (about \$38.6 billion), accounting for 66.5 percent of the total provided facilities.

During the said period, the country's mining and industry sector received over 4.069 quadrillion rials (about \$13.7 billion) in the form of working capital loans, accounting for 35.4 percent of the total such facilities.

Back in November, the CBI had announced that 14.828 quadrillion rials (over \$49.92 billion) of facilities were paid to domestic economic sectors in the ▶ Page 4

Hazfi Cup Round of 16 draw to be held on Monday

TEHRAN – Sixteen football teams will discover their fate on Monday at the Iran's 2021/22 Hazfi Cup Round of 16.

The ceremony will be held in Iran's Football League Organization.

Esteghlal, Persepolis, Mes Rafsanjan, Sanat Naft, Khalij Fars Mahshahr, Sepahan, Zob Ahan, Mes Kerman, Gol Gohar, Padideh, Aluminum, Kheybar Khoramabad, Nassaji, Naft Masjed Soleyman, Paykan and Foolad have booked their place in Round of 16.

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

It's the Iranian football knockout cup competition, run by the Iranian Football Federation.

Foolad are the defending champions of the competition.

need for paying attention to population growth and childbearing, so everyone is required to be aware and do their duty to get the country out of the current situation in the coming years.

The national budget bill for the next [Iranian calendar] calendar year (to begin on March 20, 2022) has proposed 120 trillion rials (nearly \$444 million) to implement childbearing and family support plans in the country. ▶ Page 7



Academic achievements on display in Tehran

Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (3rd R) pays a visit to an exhibition of achievements and capabilities by the Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research (Jahad-e Daneshgahi) which opened at Tehran's Goftogoo Park on Sunday.

Exhibitors have set up pavilions to showcase advances in the fields of science and engineering, medicine, agriculture, natural resources, as well as society and arts.

Th event will be running through Thursday, December 30.

Childbearing, population growth top priorities: official

TEHRAN – Population and childbearing are the main priorities of the country, deputy health minister Kamal Heydari has said.

The total fertility rate in the country is 1.7, which is a low figure, and if it reaches one or less, we will face a demographic black hole (as the pace of population aging accelerates and the population growth declines, there will come a point in time when economic and social sys-

tems collapse), he explained.

Highlighting that only seven years left for the demographic window not to close, he stated that “seven years later we will fall into the demographic black hole, and 150 years is taken to make up for this shortcoming.”

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has always emphasized the

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Interview

Israel, some Arab states hate democratic forces in West Asia, British professor says

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A London-based professor of binary economics says that Israel and the Persian Gulf Arab states share a hatred of democratic forces in the region.

“Israel and the Persian Gulf Arab states are deeply united in one thing – their hatred, and fear, of democratic forces in West Asia,” Rodney Shakespeare tells the Tehran Times.

While Iran and other remaining parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) are striving to revive the agreement, Israel and some Arab states make every effort to hamper the negotiation process in Vienna.

They all see Iran as the main sponsor of resistance and anti-autocratic movements in West Asia.

“Supported by the USA and the UK (which also hate the democratic forces in the region) they will do anything – and that includes ties with Israel – to suppress any form of democratic movement,” Shakespeare argues.

“However, NB, the tide of history is against them.”

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you see Israel's role when it comes to stability and peace in West Asia?

There is an immensely dangerous situation. The JCPOA negotiations will collapse because nobody trusts the Americans not to break any agreement with Iran (and Trump and Pompeo are possible future Presidents). ▶ Page 5

Gen. Soleimani's comrade reveals memories of 40-year friendship

TEHRAN – Hojjatolislam Ali Shirazi has published a book revealing his memories of a 40-year-long close friendship with Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani.

In the book entitled “The Hajji Qassem Whom I Know: Narratives about a 40-Year Friendship”, Shirazi recounts numerous stories from the long friendship, which began in 1982 when Shiraz joined the volunteers in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war in Hamidieh, a town located in near Ahvaz.

He met Soleimani, the then commander of the Sarallah Brigade, when he was delivering a speech for his soldiers. Suddenly, he felt a deep affection for Soleimani.

In 1986, Soleimani assigned him the task of disseminating Islamic teachings in his division. As the friendship continued, Shirazi was appointed as the representative in the Quds Force of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The Quds Force is the overseas arm of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), which was commanded by Soleimani until his martyrdom on January 3, 2020. ▶ Page 8

The chance for nuclear diplomacy shouldn't be wasted

Mahmood Monshipouri, PhD

With negotiations over the Iran nuclear deal (also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions—JCPOA) being disrupted and delayed for so long, the parties concerned cannot avoid very serious talks any longer. Given the ongoing the US-Russia tensions over Ukraine on the one hand and the US-China tensions over Taiwan on the other, the importance of the negotiations over Iran's nuclear deal cannot be underestimated. Furthermore, regional cooperation between Iran and its oil-rich neighbors is likely to increase as the prospects for the gradual U.S. withdrawal from the Persian Gulf region seem all but certain.

It is worth noting that the UAE has facilitated selling Iranian oil to China, significantly reducing the risks of regional escalation with Iran. Many sources have recently indicated that a thaw in economic relations between Tehran and Abu Dhabi has already occurred even as U.S. sanctions on Iran continue to remain in place. In light of these new realities, the real question persists: Will the Biden administration stay on the current path of stalemate and trigger further tensions with Iran or will it instead act swiftly enough to avoid the very worst consequences of gamesmanship? A failed nuclear diplomacy could have profound and destabilizing consequences for the region and the rest of the world. Needless to say, such an eventuality must be avoided at all costs.

What is at stake is the global economy and peace. The likely consequences of failed diplomacy—both in the immediate future and over the longer term—include military conflicts, disruption of oil shipments, and an unprecedented rise in regional tensions. Aside from the dangers of military confrontation, which could have grave ramifications, disruption of the world's most important oil chokepoint, the Strait of Hormuz—through which over 20 million barrels of oil flow per day, or the equivalent of nearly one-fifth of global petroleum consumption—could plunge the global economy into a depression of historic proportion. Increasing regional tensions between Iran and its neighbors and the possibility of Iranian military actions in retaliation to mounting economic and political pressures would have far worse consequences.

All of these potential outcomes are alarming at a time of rising nationalism, populism, climate change, and the ongoing pandemic. A breakdown of nuclear diplomacy with Iran serves no-one's interests in the region or beyond. Ongoing harsh economic sanctions have driven Iran into the arms of China and Russia, even making it difficult to normalize ties with these countries given that both Beijing and Moscow appear unwilling to entirely bypass the U.S. sanctions on Iran. Meanwhile, the Iranian "Look to the East" policy aimed at strengthening Iran's strategic cooperation with Russia and China is emblematic of a deepening mistrust toward the United States.

Should nuclear talks collapse, it is entirely possible, if not likely, that Washington will be increasingly dragged into regional conflicts by supporting its allies—namely Israel and the Persian Gulf Arab states—against Iran. It is not clear that members of the Abraham accords—Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain—would provide a defensive shield against Iran. More sanctions or even a naval blockade of Iran are unlikely to secure

concessions from Tehran. As a country that has lived with—and indeed become accustomed to—sanctions, the Islamic Republic will find ways to survive.

It is virtually impossible to visualize political stability in the region without cooperative behavior by Iran. In a conceivable scenario in which the United States is disengaged from the region, failure in nuclear diplomacy is ominous at best. The Biden administration must find a way to resuscitate the JCPOA and engage Iran. Clearly, each side should move back to the JCPOA on the basis of the agreement that already exists rather than trying to pressure the other for concessions. It is important to remember that a return to the JCPOA should not be contingent upon resolving everything beforehand. It is critical to go back to the JCPOA in the weeks and months ahead, even as the two sides have vastly divergent views of what constitutes "full compliance" or what these negotiations should ultimately achieve. Iran's demand, articulated by Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh, that "Washington should give Tehran assurances that it will never abandon the nuclear deal if the talks to revive the deal succeed" may not be practical as long as the deal remains an "executive agreement." Still, the deal's strength lies in its multilateral framework and broader support across the world. It is possible to work out some provisions in a new agreement to go far enough to protect Iran from any potential, future abrupt and gratuitous U.S. withdrawal from the deal as long as Tehran continues to fulfill its nuclear-related pledges. For the time being, the resumption of nuclear talks will be fruitful, provided that Washington and Tehran come to terms on the JCPOA, an understanding that can potentially reconstitute a channel to negotiate about other regional issues. This is not to imply that the tensions surrounding regional issues will slowly vanish, but rather to suggest that Iran's regional activities will be subject to negotiation at some point.

Trump's reckless withdrawal from the JCPOA practically ended his ability to have regular diplomatic conversations with Iran. His re-imposition of even harsher sanctions on Iran than those employed by his predecessor (President Obama) has fueled much uncertainty and mistrust in an already fragile relationship that was desperate for the restoration of diplomatic ties. Certain Iranians groups, who have consistently opposed any rapprochement with the United States, felt vindicated in their mistrust of Washington, and some would argue that they euphorically lambasted the moderates for their trust and extension of goodwill. The Biden administration can significantly reduce the tensions between Iran and the United States by making the JCPOA a lasting and sustainable agreement. The benefits of such an accord accrue only if Washington gets the picture right, by taking note of Iran's security needs, most particularly its legitimate defensive and deterrence claims. Absent such an approach, it is a foregone conclusion that the colossal wall of mistrust between Iran and the United States is unlikely to be dismantled any time soon.

Mahmood Monshipouri, PhD, is Professor of International Relations at San Francisco State University; he is also a lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author, most recently, of a forthcoming book, In the Shadow of Mistrust: The Geopolitics and Diplomacy of US-Iran Relations (London: Hurst Publishers, 2022). This essay is based on this book.

Iran's GDP stands at \$1tr despite economic war

From page 1 ► A professor of economy at Shahid Beheshti University says Iran has broken the record of the government of Mohammad Mosaddegh in running the country without oil income.

Iran has learned that it should move toward a generative economy. It has also realized that necessity is the mother of invention.

The figures by the IMF show that 1-trillion-dollar GDP in the current year happened despite the fact that Iran has been among the hardest-hit countries by the Covid-19 pandemic in the world. The disease, among many malaises, also brought Iran's income from tourism to nearly zero.

Facing political and economic pressure from the West, the Islamic Republic has also sought to develop economic and trade ties with Eurasian Economic Union countries. It was also admitted as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in September 2020. Through reliance on domestic capacities and developing ties with regional blocs, Iran has proven that the world is not just the West.

Iran overtaking Netherlands, Switzerland in the top 20 list

According to the report, Iran would be

overtaking the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Switzerland in the top 20 list.

the United States and China would occupy the first two places in both methods' GDP ranking.

It also said China will remain the world's largest economy on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis over the next few decades as 2nd ranked U.S. is growing slow and 3rd ranked India is way behind.

In the nominal GDP list, there would be no change in the top 10.

Among the top 50, the economic rank of South Africa would move up by eight positions, while Egypt would lose four places.

In the PPP ranking, there would be no change in the top 10 list. Other changes in the top 20 would be Taiwan overtaking Australia. Among the top 50, Ireland will climb three spots.

In the list of top 50, all economies will experience a positive growth rate in 2021. Ireland is the fastest-growing economy with 14.04%, followed by Chile (11.00%). Thailand has the lowest growth rate of 0.96%, followed by the United Arab Emirates (2.24%) and Japan (2.36%).

Special envoy: Iran backs lasting stability in Afghanistan

TEHRAN — Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's special envoy to Afghanistan, met on Sunday with Mohammad Mohaqeq, leader of the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan.

According to a statement released by Mohaqeq's office, the two spoke about the historical, religious and cultural friendship between the two brotherly nations of Iran and Afghanistan, and stressed Iran's position on a peaceful solution to the Afghan crisis.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran stands for lasting stability and security in Afghanistan and also wants a peaceful solution to Afghanistan's issues through negotiations between all political parties and ethnic groups in



Afghanistan," the Iranian special envoy said, according to the statement.

Kazemi Qomi added that Iran has a friendly relationship with all

political factions in Afghanistan.

"We are interested in mediating between all parties so that peace and stability and an inclusive government can be formed in our

neighboring country Afghanistan with the participation of all movements," he reiterated.

Security and stability in Afghanistan are in the interest of the whole world and the region, the Iranian special envoy pointed out.

Mohaqeq, for his part, said that Afghanistan is aware of the important role of Iran in the course of developments and events in the region.

"I assure you that in the current situation, we are not in favor of war and violence, and if the ground for an inter-Afghan negotiation is provided, we are ready for a constructive dialogue to resolve the issues of our country," the Islamic Unity Party leader remarked.

Iran FM visit to Baku promises success of government's strategic policy

By Mojtaba Rouzbahani

The intensive but fruitful visit by Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian to the Republic of Azerbaijan, which was warmly welcomed by the officials of that country, opens a new page in the history of relations between the two brotherly and Muslim neighboring countries.

Upon arrival at Baku International Airport, Amir Abdollahian was warmly welcomed by the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Iranian ambassador and diplomats in Baku.

"I have various ideas for further expansion of cooperation with the Republic of Azerbaijan," he said in an interview with IRNA on Wednesday.

"I have had three meetings with my counterpart in New York, Ashgabat and Islamabad, and we have discussed the framework for developing cooperation."

During two rounds of talks with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, which lasted 3.5 hours - and this is unprecedented in the previous meetings of the President of Azerbaijan with foreign officials in Baku - the foreign minister discussed the latest situation regarding regional issues and international cooperation between the two countries.

Referring to the important and cordial meeting of the presidents of Iran and Azerbaijan in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, and the elimination of misunderstandings through continuous consultations between the foreign ministers and the embassies of the two countries, Amir Abdollahian described development of cooperation in political, economic, cultural and defense sectors as "very good" and said that the President Aliyev's instructions would be very effective in opening relations between the two countries, especially completing joint projects and developing new cooperation projects.

Referring to his cordial meeting with Iranian President Ayatollah Raisi, President Ilham Aliyev mentioned the importance of the Islamic Republic as a friend, brother and neighbor for the Republic of Azerbaijan. Some of the achievements of this

constructive meeting are:

The possibility of the presence of Iranian companies in the process of reconstruction of the liberated areas;

resumption of direct flights between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan;

beginning of the process of release and transfer of some Iranian citizens imprisoned in the Republic of Azerbaijan;

participation of Iranian military experts in the demining process of the occupied territories, given that these areas are currently one of the most densely mined areas in the world;

attracting Iranian companies to operate in the Aras Free Trade and Industrial Zone on the border with Iran and producing Iranian products in this region and exporting to the commonwealth countries, where the Republic of Azerbaijan enjoys some trade and customs benefits and exemptions;

additional negotiations for the Rasht-Astara railway project along the North-South corridor and the existing freight terminal project in Astara and the construction of a car bridge over the Astarachai River;

increasing the export of electricity from the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Iran and connecting the Iran-Azerbaijan-Russia electricity network;

holding the Iran-Azerbaijan-Russia summit and proposing the four-nation summit of Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey;

And follow-up negotiations on joint oil blocks in the Caspian Sea.

Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian also met with Ms. Sahebeh Ghaffarova, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Azerbaijan, thanking her for attending the inauguration ceremony of the Iranian president in August and spoke about the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in advancing the foreign policy of the two countries.

The speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan also called the Parliament of her country a supporter of relations with Iran and

renewed her invitation to Dr. Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the Iranian parliament Speaker, to visit the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The meeting also addressed the activation of parliamentary friendship groups between the two countries in order to increase the parliamentary relations between the two countries.

At the end of his working day in Baku, Amir Abdollahian was the guest of his Azerbaijani counterpart at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and agreed on ongoing meetings and consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers and regional directors to follow up on the meetings and agreements reached between the two foreign ministers.

The two ministers also emphasized the active continuation of the work of the Joint Media Cooperation Committee of the two countries. The foreign ministers positively assessed the cooperation between the two countries in international and regional forums and organizations and agreed to increase this cooperation.

Discussions on the latest developments in the South Caucasus, the talks between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the latest situation in Afghanistan and the Iran nuclear talks in Vienna were another part of the detailed talks between the two foreign ministers.

After a dinner hosted by Jeyhun Bayramov, Amir Abdollahian addressed a gathering of Iranians living in Baku to discuss the Raisi government's efforts to pass a comprehensive law to protect Iranians around the world. He then sat down with Iranian residents in Baku until midnight and responded to their questions and requests.

The brief but fruitful visit of the foreign minister to Baku, which is the first official visit of a high-ranking official of the government of Raisi to the Republic of Azerbaijan, promises the success of the strategic policy of the new Iranian government in prioritizing ties with neighbors.

Mojtaba Rouzbahani is the foreign media director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Iran, Oman hold ‘strategic consultations’

TEHRAN – Senior diplomats from Iran and Oman held the eighth round of strategic consultations in the framework of a joint committee between the two countries in Tehran on Sunday.

The committee, formally known as the Joint Committee for Strategic Consultations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sultanate of Oman, was formed to facilitate diplomatic dialogue and consultation between Tehran and Muscat.

The eighth meeting of the joint committee was co-chaired by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs and his Omani counterpart Sheikh Khalifa al-Harthy.

Referring to the 50th anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries, the two sides expressed satisfaction with the level of relations and efforts to develop it on the basis of mutual trust.

Emphasizing the need to resolve regional issues by the countries of the region, Bagheri expressed hope that the existing problems would be resolved through dialogue between the countries of the region, according to ISNA.

Al-Harthy, referring to Iran's pivotal role in the region, said that his country, as in the past, is interested in developing bilateral and regional relations and considers peaceful paths necessary for peace and tranquility in the region.

In addition to bilateral issues, the two sides discussed various regional and international issues, including the Vienna talks, the need for a political solution to the crisis in Yemen, and the region's need for dialogue.

Al-Harthy said, "Iran-Oman relations had regional and trans-regional influences and will continue."

At the end of the meeting, the minutes of the eighth meeting of the Strategic Consultation Committee of Iran and Oman were signed by the deputy foreign



ministers of the two countries.

The Omani Foreign Ministry said in a statement that during the meeting, Bagheri and al-Harthy discussed aspects of cooperation between the two countries, especially the economic, investment and trade exchange aspects.

The statement also said that al-Harthy met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on the sidelines of his visit to Tehran. "This meeting emphasized the importance of Omani-Iranian relations and the importance of meetings and consultations to exchange views on topics and issues of common interest to both countries and the region as a whole," it said of the meeting with Amir Abdollahian.

In this meeting, Amir Abdollahian said improving and expanding relations with neighbors is a priority of the foreign policy of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's administration. He also emphasized the significance of Oman's special position among neighbors, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Amir Abdollahian also stressed the need for Iran and Oman to work to enhance the volume of trade between the two countries at the level of friendly relations.

The Iranian foreign minister added that the Islamic Republic is committed

to dialogue and the adoption of political solutions to resolve bilateral and regional problems. Amir Abdollahian declared Iran's readiness to negotiate with regional countries in order to improve bilateral relations.

Amir Abdollahian expressed hope that the efforts of all countries in the region, especially Iran and Oman, will provide the necessary ground for ending the crisis in Yemen. Oman's Deputy Foreign Minister al-Harthy also expressed hope that the Yemeni crisis will end as soon as possible, adding that his country welcomes and supports any effort to reduce regional problems through peaceful means and dialogue.

In October and December, Amir Abdollahian spoke twice over the phone with his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Albusaidi. During the December call, the good relations between the two friendly countries were emphasized and the continuing work to strengthen and develop them, according to Oman's Foreign Ministry.

The two ministers also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common interest. They emphasized the good-neighborly relations between the countries of the region and their common interest in supporting efforts to enhance security and stability to achieve common benefits for all parties.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also

echoed the same thing about the December conversation. It said the two ministers referred to good ties between the two countries and their determination to maintain, expand and strengthen relations as well as regional and international cooperation.

Amir Abdollahian also extended the Iranian president's greetings to Oman's Sultan.

The Iranian foreign minister also referred to the nuclear talks and underlined the Islamic Republic of Iran's readiness to reach a good deal to fully enjoy the economic benefits of the 2015 nuclear deal and also dispel the possible concerns of the other side.

He said Iran's nuclear program will also be pursued in line with the nuclear deal, JCPOA, in exchange for sanctions removal.

Oman's top diplomat also referred to his country's support for the nuclear talks during the phone call. Albusaidi said Iran's emphasis on its seriousness and efforts to conclude the talks is a cause for optimism and Oman always holds consultations in this regard.

In October Bagheri paid a visit to Oman. During that visit, he met with the Omani foreign minister. They reviewed relations and cooperation in various spheres reflecting the attention the leaderships of the two countries attach to promoting these relations to achieve mutual benefit.

The two sides also touched on regional and international issues and developments relating to these issues. They underscored the importance of dealing with these issues through constructive dialogue and peaceful means, according to Oman's Foreign Ministry.

The meeting was attended by al-Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs; Khalid Almuslahi, head of the Minister's Office Department; and Ali Najafi, the Iranian Ambassador to the Sultanate.

IRAN IN FOCUS

DECEMBER 27, 2021
Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran football team end 2021 on high

TEHRAN – Iran national football team end the calendar year without suffering a single defeat.



Dragan Skocic's team almost booked their place at the 2022 FIFA World Cup as well.

Iran earned 12 victories and one draw in the 2021.

Argentina and Algeria also are the teams who didn't lose in the current year.

Albiceleste registered 11 wins and five draws in 2021. Lionel Messi's Argentina also won CONMEBOL Copa America 2021.

Algeria also recorded 13 wins and four draws in the 2021.

FIFA bans Iran's Tractor from transfer window

TEHRAN – FIFA has banned Iran's Tractor football club from signing players at the transfer window.

The Iranian football club have been banned due to unpaid debts to their former striker Okacha Hamzaoui

The Algerian signed for Tractor in January 2020 and scored one goal in 20 matches for the Tabriz-based football club.

On Saturday, another Iranian club Zob Ahan were handed transfer ban by FIFA after they failed to pay Darko Bjedov's payment.

Tractor sit 11th in Iran football league and have collected 11 points out of 11 matches.

Iran's women's football team beat Zob Ahan: friendly

TEHRAN – Iran's women's football team defeated Zob Ahan 2-0 in a friendly match.

Negin Zandi and Hajar Dabaghi scored for Maryam Irandoost's side in the match held in Tehran's Azadi Complex.

Iran prepare for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022 which will be held in India from January 20 to February 6.

Iran have been drawn in Group A along with host India, eight-time winners China and Chinese Taipei.

Iranian skier Bayrami wins gold at Turkish Event

TEHRAN – Samaneh Bayrami Baher of Iran won a gold medal at the Turkey's International Ski Competition.

The even is being held in Erzurum Kandilli on December 25-26.

Bayrami claimed the gold medal in the Cross-Country Skiing Women's 5km Classic Style.

Approximately 60 athletes from Turkey, Iran, Argentina, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Dominican

Republic, Pakistan, Mexico, Malaysia and Morocco compete in the tournament.

Iran has sent eight skiers to the competition.

Iran handball team edge Iraq in friendly

TEHRAN – Iran national handball team earned a narrow 28-27 win over Iraq in a friendly match.

The match was held as part of preparation for the 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship.

Iran have been drawn in Group B along with Saudi Arabia, Australia and India.

The Championship will be held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia from January 18 to 31.

The competition was originally scheduled to be held in Shiraz, Iran but the Asian Handball Federation (AHF) decided to move the event to Saudi Arabia due to spread of COVID-19 in Iran.

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

FFIRI may allow fans at Azadi for Iran-Iraq WCQ

TEHRAN – The Iranian Football Federation is mulling over the possibility of allowing fans in Grand Azadi Stadium to watch the qualifying match between Iran and Iraq for the 2022 FIFA World Cup on Jan. 27, 2022.

According to the Iranian Khabar Varzeshi Newspaper's website, the Iranian Football Federation is considering whether the match between Iran and Iraq qualifying tournament for the 2022 FIFA World Cup is to be held in an empty Azadi Stadium in Tehran or if fans would be allowed in.

Group A leaders Iran will qualify for the 2022 FIFA World Cup for the third time in a row if defeat the Iraqi team at the Azadi Stadium, according to Tehran Times.

It is also said that FIFA president Gianni Infantino will travel to Tehran on Jan. 27, 2022, to watch the qualifying match in Tehran's stadium.

There is still skepticism about the federation's decision on the Iran-Iraq match because although the body announced 10,000 fans would be allowed in the stadium in Tehran for the Iran-South Korea qualifying match on October 12, the match eventually was held in the empty stadium.

Iran futsal rank 7th in world, best in Asia

TEHRAN – Iran national futsal team remained the best team in Asia, according to the latest ranking.

According to the latest futsal world ranking published on Sunday, the Iranian national futsal team's ranking in Asia have remained unchanged

Iran are still the top of the Asian continent while it is seventh among the teams in the world with 1580 points, MNA reported.

Iran finished in fifth place in the world but their place dropped after it was knocked out of the 2021 FIFA Futsal World Cup in the quarter-final round.

In the table of world teams, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, Russia and Kazakhstan rank first to sixth, respectively.

Artificial deadlines hamper progress at Vienna talks

TEHRAN – After a period of consultations in capitals, negotiators from Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal are expected to gather in Vienna on Monday to resume talks on how to remove U.S. sanctions against Iran.

The latest round of talks was concluded more than a week ago with an agreement on some broad principles based on which the next round of the talks would proceed. The last round of talks faced many ups and downs due to Western refusal to take into consideration the change Iran had undergone in the past months in terms of the election of a new president.

The new negotiating team of Iran led by Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani went to Vienna with a set of new proposals on the nuclear and sanctions spheres. The team brought to Vienna many proposals and it managed to present the proposals in stages. Two of the proposals, one related to nuclear measures and the other on sanctions removal steps, were given to the other side.

While Iran underlined that its draft proposals are subject to negotiations, the U.S. and the E3 -France, Britain, and Germany – chose to portray Iran as an uncooperative and unserious negotiating partner. They even hinted at the failure of the talks based on a figment of their imagination.

On the other side, Iran underlined its seriousness to reach a good and swift deal. In a recent phone conversation with EU foreign policy chief Josep

Borrell, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian stressed that a good deal is within reach. He said, "We believe that a good deal is at hand but it requires a shift by some parties away from the language of threat to the language of cooperation and mutual respect that would be also result-based."

Amir Abdollahian further noted on Twitter that such a deal is at hand if the West shows goodwill.

While Iran has conditioned making a good deal on Western goodwill, the Europeans and their American colleagues showed no interest in pursuing negotiations in good faith. Drawing on the Trump administration's playbook, they used everything in their power to use the Vienna talks as a "starting point" for further negotiations with Iran. In other words, the Western negotiators are not in Vienna to simply return to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Instead, they want to impose a really flawed version of the JCPOA on Iran while retaining large swaths of U.S. sanctions for follow-on negotiations. This aim runs counter to the terms of the JCPOA.

For instance, the U.S. has divided its sanctions on Iran into three main categories: red sanctions that are not subject to negotiations, yellow sanctions that are negotiable and ultimately green sanctions that are supposed to be lifted once the deal is revived.

In addition, the U.S. seeks to use the yellow sanctions to "strengthen and lengthen" the JCPOA.

Iran Air Forces will respond devastatingly to any threat: senior general

TEHRAN – The deputy commander of the Iranian Air Force has said that his forces are always ready to defend the country, warning that it will deliver a devastating response to any threat.

Brigadier General Mehdi Hadian made the remarks before a group of commanders and senior generals on Sunday.

"The Iranian Army's Air Force has faced a total ban for 43 years by arrogant regimes, but its fighter jets are carrying out the tasks of maintaining the security of the Islamic Republic of Iran and defending the country's airspace in the best way," he said.

He continued, "The Air Force was able, relying on its own capabilities, to carry out all the tasks and responsibilities entrusted to it in the best possible way, which is evidence of the internal capabilities and the

efficient and capable human cadres."

He described the Iranian army's air force as supportive of the Islamic Republic of Iran's leadership and people, and that it enjoys constant readiness to defend the country and responds destructively to any threat.

The remarks came at a time when the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) conducted the first launch of precision and medium-range Cruise missiles from a warship, and carried out aerial operations for drones during a military drill code-named the Great Prophet 17.

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, 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

Bank loans to economic sectors increase over 59%



From page 1 ► first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), to register a 58.5-percent rise from the same period in the previous year.

According to CBI, the country's banking system offered 18.989 quadrillion rials (about \$63.93 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the previous Iranian calendar year of 1399 (ended on

March 20), 94.8-percent more than the figure for its preceding year.

CBI has defined supporting production as one of its major plans over the past two years.

Former CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati had repeatedly stressed that supporting production units to flourish production is the priority of the country's banking system.

In early May 2019, Hemmati had outlined CBI plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's economy and mentioned providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production as one of those plans.

CBI's plans take two major approaches, one of which is to secure finance for production activities and also to provide the working capital needed for such activities.

Oil Ministry invites industries to invest in gas sector

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for planning Houshang Falahatian has called on the country's major industries especially the steel industry, to invest in gas sector development projects, Shana reported.

Falahatian has criticized the imbalance of development between oil and gas industries and noted that the country's gas sector currently requires over \$80 billion on investment.

According to the official, if the current trend continues, the natural gas shortage in the country during the cold months of the year will increase from 200 million cubic meters per day to about 250 million cubic meters in the Iranian calendar year 1404 (begins in March 2025) and more than 350 million cubic meters in 1410 (starts in March 2031).

Stating that the study of gas consumption in the steel industry over the past four years shows an annual growth of about 13.7 percent, Falahatian added: "This is while the average annual growth of gas consumption in the petrochemical and cement industries in the said period, has been 8.1 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively, and the average growth of natural gas injection into the national gas network was 5.2 percent."

The data for gas consumption in the steel industry indicates that this industry has a larger share in the country's total gas demand compared to other major industries and natural



gas has played an effective role in the development of this industry, according to the official.

Falahatian stated that maintaining and increasing gas production in the country requires more than \$80 billion of investment in the gas industry, so the stability of gas supply to major industries, especially steel, requires the cooperation and participation of these industries.

Of the required \$80 billion, \$23.6 billion is needed for increasing pressure and stabilizing the production of the active gas fields, while \$36.4 billion is required for the development of new fields, \$8 billion is needed for the development and improvement of gas refineries, \$1.2 billion is needed to collect flare gases, and finally, \$3 billion to develop gas storage in fields, \$6 billion for pipelines and stations, and \$2 billion to optimize infrastructure, the official explained.

Over 5m tons of basic goods transported from ports in 9 months



TEHRAN- More than 5.36 million tons of basic commodities were transported from five port cities of the country to the designated destinations during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), the director-general of coordination department of Government Trading Corporation of Iran announced.

Siaavash Hosseinpour said that the mentioned goods include types of rice, wheat, raw sugar and oil, which according to the company's schedule have been sent to different parts of the country by rail and

road for storage.

This amount of goods has been loaded and transported from the provinces of Khuzestan, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Sistan-Baluchestan (Chabahar Port), Mazandaran and Gilan, the official added.

Last week, the head of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced that unloading of basic goods at the port of country has risen 25 percent in the current Iranian calendar year, as compared to the previous year.

The highest amount of import of basic goods was related to Imam Khomeini port (in southwestern Khuzestan province), Ali-Akbar Safaei noted.

"Currently, 17 ships are unloading and loading goods at the same time," he said, adding, "We need 75,000 trucks to distribute basic goods."

"We unload the basic goods in the

shortest time and we do not have to worry about the supply of the basic goods", the official added.

Earlier in May, former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had ordered the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) to take the necessary measures to accelerate the clearance of basic goods deposited at the country's customs.

According to IRICA Deputy Head Mehrdad Jamal Orounagi, in a meeting of the government economic coordination headquarters, some problems and issues were raised regarding the clearance of goods in the country's customs, and a report was presented to the president.

Following the mentioned meeting, Rouhani issued a decree ordering to investigate and resolve the mentioned problems and also agreed with the IRICA and Industry Ministry's proposals in this regard.

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie has called on Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Ali Saleh-Abadi to accelerate the formation of a special bank account for allocation of working capital to production units.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, Shafeie made the remarks in a meeting of the representatives of the country's private sector with Salehi on Sunday.

The meeting was attended by the ICCIMA board of directors, as well as the heads and representatives of economic organizations, heads of provincial chambers of commerce, and some of the country's businessmen and entrepreneurs.

Speaking at this gathering, Shafeie underlined the significance of close communication between the CBI governor and the country's private sector and said: "From the private sector's point of view, most of the current problems and difficulties in the country's economy can be solved by the central bank and the presence of the head of this institution in a meeting with ICCIMA is a big step to resolve such problems."

According to the official, unpredictability and changes of raw materials prices, the difficulty of financing, and instability of business policies, rules and regulations have been the three main factors which con-

ICCIMA calls on CBI to accelerate allocation of working capital for production units



CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi (L) and ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie

tributed the most to a severe business environment over the past three years.

Noting that an important part of these problems can be resolved by CBI and the expectations of the private sector are high in this regard, Shafeie addressed some of the inefficiencies in the country's monetary and banking system that have the greatest impact on national production and ex-

port development.

"The first major problem is the diversion of banking facilities from productive activities. According to the central bank, the share of banking facilities allocated to the productive sectors, including industry, mining, and agriculture, accounted for only 40 percent of the total bank facilities paid last year," he said.

The ICCIMA head said that

the second factor preventing growth in production and export development was the lack of full implementation of the law on removing barriers to competitive production and improving the country's financial system.

CBI to issue new directive to support exports

Elsewhere in the meeting, CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi pointed to the positive economic outlooks for the coming years, saying that the bank is going to issue a new directive in the near future for supporting exports.

The official stated that the details of the directive have been decided on in meetings with Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi Amin.

"We have formed a joint working group with the Industry Ministry and we have held regular meetings; this interaction will continue with the cooperation of the private sector," Saleh-Abadi added.

He also noted that the CBI is optimistic about the country's export revenues and foreign currency supply for import of basic goods in the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2022).

Last year, a total of \$36.482 billion in foreign currency was provided by the central bank, while in the first nine months of the current fiscal year (March 21-December 22), about \$40 billion has been raised and financed in various ways, the official said.

Commodities worth over \$2.4b traded at IME in a month

TEHRAN- Over 8.376 million tons of commodities worth \$2.433 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) in the past Iranian calendar month (ended on December 21).

As reported by the IME Public Relations and International Affairs Department, trades in the oil and petrochemical trading floor of the IME experienced growth of five percent, and seven percent, in value and weight, respectively, in the past month as compared to its preceding month.

The exchange sold on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor more than 1.46 million tons of commodities worth over \$940 million.

On this floor the exchange traded 450,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 420,000 tons of bitumen, 396,000 tons of polymeric products, 191,000 tons of lube cut, 133,000 tons of chemicals, 26,000 tons of sulfur, 20,000 tons of oil, 3,800 tons of slops wax, 550 tons of argon and 48 tons of insulation.

Next was the metals and minerals trading floor with trades of 6.701 million tons of commodities valued at nearly \$1.476 billion.

Commodities changing hand on this floor included 4.643 million tons of cement, 1.511 million tons of steel, 241,000 tons of iron

ore, 201,000 tons of sponge iron, 41,000 tons of aluminum, 35,000 tons of zinc, 33,000 tons of copper, 12,000 tons of cast iron, 540 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 400 tons of coke, 81 tons of precious metals concentrate and 16 kg of gold bars.

It's worth noting that the IME also played host to trade of 34,095 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities on its side market.

IME's side market hosted trade of 34,095 tons of commodities in a month

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

Addressing a ceremony to launch "futures" for the copper cathode deals at the IME on December 20, Majid Eshqi said, "Pricing is one of the problems that has always existed in this market and we still have this problem in some products."

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

In a bid for more risk management in the country's capital market, Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) officially launched futures contract during a ceremony held in Decem-



ber 2018 at the place of Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI), which is the sole registrar, central custodian and clearing house for the Iranian stock market.

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

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

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

In the past year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

TEDPIX loses 1,400 points on Sunday



TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 1,489 points to 1.384 million on Sunday.

Over 5.363 billion securities worth 36.756 trillion rials (about \$126.74 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index drops 1,51 points, and the second market's index fell 1,68 points.

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

During the past week, the indices of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Company, Saipa Com-

pany, Social Security Investment Company, National Copper Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

On December 18, Head of Iran's Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund Amir-Mehdi Sabaei has said the National Development Fund of Iran (NDF) is going to deposit 120 trillion rials (about \$510 million) into the fund to support the stock market.

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

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

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

After Floyd, U.S. cops still murder and still get away with it

From page 1 ▶ have been very critical of American police brutality. Firstly, the astonishingly high murder rate by police, who are literally acting as the judge, the jury, and the executioner by taking the law into their own hands and using lethal force. Second is the issue of racial disparity among black and white Americans killed by police. Thirdly is the aspect of accountability, or to be more precise the lack of justice for officers who murder their victims and then walk away.

According to Mapping Police Violence, a non-profit monitoring group, American officers have killed 1,646 people, which averages to about three people every day, since the murder of Floyd in May of last year. The data will not go down well with activists and protesters who staged months of demonstrations in the aftermath of Floyd's murder, demanding change, nor will the fact that experts believe the figure cited by the non-profit group is a conservative one. Analysts strongly believe the number of deaths as a result of excessive use of force by the police is much higher than what has been recorded or reflected in the media. For instance, campaigners have long pressed for more transparency of the federal records into how many people die when they are in police custody each year.

This is despite the monitoring group, Mapping Police Violence, using a wide variety of sources to document its data. Nevertheless, the group states on its website that "law enforcement agencies across the country have failed to provide us with even basic information about the lives they have taken. And while the Deaths in Custody Reporting Act mandates this data be reported, it is unclear whether police departments will actually comply with this mandate and, even if they do decide to report this information, it could be several years before the data is fully collected, compiled, and made public."

Worst still for rights groups and the international community is that fatal police incidents against Americans based on the color of their skin have also remained the same as before the murder of Floyd. Despite the protests and the outcry, Mapping Police Violence has documented that black Americans are still two and a half to three times more likely than white Americans to be killed by a police officer. Experts say this issue of racism will not be easy to tackle. Speaking to U.S. media, Philip Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio thinks "many police officers ex-



hibit a fear of Black people." Professor Green, who tracks police criminal charges and convictions argues that "until we can address that, it is very difficult to bring about meaningful reforms."

And to make matters worse, despite a case this year, where a jury in America has ruled against a now former police officer for killing a Black man, it represents a very tiny minority of cases in comparison with the number of murders committed by the police. While it is true that a court verdict against former cop Kimberly Potter found her guilty of two counts of manslaughter for the shooting death of Daunte Wright during a traffic stop. The high-profile case just represents an unusual decision to send a police officer to prison. Potter was the first female police officer convicted of a murder or manslaughter charge in an on-duty shooting since 2005.

It's also just the second time this year that an officer has been convicted albeit on manslaughter charges, the other case was the conviction of Derek Chauvin for the murder of Floyd, but what about the accountability for the 1,645 other victims (an underestimated number by all accounts), who were murdered when encountering the police over the past year and a half. Criminal charges against American police remain something exceptionally rare. Activists say it underscores the power of police unions who

are often found protecting officers, while legal experts say if the problem of police accountability is the law, then the American judiciary is a farce. We shouldn't be surprised if footage showing tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of marchers rallying against police brutality against black Americans appears on our TV screens again, or more vigils being held in solidarity with families who have lost loved ones to police violence. As more awareness has been raised and little action has been taken to make changes, the eyes of the world will be zero in more and more on the killings at the hands of police officers and the reaction it triggers among the black American community and those who stand by it.

The convictions of both Chauvin, the former Minneapolis officer who was captured on an intensely painful bystander video pinning Floyd to the ground for more than nine minutes as he gasped for air and begged for his life, and Potter strike some experts as just small glimpses of a legal system in urgent need of major reform. Did the conviction of Chauvin keep other officers on their toes? All the evidence points to the contrary.

Indeed, observers are reluctant to read too much into a few isolated cases carried out under a state of media scrutiny. Paul Butler, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center and a former prosecutor says "crim-

inal trials are not designed to be instruments of change, criminal trials are about bringing individual wrongdoers to justice. So while there have been high-profile prosecutions of police officers for killing Black people, that doesn't in and of itself lead to the kind of systemic reform that might reduce police violence." Other experts have argued that accountability must also be aimed at prosecutors who gave officers "carte blanche" for a century until the recent show of public outrage.

Change is not likely to come soon.

While there has been an increase from the 16 officers charged in 2020 and the highest number since some began compiling data in 2005, it remains small next to the roughly 1,100 victims killed by the police every year. There is a lot of work that still needs to be done to educate and reform the centuries old attitudes of prejudice against black Americans.

Since Floyd's public execution, very little, if anything, has changed in the United States for the plight of black Americans. A study that has just recently been published in the peer-reviewed Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences suggests it's one of the largest to date on racial bias in America. Apart from finding out that black Americans are less likely to receive a response to the emails they send, the researchers say "discrimination appears to be the norm, rather than the exception."

Critics would argue it's safe to say white Americans enjoy a privilege in a country that self-proclaims itself as the flag bearer of democracy and beacon of human rights in the world.

Ongoing EU-UK tiff over Northern Ireland protocol

By Saeed Pourreza

It was supposed to ensure seamless trade between the UK and the EU following Brexit, but the Northern Ireland protocol, has become a problem itself, or has it?

Negotiated in 2019, the protocol was aimed at avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland still in the EU's single market, and EU member- republic of Ireland. Instead it's created a regulatory border in the Irish Sea which acts as a de facto EU-UK frontier.

Now, British goods entering Northern Ireland are subject to EU checks and customs regulations. While some have disliked the protocol from day one, others have found it beneficial. That small minority, are elements in the loyalist or unionist community in Northern Ireland, people who wish their country to remain part of the UK. They feel they've been cut off from the mainland.

Before becoming prime minister, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had told pro-UK parties that he didn't want to see Northern Ireland left abandoned by a border in the sea. There will not be tariffs or checks on goods coming from GB to here that are not going on to Ireland.

That assurance fell by the wayside. A sense of betrayal prevailed. Protests ensued. To the UK government that meant changing the goal posts. A fact only admitted after the UK left the EU. The EU rejected any re-negoti-



ation of the deal. Some experts believe the government must have known about the problems ahead from Day 1 of Brexit, calling into question the UK's credibility as an international trading partner.

Another bone of contention, the UK government's demand to remove the EU's legal oversight role as part of the Northern Ireland Protocol, saying as long as the role of European Court of Justice continues the protocol will never survive. But in early December, Prime Minister Jonson's conservative government reluctantly dropped that demand at a time when it would appear the majority of people in Northern Ireland want an end to the standoff.

Things took a turn for the worse for the UK Prime Minister with the Dec 18 high-profile resignation of his Chief Brexit-negotiator, David Frost who was replaced than 24 hours later by Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, who openly backed Remaining in the EU in 2016.

(Source: Press TV)

France hits 100,000 COVID cases record

France reported a record high of 104,611 COVID-19 infections on Saturday, breaking the 100,000 threshold for the first time since the pandemic began.

Saturday's tally marked the third consecutive day that numbers have reached record highs.

They come ahead of a video-conference meeting Monday in which President Emmanuel Macron and key members of his government will discuss new COVID-19 safety measures.

Officials are concerned about the effect of the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.

Already on Friday, the health authority recommended adults receive a booster jab three months after their initial vaccination.

Now the government is moving to make the health pass issued to the vaccinated valid only if people accept the booster jab.

The pass is required for access to cafes, restaurants and public spaces, as well as for international travel.

Some regions have already enacted their own safety measures.

At the end of last month, for example, officials in Savoie, a department in the southeast of France, reintroduced the compulsory wearing of masks, not just in indoor public spaces, but outdoors too — a move just adopted in neighboring Italy.

The latest figures mark a dramatic rise since the beginning of the month: on December 4, the numbers broke 50,000 for the first time before rising steadily.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, France has recorded 122,546 deaths from the coronavirus. So far, 76.5 percent of the population is fully vaccinated.

Palestinians will not allow settlers attacks to continue

A spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has strongly denounced the rising violent attacks by Israeli forces and extremist settlers across the occupied territories, stressing that Palestinians have a lawful right to resist Israel's occupation of their lands.

In a statement released on Sunday, Nabil Abu Rudeineh said the rising violence by Israeli settlers and soldiers in the occupied West Bank needs to be stopped, adding, "We will not allow the assaults by Israeli occupation and its settlers against our people to continue."

"Our people have the tools to defend their rights, and no one should underestimate the potential and the determination of our people," he added. On Saturday night, Israeli settlers and troops attacked the villages of Burqa, Sebastia and Bazariya in the occupied West Bank province of Nablus, injuring nearly 250 people during fierce clashes with Palestinians. Soldiers targeted them with live bullets, rubber-coated rounds, stun grenades and teargas.

Burqa and the nearby villages have been flashpoint of clashes in recent days. They sit near the site of a former settlement. The Israeli military destroyed that settlement in 2005. But now the settlers say they want to return.

Abu Rudeineh further said that the Tel Aviv regime was playing with fire by committing crimes against Palestinians across the occupied lands.

"The current situation resulting from Israel's policies in the Palestinian territories is like playing with fire and is unacceptable, and we will not allow it to continue," he said.

The spokesman vowed to confront all plots and conspiracies being devised against Palestinian nation.

Abu Rudeineh urged the international com-

munity, particularly the UN Security Council, "to intervene urgently to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, as Israel cannot continue to act as a state above the law."

"The upcoming PLO Central Council session will pave the way to a new phase, in the event that the Israeli regime insists on continuing its aggressive policies against the Palestinian people, and in the event and the international community remains silent about these repeated crimes," he pointed out.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Abu Rudeineh stressed the need "to work to pressure the Israeli regime to stop settlements and curb the settlers' attacks, which mainly aim to thwart international efforts aimed at reviving the political process."

Palestinian groups and activists have warned that Israel's practices and settler "assaults" against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank will lead to a new intifada (uprising).

Hamas and other Palestinian factions, meanwhile, have renewed their call for stepping up "all forms of resistance" against Israel.

Tensions have been running high in the occupied territories for months over Israel's settlement activities and its planned eviction of Palestinian families from their ancestral homes.

Israeli rights group B'Tselem has documented hundreds of settlers' attacks against Palestinians and their property in the occupied West Bank this year alone.

In a 43-page report released last month, the advocacy group revealed that Israel had been using settler violence as a "strategy" to take over the occupied West Bank and expel Palestinians from their own land.

(Source: Press TV)

Israel, some Arab states hate democratic forces in West Asia, British professor says

"The Biden administration is more Zionist than the Trump administration"



From page 1 ▶ When the negotiation collapses, Israel will feel able to attack Iran and, within one hour of that attack, the price of oil will have shot up to \$200/\$300 per barrel, the Strait of Hormuz will be blockaded – and the collapse of the global economy will have begun.

Iran will then make a military response against Israel and against any state in any way aiding Israel in its attack. A conflagration is likely in which the medieval, autocratic, barbaric regimes of West Asia will find themselves involved in ways which they did not expect.

Why do the Persian Gulf Arab states strive to have cozy ties with Israel?

Israel and the Persian Gulf Arab States are deeply united in one thing - their hatred, and fear, of democratic forces in West Asia. Supported by the USA and the UK (which also hate the democratic forces in the region) they will do anything – and that includes ties with Israel – to suppress any form of democratic movement.

However, NB, the tide of history is against them.

U.S. intelligence agencies have assessed that Saudi Arabia is now actively manufacturing its own ballistic missiles with the help of China. Do you think Israel will accept this development?

This is an excellent question!

And you could also have asked - What happens if the regime in Saudi Arabia is overthrown by democratic forces?

Israel's basic policy is the belief that it can be militarily supreme, without any form of challenge, forever.

I do not think Israel will accept Saudi having missiles – but I doubt if Israel can do anything about it.

Why is the Biden administration reluctant to remove all sanctions imposed on Iran by Trump after his administration abandoned the JCPOA?

The Biden administration is more Zionist than the Trump administration.

Believe it or not, it is also less flexible mentally (which is an extraordinary thing to say given that Trump is insane).

How do you see the U.S. and Israel's role in supporting Saudi Arabia in the war on Yemen?

The USA and Israel support the Saudi war on Yemen because they wish to crush any form of democratic movement in West Asia.

Believe it or not, Biden's administration is also less flexible mentally (which is an extraordinary thing to say given that Trump is insane).

Sassanid seal depicting unique animal motif unearthed in northern Iran



From page 1 ► Architecture often took grandiose proportions such as palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan that are amongst highlights of the ensemble. Crafts such as metalwork and gem-engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state. In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the language of the Sasanians. Rock-carved sculptures and bas-reliefs on abrupt limestone cliffs are widely deemed as characteristics and striking relics of the Sasanian art, top examples of which can be traced at Bishapur, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Naqsh-e Rostam in southern Iran.

Some experts believe that Sasanian art borrowed from ancient Near Eastern and

Greco-Roman traditions to express a new Iranian cultural identity, particularly manifest in prestigious monuments and objects connected to the royal court. Secure dates for many Sasanian buildings and works of art are difficult to determine, in part due to the lack of material from documented archaeological contexts.

The dynasty evolved by Ardashir I and was destroyed by the Arabs during the period of 637 to 651. The dynasty was named after Sasan, an ancestor of Ardashir I. Under his leadership who reigned from 224 to 241, the Sasanians overthrew the Parthians and created an empire that was constantly changing in size as it reacted to Rome and Byzantium to the west and the Kushans and Hephthalites to the east.

According to experts affiliated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the trade, conquest, and diplomacy resulted in the diffusion of Sasanian luxury arts both in the East and West during the four centuries of Sasanian rule.

In 2018, UNESCO added an ensemble of Sasanian historical cities in southern Iran -- titled "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region" -- to its World Heritage list.

Restoration of Bam citadel in progress

TEHRAN – Restoration of Bam citadel is still ongoing, said a local official on Sunday on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of a massive quake that brought the adobe fort down to earth.

"A total of ten workshops are currently underway to restore different parts of Arg-e Bam, a quake-stricken UNESCO-registered citadel in the southern province of Kerman," the provincial tourism Fereydoun Fa'ali said.

Currently, restorers and cultural heritage experts are working on Mir Akbar Mansion, the Government Stables, the Stables' Tower, the Fence, the traditional ice storage, as well as the Holy Shrine of Imamzadeh Seyyed Abdollah, the official added.

The property of Bam and its Cultural Landscape is located on the southern edge of the Iranian high plateau close to the Pakistan border.

The origins of the citadel of Bam ("Arg-e Bam"), can be traced back to the Achaemenid period (6th to 4th centuries BC) and even beyond. The heyday of the citadel was from the 7th to 11th centuries, being at the crossroads of important trade routes and known for the production of silk and cotton garments.

The citadel, which contains the governor's quarters and the fortified



residential area, forms the central focus of a vast cultural landscape, which is marked by a series of forts and citadels, now in ruins. The existence of life in the oasis was based on the underground irrigation canals, the qanats, of which Bam has preserved some of the earliest evidence in Iran and which continue to function till the present time.

According to UNESCO, Arg-e Bam is the most representative example of a fortified medieval town built in vernacular technique using mud layers (Chineh), sun-dried mud bricks (khesht), and vaulted and domed structures.

Bam and its Cultural Landscape represents an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement that

Iran not to apply travel restrictions to all air passengers

TEHRAN – Iran's deputy tourism minister has said the newly-declared travel restrictions do not apply to all air passengers.

Air passengers are allowed to enter Iran except those whose departure would be from Botswana, Swatini, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Namibia as well as England, France, Norway, and Denmark, ISNA quoted Ali-Asgar Shalbafian as saying on Sunday.

The official said that land and sea borders will be closed to all travelers excluding those who have specific visas for medical tourism, trade, business investment, and education.

The restrictions are planned to be enforced for 15 days as of December 19 due to the outbreak of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, the report said.

Over the past couple of days, several travel insiders have lamented that pauses for arrivals had caused many problems for the ones who had pre-arranged to visit the Islamic Republic.

On Saturday, Hormatollah Rafiei who presides over the Association of Air Transport and Tourist Agencies of Iran said some foreign travelers stayed outside



Iran's borders and failed to enter the country as the result of the ban. "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 decision is wrong and will cause damage to the country once again as well as create distrust towards Iran on the global tourism market, he lamented.

Some believe that preventing

the spread of new variants of the virus and maintaining public health is preferable to the benefits of tourism.

Over the past days, 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.

Furthermore, 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.

The pandemic has taken a huge toll on Iran's civil aviation sector. For instance, airlines reportedly lost hundreds of millions of dollars because of flight cancellations during the busy New Year travel season last March.

Some experts say Iran has the potential to experience a tourism boom after coronavirus is contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

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

Iranian, German archaeologists commence work in western Iran

TEHRAN – A team of Iranian and German archaeologists has commenced another excavation season on an ancient mound in western Iran, a local official said on Sunday.

Experts of other fields such as natural sciences, architecture, restoration, and surveying are taking part in the project comprises, which is aimed to define boundaries of the mound, Pouya Talebnia said.

Co-directed by Talebnia and Shalir Amelirad from Heidelberg University, the team is willing to shed new light on the history of the nearby Uramanat tries to unearth remnants of historical monuments and relics.

Stretched on the slopes of Sarvabad county, and shared between the provinces of Kordestan and Kermanshah, the rural area embraces 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.

The remote and mountainous landscape of Uramanat, which is a UNESCO World Heritage, bears testimony to the traditional culture of the Hawrami people, an agropastoral Kurdish tribe that has inhabited



ited the region since about 3000 BC.

The mode of human habitation in its main valleys has been adapted over millennia to the rough mountainous environment. Tiered steep-slope planning and architecture, gardening on dry-stone terraces, livestock breeding, and seasonal vertical migration are among the distinctive features of the local culture and life of the semi-nomadic Hawrami people who dwell in lowlands and highlands during different seasons of each year. Their uninterrupted presence in the landscape, which is also characterized by exceptional biodiversity and endemism, as evidenced by stone tools, caves and rock shelters, mounds, remnants of permanent and temporary settlement sites, and workshops, cemeteries, roads, villages, castles, and more.

\$33,000 allocated to restore monuments in South Khorasan province

TEHRAN – A budget of 10 billion rials (some \$33,600) has been allocated to restore historical monuments across the eastern province of South Khorasan, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The allocation is specific to monuments and historical sites which have been inscribed on the national heritage list, Has-

san Ramezani said on Sunday.

Buildings of historical significance need to be inspected and restored annually, so funds are allocated according to the progress of their restoration projects, the official added.

South Khorasan province is home to more than 1,500 historical monuments, of which four are listed on the World

Heritage List, he noted.

Back in May, the tourism ministry announced that a budget of 52 billion rials (\$175,000) has been spent on restoring and reviving the province's historical monuments and aging buildings during the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20).

Across the province, 948 his-

torical properties are also listed as national heritage sites.

South Khorasan is home to many historical and natural attractions such as Birjand Castle, Dragon Cave, Furg Citadel, and Polond Desert. It is also known for its famous rugs as well as its saffron and barberry which are produced in almost all parts of the province.

New properties in Gilan made national heritage

TEHRAN – A total of nine historical buildings and aging structures, scattered across Gilan province, have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced the inscriptions on Sunday in separate letters to the governor-general of the northern province, IRNA reported.

Ferdowsi Hotel in Rasht, Hojati Mansion, Asiabar Bazaar, and Qavam Tea Factory were among the properties added to the prestigious list.

Gilan is well-known for its rich Iron Age cemeteries such as Marlik that have been excavated over the past century. It was once within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE. The subsequent Arab conquest of Iran led to the rise of many local dynasties, and Gilan acquired an independent status that



continued until 1567.

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.

Kerman-Najaf flights resume after two years halt

TEHRAN – Flights between Iran's Kerman and Iraq's Najaf have resumed following a two-year suspension resulting from COVID-19 restrictions.

"The flights to and from Najaf operate once a week and can carry 160 passengers," Kerman's tourism chief Fereydoun Fa'ali said on Sunday.

"Due to Kerman's health tourism capacities, the city can cater to Iraqi tourists in this area, and the re-launch of this flight will facilitate the arrival of health tourists," the official added.

Hospitalization facilities and a health



department for Iraqi tourists have been created in the province, as well as the necessary medical facilities, he noted.

Earlier this month, a group of Iraqi tour operators and tourism activists along with

their Iranian fellows visited several Iranian provinces on farm tours.

Back in November, several Iraqi travel insiders requested Iran to waive visa requirements for Iraqi nationals who want to enter the Islamic Republic via land borders.

The two neighboring states agreed to abolish visa requirements for air travelers earlier this year. It came after Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi met in Tehran, discussing various issues including the visa waiver program.

Childbearing, population growth top priorities: official

From page 1 ► The budget will be provided to four responsible bodies of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, and the Presidential Office.

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

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

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

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



services to pregnant women.

Demographic issue

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

While 1,594,000 births were registered in the [Iranian calendar] year 1394 (March 2015–March 2016), the downward trend continued annually to the point that the number of births reached about one million

in the [Iranian calendar] year 1399 (March 2020–March 2021).

In other words, we lost more than 550,000 births in five years.

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

Replacement level is the amount of fertility needed to keep the population the same from generation to generation. It refers to the total fertility rate that will result in a stable

population without it increasing or decreasing.

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

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

The decline in the marriage rate, followed by a dramatic decrease in childbearing, has sounded the alarm of the aging population.

Tehran, Turin universities to exchange professors, students

TEHRAN – The Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the University of Tehran and the University of Turin, Italy, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to exchange professors and students.

The MOU was signed by Seyed Hossein Goldansaz, chancellor of Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Stefano Geuna, chancellor of the University of Turin, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The University of Turin has joint fields with the University of Tehran in the fields of agriculture, forestry, and other fields with the faculties of agriculture and natural resources.

Exchanging professors for lectures, teaching or research; exchanging students for research activities; holding joint online teaching courses for senior and doctoral thesis students; launching joint projects, short-term university programs such as seminars, webinars, internships, and workshops, and joint educational programs such as the award of a joint doctorate, were cited as the focus of the memorandum.

“In the past, we have run joint doctoral certificate with some European universities, such as Nantes and Toulouse, France, and Valencia, Spain, and we plan to have

this program with the University of Turin as well,” Valiollah Mohammadi, international vice-chancellor of the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources, said.

According to the memorandum, we should also sign the Erasmus contract and provide financial support for the exchange of professors and students, he added.

In the last two years, 19 MOUs have been signed with various Asian, European, and neighboring countries, and 14 Erasmus agreements with EU-affiliated universities for the exchange of professors and students.

Iranian universities among world's top ones

Most recently, a total of 51 universities from Iran have been listed in the Islamic World University Rankings 2021 announced by the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC).

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

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



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

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

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

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

Charity plans to create 300,000 jobs next calendar year

TEHRAN – Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, plans to open up 300,000 job opportunities for those residing in rural and deprived areas over the next [Iranian calendar] year (starting March 21, 2022).

The job opportunities will be achieved by launching 200,000 community-based job creation projects, Mohammad Torkmaneh, head of the Foundation, said, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The number of villages covered by the foundation's employment ac-

tivities next year will reach 20,000 villages, equivalent to 50 percent of the country's villages, and also will include small towns with a population of less than 30,000, he explained.

Torkmaneh went on to say that “to date, 160,000 employment projects with 480,000 direct and indirect jobs in deprived areas of 10,000 villages and 550 cities in 31 provinces of the country have been put into operation.”

The Foundation is launching 80,000 job creation projects for the current year, leading to the creation of 240,000 job opportunities in de-



prived and rural areas of the country, which will be fully realized by the end of this year.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386 (March 2017–March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation– the

social arm of the organization– with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries worldwide

Some 105 medical equipment produced by 23 Iranian companies are exported to 55 countries across the world, Reza Masaeli, an advisor to the health minister said on Sunday.

“Currently, a total of 280,000 medical equipment is produced in the country,” Fars quoted Masaeli as saying.

“In recent years, the production of medical equipment in Iran has increased by 9 percent,” he added.

One of the main strategies of the Health Ministry is to boost exports, he said, adding that Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries including Russia, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Croatia.

So far, a series of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been signed for export of medical equipment to various countries, including Brazil, Iraq and Oman, Masaeli stated.

تجهيزات پزشکی ایرانی به ۵۵ کشور دنیا صادر می شود

مشاور وزیر بهداشت گفت: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می شود.

به گزارش گروه اجتماعی خبرگزاری فارس، رضا مسائلی، اظهار داشت: در کشور بیش از ۲۸۰ هزار قلم تجهیزات پزشکی در کشور وجود دارد و در سال های اخیر، تولیدات تجهیزات پزشکی در جمهوری اسلامی ایران، ۹ درصد افزایش داشته است.

وی توجه به صادرات را یکی از مهمترین راهبردهای اساسی وزارت بهداشت در راستای حمایت از تولیدات داخلی دانست و افزود: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می شود.

Erosion of world's glaciers causing global oxygen decline, study suggests

Over the last 800,000 years, the level of oxygen in the atmosphere has been slowly declining, and new research undertaken in Antarctica suggests glacial erosion could play a previously overlooked role.

Glaciers grind up rock and other matter as they move, carving out landscapes and churning up minerals, and expose organic carbon which has been buried.

Once exposed, the physical and chemical process of weathering – which breaks down rock and minerals – uses up oxygen, the Independent reported.

The researchers examined geological records and found around the time oxygen levels began to dip, an important change occurred in the world's glacial cycles.

The team noted that the ice age Earth is in today began about 2.7 million years ago. Since then, dozens of glacial cycles have followed.

In each, the ice caps grow outwards until up to a third of the planet is covered in ice, and then, it eventually retreats toward the poles.

Each of these cycles lasted around 40,000 years until just 1 million years ago. Then, at roughly the same time atmospheric oxygen began to decline, glacial cycles began lasting about 100,000 years – over twice as long.

“We know atmospheric oxygen levels began declining slightly in the late Pleistocene, and it looks like glaciers might have something to do with that,” said Rice University's Yuzhen Yan, one of the authors of the study.

“Glaciation became more expansive and more intense about the same time, and the simple fact that

there is glacial grinding increases weathering.”

Weathering refers to the physical and chemical processes that break down rocks and minerals, and the oxidation of metals is among the most important. The rusting of iron is an example. Reddish iron oxide forms quickly on iron surfaces exposed to atmospheric oxygen, or O2.

“When you expose fresh crystalline surfaces from the sedimentary reservoir to O2, you get weathering that consumes oxygen,” said Dr Yan.

In a previous study he worked on, Dr Yan used air bubbles in ice cores taken from Antarctica to show the proportion of oxygen in Earth's atmosphere had declined by about 0.2 per cent in the past 800,000 years.

In this study, along with academics from Princeton University, Oregon State University, the University of Maine and the University of California, Dr Yan analyzed bubbles in older ice cores to show the O2 dip began after the length of Earth's glacial cycles more than doubled around 1 million years ago.

“The reason for the decline is the rate of O2 being produced is lower than the rate of O2 being consumed,” Dr Yan said.

“That's what we call the source and the sink. The source is what produces O2, and the sink is what consumes or drags on O2. In the study, we interpret the decline to be a stronger drag on O2, meaning more is being consumed.”

The glaciation and deglaciation processes have two key impacts influencing oxygen consumption from weathering. The first is through the glaciers themselves, as already mentioned. The second is through sea level rises and falls.

Ozone-destroying greenhouse gas emissions from China increased significantly, study

Emissions of industrially produced chlorocarbon, dichloromethane (CH2Cl2), increased in China from 2011-2019, a new study established. The emissions grew to 628 gigagrams (Gg) per year in 2019 from 231 Gg per year in 2011 in the country, with an average annual increase of 13 per cent primarily from eastern China.

The overall increase in CH2Cl2 emissions from China has the same magnitude as the global emission rise of 354 Gg per year over the same period, according to Down to Earth website.

If global dichloromethane emissions remain at 2019 levels, they could lead to a delay of around five years in Antarctic ozone recovery compared to a scenario with no dichloromethane emissions, the report published in Nature Communications noted.

Short-lived halogenated substances (VSLs) such as dichloromethane have an atmospheric lifetime shorter than six months. Dichloromethane has been identified as the most abundant chlorine-containing VSL, accounting for 70 per cent of the total stratospheric source gas injection from chlorine-containing VSLs.

Dichloromethane originates mainly from anthropogenic sources, including its use as an emissive solvent for adhesive and cleaning purposes, and as a feedstock for hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) production.

To answer that question researchers from Peking University, the China Meteorological Administration and the University of Bristol teamed up to examine new data collected within China.

A substantial increase in the annual dichloromethane emissions from China in 2011-2019 was observed using measurements from nine sites within China Meteorological Administration's monitoring network by an inverse modelling approach.

The mean annual emissions growth rate in China was 13 per cent. There was a rapid increase in emissions after 2012, from 272 Gg per year in 2012 to 534 Gg per year in 2015. After 2015, emissions continued to rise overall but at a much slower rate.

China accounted for 30-35 per cent of global dichloromethane emissions in 2011-2012. After 2012, emissions from China accounted for 50–60 per cent of the global total.

The eastern part of China, including part of the North China Plain and the Yangtze River Delta region, are shown to be the main source regions for dichloromethane over the study period. These regions also contribute most to the increase between the pre-2012 and post 2015 periods. The Yangtze River Delta region, which consists of the highly populated provinces Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Shanghai and Anhui, was one of the biggest emitters.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON DECEMBER 26

New cases	1,857
New deaths	52
Total cases	6,184,762
Total deaths	131,400
New hospitalized patients	316
Patients in critical condition	2,774
Total recovered patients	6,026,378
Diagnostic tests conducted	41,491,521
Doses of vaccine injected	116,707,715

