

Leader Hails Success of General Soleimani's Legacy

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Report

A further \$3.1bn of U.S. taxpayers' money goes to Israeli military

TEHRAN - Israel has clinched a deal with the United States to receive 12 CH-53K helicopters from the American arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin Corp and two American Boeing Co KC-46 refueling planes. A statement by the Israeli ministry of military affairs also says the deal includes an option to receive an additional six helicopters.

The deal will cost an estimated total price of around \$3.1 billion. The funds will come from military aid the U.S. hands out to dictatorships and apartheid regimes annually, the latter of which receives the biggest chunk of that money. \$3.8 billion is the total amount that the regime receives from America annually in military aid.

So it's perhaps important to highlight that the biggest losers of this deal are U.S. taxpayers, especially the lower and working class American families who are financially struggling, even more, this year amid the Pandemic. Americans are suffering from the biggest infections and deaths from Covid-19 in the world. This is taxpayers' money that could have gone to use, serving Americans instead of sending it in the form of military hardware to the biggest terrorist entity in West Asia and adding to its arsenal of helicopters to attack the Palestinians.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute had it right, the Pandemic has had no effect on the transfer or sale of military hardware. The monitoring research group said "arms sales increased even as the global economy contracted by 3.1 percent during the first year of the pandemic. 'The industry giants were largely shielded by sustained government demand for military goods and services.'" ► Page 5

Report

Former defender Nosrati hails IPL title race

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Former defender of Iran national football team, Mohammad Nosrati, believes that Iran Professional League (IPL) has a three-way title race at this season.

At the end of 12th week of the 2021/22 IPL, Esteghlal lead the table with 28 points and are three clear of Persepolis at the top. Sepahan, the other favorites, remain third with 22 points

"There are some teams at the league who show consistency, quality and determination. Aluminum Arak, Gol Gohar Sirjan, and Foolad Khuzestan are among them. They have been at the top level so far and have made the competitions more exciting," said Nosrati in his interview with Tehran Times.

"However, I think that the major favorites to win the title are three teams: Persepolis, Esteghlal, and Sepahan. Everyone wants a three-horse title race for the IPL title, but we cannot blame other teams for their quality.

"Persepolis, the title holders with five consecutive championships in a row, started the league not in the best way, but they are again on track to notch an impressive title win. The Reds' win against Sepahan proved that Yahya Golmohammadi's side are once again the favorites to win the title, and I think they deserve it," said the former Persepolis player.

Nosrati believes that it is a good point for Iranian football to have more and more favorites. ► Page 3

Iraqis remember anti-terrorism heroes



TEHRAN — On Saturday afternoon, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis gathered in Baghdad to commemorate the anti-terrorism heroes, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), who were martyred on January 3, 2020.

Hadi Al-Ameri, the head of the Fatah Alliance, Faleh Al-Fayyad, the head of the PMF, also known as Hashd al-Shaabi, and Qais Khazali, head of the Asaeb Ahl-Al-

Haq, participated in the gathering along with other prominent leaders of the Shia factions.

Sayyid Ammar Hakim, leader of the National Hikma Movement, was also present at the event. ► Page 2

Iran begins swapping Turkmenistan's gas to Azerbaijan

TEHRAN - The agreement between Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on a natural gas swap deal for up to two billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas has taken effect as of January 1, 2022, ILNA reported.

As reported, of the total received gas from Turkmenistan about 20 to 30 percent will be the share of Iran as swap fee and the rest will be delivered to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan will

reportedly receive four million cubic meters of new energy supplies per day; however, the figure is currently less than four million and will gradually reach that amount.

The deal, which was backed by the presidents of the three Caspian countries during the 15th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the Turkmen capital city of Ashgabat on November 28, 2021,

was signed by the oil ministers of the two countries on November 30, 2021.

Under the swap deal, Iran will receive gas from Turkmenistan and deliver an equivalent amount minus the swap fee to Azerbaijan at the Astara border. The gas that Iran will receive from Turkmenistan under the swap agreement will cater to the needs of northern provinces of the country. ► Page 4

Iran's intl. laboratory network cooperating with 7 countries

TEHRAN - The international laboratory network of Iran is cooperating with 7 countries and 21 laboratories across the world, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

The international laboratory network has been established with the aim of presenting laboratory services to the university and industrial researchers around the world.

Improving the quality and quantity of high-tech laboratory services by standardization of laboratory activities; improving the knowledge of laboratory technicians by the organization of training courses and experience-sharing; and facilitating access of industrial and academic researchers to laboratory services are the actives of the network.

The laboratory maintains a variety of international collaborations and welcomes all forms of international collaboration ► Page 7



Saint Sarkis Cathedral hosts New Year's celebrations

Christians in Tehran gathered at the Saint Sarkis Cathedral on Friday night, celebrating the New Year in the presence of Bishop Sibo Sarkisian.

Around 300,000 to 370,000 Christians live in Iran, enjoying the freedom to perform their rituals and celebrate their festivities for four centuries.

Most of the Christians in Iran are Armenians, followed by Assyrians, Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelical Christians.

Archaeological expedition finds 50 historical sites, relics in Isfahan

TEHRAN - A team of Iranian archaeologists has discovered over 50 historical sites and relics during its thorough expedition on the eastern basin and lands of the Zayandeh River.

"The relics and ruined sites date from the Bronze Age, Sassanid era, and early Islamic times were discovered during the field research conducted from Gavkhouni wetland to the southern

plains of Varzaneh-Kafroud," ILNA on Saturday quoted Yaser Jebraeli who presides over the archaeological expedition.

The survey was aimed to identify potential archeological sites, develop knowledge over cultural landscapes and their changes over time, and determine patterns of settlements in the cited area that covers some 200 square kilometers, the archaeologist explained.

Isfahan has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahān which is translated into "half of the world", suggesting that seeing it is equivalent to seeing half of the world. The history of Isfahan can be traced back to at least the Achaemenid era (559-330 BC), but little is known about the area before the rule of the Sassanid dynasty (c. 224 - c. 651 CE). ► Page 6

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Interview

Iran's flexibility needs to be reciprocated by the West if it is serious in Vienna talks: ex-diplomat

By M.A. Saki

TEHRAN - A former Iranian diplomat says if the West is serious to revitalize the 2015 nuclear agreement, like Iran it also needs to show flexibility in the Vienna talks.

"There are indications that the Iranian delegation has been constructive in showing flexibility, including in avoiding to insist on all the amendments that it had proposed at the beginning. There is a need for this flexibility to be reciprocated by the other party, if it is serious to reach an agreement," Kourosh Ahmadi tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Ahmadi also believes that the U.S. is accusing Iran of buying time as a tactic because it may have "an eye on blame game in case the talks fail."

Following is the text of the interview:

Even some in the U.S. are saying that Joe Biden is not serious to revitalize the JCPOA as he promised during his presidential campaigns. Do you think this lack of seriousness is intended to avoid infuriating the Republics?

I don't see any serious signs indicating that Mr. Biden is not serious to revive the JCPOA. It seems that he is serious to do so under certain conditions that are not realistic. ► Page 2

New painting by Ruholamin depicting sons' final farewell to Hazrat Fatima (SA)

TEHRAN - Iranian artist Hassan Ruholamin published on Friday his new painting depicting Imam Hassan (AS) and Imam Hussein (AS) in final farewell to their mother Hazrat Fatima (SA).

The painting named "Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein Bidding Farewell to Hazrat Fatima (SA)" was published in an Instagram post.

"God granted me the inspiration for drawing the painting of the farewell of Imam Hassan (AS) and Imam Hussein (AS) in a place on the earth where the greatest tragedy of history occurred," Ruholamin wrote in the post.

"What voices have been stored in this part of the earth that we could not hear? A place located between Talle Zeinabieh and the place where Imam Hussein (AS) was martyred; I will never understand where I had sat; mourning was underway at the son's house; o God! How can we express the depth of the tragedy," he added.

Ruholamin has published the painting to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Fatima (SA), which will fall on January 6 this year.

Despite its title, this painting shows Imam Ali (AS) mourning on the remains of his wife. ► Page 8

Raisi says citizens don't tolerate corruption in Islamic system



TEHRAN — Speaking in the meeting of the administrative council of Qom Province on Friday, President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi stated that executive actions must have a guarantee for implementation.

Referring to the government's provincial trips, the president said that the government's approach in provincial trips is that what is decided its implementation should be guaranteed.

Emphasized that the actions taken by the government should be announced to the people, he added, "It is necessary to determine the effects of actions in people's lives. People understand the situation well."

The president added that what the administration is looking for is an effortful work and it must be achieved, and the results must be determined.

Raisi added, "If these measures do not work, it will cause people despair and reduce trust of them towards the government, and this social capital will be harmed."

"On the other hand, the path is not smooth, but all the managers have the necessary ability to remove these obstacles," he remarked.

The president went on to say that all managers should be accountable in four areas: first, in the presence of God Almighty, second, to the people and citizens, third, the client, and finally,

accountability to the hierarchy and administrative supervisors.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president said 6,000 soldiers from Qom were martyred during Saddam Hussein's war against Iran in the 1980s, saying, "There is no house in this city that does not have a wounded veteran, a martyr and a prisoner of war."

Referring to the existence of social harms in Qom, Raisi stated, "If some social harms in Qom are not prevented and treated, it will become a punishable crime."

Regarding unemployment in Qom province, Raisi said that there are semi-closed factories that must be activated, and the solution to eliminate unemployment is to activate production centers.

Raisi also asked minister of industry, mines and trade to set up a working group to solve the province's industrial problems with the help of the central bank, the National Development Fund and the office of governor-general in the province.

In another part of his remarks, the president considered it important to pay attention to the tourism economy and noted, "Considering the relationship between Qom and 17 provinces of the country, the issue of tourism in this province is important."

Regarding the issue of corruption, Raisi emphasized, "People do not accept corruption, bribery and unhealthy administrative relations in the Islamic system."

The president stressed the importance of increasing public confidence in the government, saying, "This trust is the most important component of security and the reduction of trust undermines national security."

Iraqis remember anti-terrorism heroes

From page 1 ► On the sidelines of the gathering, Khazali thanked the Iranian people, including the people of Kerman [the birthplace of martyr Soleimani], and warned the United States troops that if they do not leave Iraq, the resistance forces will "teach them a lesson".

He added, "The name of martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis will remain immortal. Martyrs Soleimani and Muhandis were the founders of the Resistance, and thanks to them, we defeated Daesh."

According to Khazali, the PMF is the blessing of martyrs Soleimani and Muhandis.

"We are a nation of men, not pseudo-men! The nation that was created with the blood of the commanders of the victory over Daesh will not bow down to the money of the Persian Gulf countries, because our nation is the nation of men," he remarked in a valiant speech.

"The sons of the Resistance are ready to teach you more lessons, and they will force the American occupation forces to leave Iraq," Khazali pointed out.

Addressing the U.S. forces in Iraq, he added, "You have to understand well that these people (Iraqis) cannot accept the occupation," noting that "the lessons that the heroes of the Resistance in Iraq taught you are a message to expel them (foreign forces) from Iraq."

Fayyad, leader of the PMF resistance faction in Iraq, also gave a speech in the gathering, reaffirming his loyalty to the anti-terrorism commanders General Soleimani and al-

Muhandis. He voiced concern over the presence of the American troops in Iraq.

"Today is the day of loyalty to the martyrs of victory. We make an allegiance with the commanders of the martyrs of victory over Daesh to continue the path of victory and martyrdom," he asserted.

Fayyad added that the assassination of the commanders of the victory over Daesh was "a crime against the sovereignty of Iraq."

He noted that demand for withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq is not a stance taken sentimentally, but is intended to protect Iraq and its sovereignty.

The PMF leader also asserted that a foreign presence will not be beneficial for the Iraqis, especially for peaceful coexistence.

For his part, the Fatah Alliance leader Hadi al-Ameri said that those who think that martyrs Soleimani and al-Muhandis will be forgotten in history are "delusional."

He also said that the Iraqis will only accept a complete exit of the American forces and the achievement of full sovereignty of Iraq.

"The nation will remain resistant," he added.

The date for the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq was scheduled for December 31. However, no troops will be evacuated. Only the occupation forces will be renamed. The same combat troops will be assigned an "advisory" role, with no soldiers being removed. This was confirmed by Pentagon officials to The New York Times, who stated that the departure will take place primarily on paper.

Ambassador: Iran has suffered heavy losses in drug fight

TEHRAN — The Iranian ambassador to Qatar has said that Iran has suffered a lot of material and moral losses in its fight against drug trafficking.

"According to the Iranian Human Rights Headquarters, more than 90% of the smuggled opium, 72% of the world's smuggled morphine, and 20% of the world's smuggled heroin is discovered by the Islamic Republic of Iran," Hamid Reza Dehghani wrote in a post on his Twitter page.

Ambassador Dehghani added, "Iran is the main flag bearer of the fight against drugs. Iran has suffered a lot of material and moral damage in the fight against drug trafficking."

As reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Iran spends millions of dollars annually on border control, including for the construction of expensive barriers along its borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

More than 3,700 Iranian law enforcement forces have been killed and over 12,000 have been maimed in counter-narcotics operations over the last three decades.

Since the beginning of 2012, there have been an increasing number of reports made by the drug enforcement authorities of Iran, Pakistan and the Persian Gulf Arab states on the illegal use of maritime transport for the trafficking of drugs and illicit chemicals from/to the region.

Iran's flexibility needs to be reciprocated by the West if it is serious in Vienna talks: ex-diplomat

"If Biden admin. insists on unrealistic conditions, Vienna talks may turn out to be frustrating"

From page 1 ► For example, in his Op-ed, published by CNN on 13 September 2020, he talked of reviving the deal and making it "longer and stronger" and then focusing on other such issues as Iran's missile program and regional issues. If his administration intends to insist on such unrealistic conditions, then the current efforts in Vienna should turn out to be frustrating. This is exactly where that the Republicans come in and insist that Mr. Biden live up to his promises. In other words, he might be now trapped by his rhetoric.

How do you assess the process of the Vienna talks?

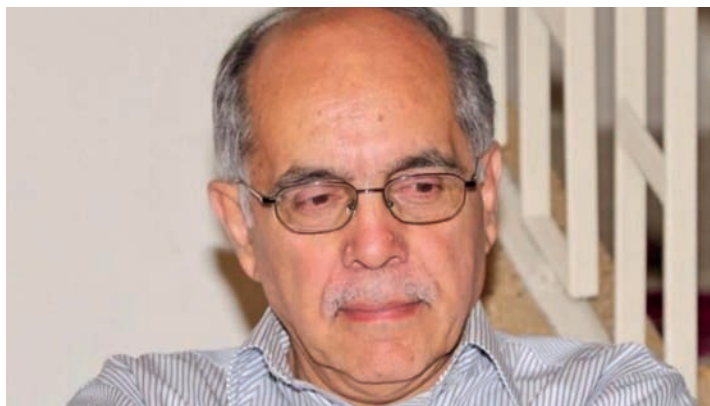
I believe that both parts seek and are ready for a compromise. While the talks have been slow so far, but I think they are still on track. The parties in the seventh round got to know each other, which was needed due to the change of administration in Iran. They also agreed on how to proceed and also on the texts that would be the bases of the negotiations. During the current round they should be able to focus on the content. There are indications that the Iranian delegation has been constructive in showing flexibility, including in avoiding to insist on all the amendments that it had proposed at the beginning. There is a need for this flexibility to be reciprocated by the other party, if it is serious to reach an agreement.

Issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program "can't be obviously legal or technical".

What is your analysis of an insistence by the West, especially Americans, that the Vienna talks should lead to a result as soon as possible? For example, Secretary Blinken has said, "I'm not going to put a time limit on it or give you the number of meters remaining on the runway, except to say, yes, it is getting very, very, very short." Don't you think such artificial deadlines are intended to put psychological pressure on Iran?

This has been a tactic that the U.S. has employed from the beginning. They began by accusing Iran of trying to buy time and procrastinate. Iran's five months or so delay to start the talks has been an excuse for them to try to advance this argument. By doing so, they may have also an eye on blame game in case the talks fail. Now, they try to bring pressure to bear on Iran by hawkish talks and some sort of unofficial and implicit deadline. No doubt that this would deteriorate the ambiance and hurt the prospect for a compromise.

There are reports that France as a member of the European troika is



hampering progress of the talks. Of course, France played such a role in the previous round of talks that led to the JCPOA. Don't you think that France is trying to please certain Persian Gulf sheikhdoms through such a behavior?

There is a possibility that the French behavior now and then was and continues to be motivated by France's relations with and pressure from some Arab States on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. They also began since August 2017 to talk about incorporating issues relating to Iran's missile

program and the regional issues into the negotiations; something that Iran has always rejected. It should be also taken into account that, as a reason, Iran has not endeavored enough toward building necessary leverage with France and other European states. While Iran's regional rivals have lost no opportunity to move in that and every other direction.

In your December 27 article in the Etemad newspaper you wrote that the experience of the previous talks show that the P5+1 group has always acted unanimously, and therefore an extremist approach by one member may affect the entire group. Can you elaborate on this point?

Yes, it has been always important for the U.S. under the Obama and Biden administrations to build a coalition in dealing with Iran and many other international issues. It was obviously not the case with the Trump administration. Now, the U.S. believes that they will be stronger if the 5+1 can maintain a unified approach and position. John Kerry, the previous U.S. Secretary of State and chief negotiator, refers in his memoir to the French more hawkish stand at one point in the previous negotiations and emphasizes that they needed to be attentive to what France was asking for. He also says that, based on the instruction by President Obama, the highest

priority for the U.S. delegation was to preserve the 5+1 unity and unified position as it was necessary for reaching agreement with Iran and protect it thereafter. Kerry adds, we therefore stood with France. This time too we may conclude that once again one 5+1 member's hawkish approach may affect the position of the whole group.

In a recent interview former nuclear negotiator Seyyed Hossein Mousavian has somehow suggested a direct negotiation between Iran and the U.S., believing if the U.S. is going to give concessions to Iran it wants to give it directly and not through intermediaries. What is your opinion?

There should be no doubt about it. While I understand Iran's anger as one of the reasons for Iran's avoiding to talk directly to the U.S., I doubt that there could be any deal between Iran and the U.S. without the two parties talking directly to each other. Moreover, I believe that at more advanced stages of negotiations, it would be essentially impossible for these two main parties to make much progress without sitting face to face and focusing on wordings, phrases, alternatives, substitute wordings and so on. Besides, indirect talks would be too much time consuming and require much confidence in messengers that may be nonexistent.

No need to remind that any of the messengers have their own interest.

Both the U.S. and Europe would like to hold Iran responsible for the current crisis, ignoring the fact that the U.S. exit from the JCPOA and inaction by the Europeans to compensate Iran for the sanctions led to Tehran's retaliatory moves. What is the reason for such a blame game?

There is no doubt that the U.S. reneging on its commitments is the main responsible for the current situation. Other countries, including the Europeans and others, are also

responsible for their inaction and failing to push their banks and companies to keep working with Iran. Some countries that continue to work with Iran in a limited way, are doing so informally and through intermediaries without showing it in their formal statistics and customs records. This type of business is also very costly for Iran and cannot go on indefinitely.

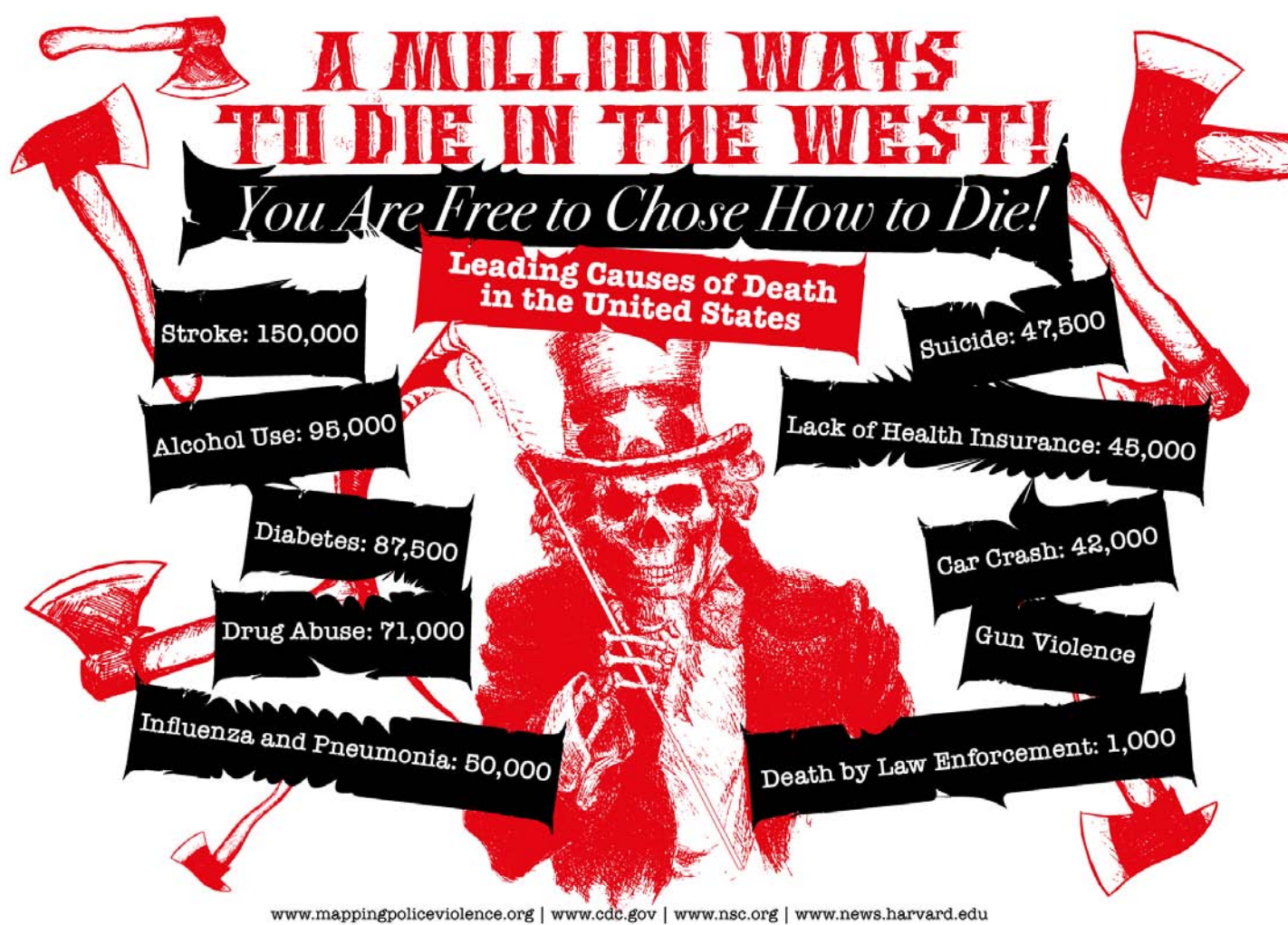
It is quite understandable that Iran is seeking some guarantees that the U.S. will not leave the JCPOA again. However, experts and diplomats believe that the only way that Iran could be sure that sanctions would be lifted permanently is to resolve Tehran's basic differences and disputes with the U.S. and to establish normal relations. What is your suggestion?

Given the breach of commitment by the U.S., I do agree that Iran is right to be wary and circumspect about taking again the same path. A kind of guarantee binding the U.S. to the deal in the future is a solution, if there could be one. To my knowledge, there is still no feasible and practical suggestion to this end. On the other hand, it is much said that the main deficiency of the JCPOA is the fact that it is a one-issue deal. Whereas there are so many issues straining Iran-U.S. relationship. Thus, I understand the logic of the proposition. At least, since the 1990s there has been talks of a so-called grand bargain in which the two countries work out everything between them. But at least at the time being, I see no prospect for such a likelihood. Under the current circumstances, I can't think of anything else other than all sides returning to their commitments under the JCPOA and trying in good faith to stay compliant with its terms.

We have also to be wary of opening up the deal, as it would resemble opening up a Pandora's box.

Do you agree with this view that the problem surrounding Iran's nuclear program is essentially political?

Of course it is essentially political. It can't be obviously legal or technical. The political will of the parties is the most determinant factor to decide the outcome of any endeavor aimed at finding a solution. And by political, I also factor in the domestic politics of the parties. As the saying goes: foreign policy is the continuation of domestic policy. The domestic policy of the U.S. under Obama brought about the JCPOA and the U.S. domestic policy under Trump destroyed it.



Leader hails success of General Soleimani’s legacy

TEHRAN – In a meeting on Saturday with the family of General Qassem Soleimani, the noted commander of the IRGC’s Quds Force, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei rejected speculations that the legacy of the slain general was fading away, underlining that the resistance movement General Soleimani helped establish is up and running.

Ayatollah Khamenei received members of the family of General Soleimani on the second anniversary of his martyrdom. The general was assassinated by the U.S. on January 3, 2020 while on a trip to Baghdad. His longtime comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), was also martyred in the U.S. drone strike.

His assassination sent shockwaves around the world, bringing Iran and the U.S. closer to an all-out war. In response to the U.S. brazen move, Iran launched retaliatory missile strikes against the Ain al-Asad base, which was housing American troops. The strike resulted in dozens of American servicemen sustaining brain injuries, a move that was unprecedented since World War II in terms of humiliating the United States. The Trump administration, which carried out the Baghdad



drone strike, swallowed the Iranian retaliation and refrained from further escalating the situation.

Many pundits believe that Iran’s massive deterrent capabilities prevented the U.S. from going too far in its aggression against Iran. Besides, American strategists, rubbing their hands with glee over the assassination of the chief architect of the Axis of Resistance in the region, assumed that the Axis would wane after General Soleimani.

Two years after the martyrdom of the most renowned Iranian general, their assumption proved wishful thinking. During his Saturday meeting with the family of General Qassem Soleimani, the Leader pointedly said the legacy of the General is more thriving

than ever.

“The enemies surmised that with the martyrdom of Soleimani, Abu Mahdi and their companions, everything will be over. But today due to the blessing of our dear General Soleimani’s blood, the U.S has fled Afghanistan. In Iraq, it is forced to pretend to withdraw and announce an advisory role without a military presence, something that [our] Iraqi brothers should pursue vigilantly. In Yemen, the Resistance front is advancing. In Syria, the enemy has been bogged down with no hope for the future,” the Leader stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei summed up the situation as follows: “On the whole, the Resistance and anti-imperial movement in the region is now more thriving, vibrant, and

promising than two years ago.”

The Leader also pointed to the popularity General Soleimani gained after his martyrdom in Iran and the broader Muslim world. “Tens of millions of Iranians attending General Soleimani’s funeral shows he was and is the most popular figure in the nation. Also, the increasing influence of his name in the world of Islam proves dear Soleimani has been one of the most popular figures in the world of Islam too,” he said, according to a readout published by the khamenei.ir.

Ayatollah Khamenei showered the late general with praise, describing him as “a manifestation of endeavor and untiring, astonishing work.”

“The heroic general of Iran had both courage and rationality in all affairs. While he knew precisely the enemies and their tools, he would enter the battlefield and carry out amazing tasks without a bit of fear,” the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei described General Soleimani as a never-dying reality. “Martyr Soleimani is an eternal reality that will live on forever. His assassins – including Trump and the like – will go down in history’s garbage bin, but of course, after receiving retribution in this world for the crime they committed,” the Leader pointed out.

Ayatollah Raisi congratulates leaders of Christian countries on New Year

TEHRAN – In separate messages to the leaders of Christian countries, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has congratulated them on the birthday of Jesus Christ and the New Year.

He expressed hope that by relying on the moral virtues of the Abrahamic religions, hardships will disappear from the world.

In his messages the president said, “I would like to sincerely congratulate you on the anniversary of the birthday of the Prophet of Endurance and Peace, Jesus Christ, and the beginning of 2022.”

Ayatollah Raisi added, “The anniversary of the birthday of Jesus Christ is dear and happy for the people of Iran; and he is no less respected by Muslims than Christians. He is the embodiment of resistance against the oppressors and the inspiration for freedom in the struggle against the dictators. That great prophet and his pure mother are mentioned many times in the Qur’an; Including: And on Judgment Day Allah will say, ‘O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour upon you and your mother: how I supported you with the holy spirit so you spoke to people in your infancy and adulthood. How I taught you writing, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel (Al-Ma’idah, Verse 110)”

The president also pointed to the challenges posed by the outbreak of Covid-19, describing them as indicative of the interdependency of human destiny.

“Global developments, especially the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, have shown that the security and destiny of human beings are interdependent. The cooperation of countries in this crisis, especially in the field of vaccination, against the reluctance of some governments to send essential items in the field of health and sanctions of nations by them, clearly showed that a decent international system is in dire need of rationality, justice and spirituality,” Raisi stated.

He concluded the message by saying, “I hope that in the new year, by relying on the moral virtues of the Abrahamic religions and in the light of the joint efforts of governments, sufferings and hardships will disappear from the world, the stability and resistance of nations will be fruitful and according to the gospel and promise of Christ, divine providence regarding that the righteous servants of God rule over the earth, and may humanity prosper.”

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

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

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

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has also issued a similar message on the occasion of Christmas. He has congratulated all Christians around the world on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ and Christmas.

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

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

they were targeted with a number of missiles launched by an American drone.

The strike was ordered by then-U.S. President Donald Trump, a dangerous move that brought Iran and the U.S. close to an all-out war. Iran did not let the U.S. go unpunished for its reckless move. Five days after the U.S. strike, Iran launched a military operation codenamed “Operation Martyr Soleimani”, which saw Iran showering the U.S. Ein al-Asad airbase in Iraq’s western governorate of al-Anbar with tens of ground-to-ground missiles. Initially, the U.S. sought to downplay the strike on its airbase. But the Pentagon admittedly announced later that more than 100 U.S. service members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) stemming from Iran’s missile attack on the airbase.

Following the retaliatory response, Iran announced a new strategy to continue what General Soleimani had assiduously started: expulsion of the U.S. forces from the region. A few days after the assassination of General Soleimani, several Iranian officials announced that real revenge for the late general would be the expulsion of all American troops from the region.

In a statement on the second anniversary of the assassination of General Soleimani, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said that “the prompt and effective action of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran in slapping the American troops stationed at the Ain al-Assad base in Iraq in the face, along with the spiritual effects of the blood of Iranian and Iraqi martyrs, upset the equations and brought about the failure of U.S. regional strategy. The U.S. fleeing from Afghanistan, the beginning of the process of withdrawal from Iraq and the change in the strategy of the U.S. military presence in the geostrategic region of Persian Gulf showcase a small part of such impacts and consequences.”

It added, “Undoubtedly, the criminal act of the United States in martyring general Soleimani is a clear manifestation of a “terrorist attack” that was orchestrated and carried out in an organized manner by the then US government for which the White House is now responsible.”

The foreign ministry noted that the US government bears “definitive international responsibility” for this crime according to international and legal standards.

IRAN IN FOCUS

JANUARY 2, 2022

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

3

SPORTS

Iran’s Super Cup date announced

TEHRAN – Ira’s Super Cup between Persepolis and Foolad will be held on Feb. 7, Iran Football League Organization announced on Saturday.

The place of the match has yet to be announced.

The Iranian Super Cup is an Iranian association football trophy awarded to the winners of a match between the Persian Gulf Pro League’s season champions and the winners of the Hazfi Cup. It is similar to numerous other Super Cup tournaments held in other countries.

Persepolis are defending champions.

The tournament was only held once in 2005 when Hazfi Cup champions Saba Battery defeated league champions Foolad 4–0.

The next edition of the Iranian Super Cup was planned to be played on Aug. 10, 2007 between the 2006–07 league champions Saipa and the Hazfi Cup winners Sepahan but the match was cancelled. After Mehdi Taj was elected as Federation president in 2016, the Iranian Super Cup was restarted.

Zob Ahan won the first Super Cup after its restart, beating 2015–16 Persian Gulf Pro League winners Esteghlal Khuzestan 4–2 after extra time. Next year Persepolis crowned Super Cup by beating Naft Tehran in Azadi Stadium.

Iran to compete in 2022 Asian Games in 28 sports

TEHRAN – Iran will send athletes in 28 sports to the 2022 Asian Games in China.

The Games will be held in Hangzhou from Sept. 10 to 25.

Iran will participate in 26 sports, namely athletic, basketball, boxing, fencing, volleyball, shooting, rowing, weightlifting, wrestling, taekwondo, karate, kurash, wushu, sport climbing, kabaddi, skate, archery, football, handball, swimming, water polo, diving, gymnastics, cycling, chess, E-sports, sepak takraw and table tennis.

The Games will also include athletes from Oceania for the first time after the approval from Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) to compete in sports which qualify for the 2024 Summer Olympics through Asia, including volleyball, beach volleyball, basketball, football and fencing.

On 8 April 2019, the Olympic Council of Asia initially announced that the Games would feature 37 sports, including the 28 permanent Olympic sports to be contested at the 2024 Summer Olympics as well as events in other non-Olympic sports. Three sports were added on Sept. 12, 2019, making the total increased to 40 sports (Consist of 61 disciplines). E-sports and breakdancing were added on Dec. 18, 2020.

Iran handball team to participate in Spain’s tournament

TEHRAN – Iran national handball team will participate in the international tournament of Spain.

The three-day event will be held in Cuenca from Jan. 6 to 8.

Spain, Iran, Poland and Japan are the participants of the four-team tournament.

Iran, headed by Spaniard Montoya Montoya, will finalize their preparation for the 2022 Asian Men’s Handball Championship which will be held in Dhahran, Saudi Arabi from Jan. 18 to 31, where Iran are pitted against hosts Saudi Arabia, Australia and India in Group B.

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

Two Iranians in 2021 AFC Champions League XI

TEHRAN – Tractor goalkeeper Mohammed Reza Akhbari and Persepolis midfielder Mehdi Torabi have been chosen by the fans in the Best XI of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Collecting over half of the votes, the Iranian custodian Akhbarishad takes the place between the posts, with Al-Hilal ‘keeper and 2021 champion Abdullah Al-Mayouf coming second.

The leading playmaker in terms of statistics, Mahdi Torabi proved the most popular candidate among the Asian football family and is the only member of the 2020 finalists in the fans’ eleven.

Torabi takes the left side of our three-man midfield with Al-Hilal pair Salem Al-Dawsari and Salman Al-Faraj, who received the second and third most votes respectively, taking up the other two spots.

Mehdi Taremi the best goalscorer of Primeira Liga in 2021

TEHRAN – Iranian international forward Mehdi Taremi became the best goalscorer of Primeira Liga in 2021.

He scored 20 goals in the previous year in Portugal league.

Benfica forward Haris Seferovic and Sporting attacking midfielder Pedro Gonçalves finished in second and third place with 19 and 17 goals, respectively.

Taremi also tops the assist chart with 16 along with Benfica midfielder Rafa Silva.

Amir Abedzadeh tests positive for COVID19-

TEHRAN – Ponferradina football team goalkeeper Amir Abedzadeh tested positive for COVID-19.

The 28-year-old goalie missed his team’s match against Oviedo, where Ponferradina lost 2-0 in Segunda Division.

The loss left the team in the fifth place with 37 points out of 22 matches.

The Spanish football team have announced that its six players have contracted COVID-19.

Former defender Nosrati hails IPL title race

Frome Page **1** ▶ “We should be proud of the competition in the IPL and it feels good because we are in the middle of the race and there is still lots of intensity in the games and the results are completely unpredictable. Title races involving multiple teams are common in top leagues, given how they require a number of different factors, and good teams, coming together,” he added.

“Esteghlal have gone invincible so far and are top of the league right now. Farhad Majidi is going to make the Esteghlal fans’ dream come true by winning the title after many years. However, I think that Esteghlal and Sepahan were a bit lucky because they have been awarded 3-0 wins by the disciplinary verdict against Gol Gohar. In my opinion, it was not a fair verdict and affected the integrity of the IPL table.” Nosrati concluded.

Assassination of General Soleimani was oppressive act against Islam: Pakistani cleric

TEHRAN – Siraj-ul-Haq, leader of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan, has denounced the U.S. move in assassinating General Qassem Soleimani as an oppression against Islam, adding that the blood of this great martyr brought dignity and honor to Muslims around the world.

The Pakistani cleric made the remarks in an interview with IRNA on the sidelines of a meeting with the Secretary General of the World Forum for Ecumenicity of Islamic Schools of Thought said that the meeting focused on the commonalities of the two neighboring countries and some of the problems facing the Islamic world, especially the issue of Palestine.

General Soleimani was assassinated along with his longtime comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The top Iranian general was visiting Iraq at the invitation of Iraq’s leader to deliver an Iranian reply to a Saudi message through Iraq. He left Tehran for Baghdad on January 3, 2020, and arrived at midnight at Baghdad airport, where al-Muhandis was waiting to receive him. After a short exchange of greetings, the two men left the airport but as they moved out of the airport in their motorcade,

cleric noted.

The leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan on Friday in a meeting with Hojjatoleslam Shahriari mentioned the influential role of Tehran and Islamabad in helping solve the problems of the Islamic world and regional crises, especially the situation in Afghanistan.

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He added, “The enemies have taken advantage of the chaos among the Islamic nations and we see the result of these conspiracies in events such as the assassination of the commander of the Qods Force.”

“We need unity and solidarity to prevent terrorist operations and unilateral actions and we must stand by the oppressed,” the Pakistani

Iran begins swapping Turkmenistan's gas to Azerbaijan



From page 1 ► Iran has major natural gas fields in the south but has imported gas from Turkmenistan since 1997 for distribution in its northern provinces, especially during the

winter.

Experts believe that the implementation of this deal could encourage other countries in the region to ink similar deals and to use the Islamic Republic's capacities in this regard.

Having the largest high-pressure gas pipeline network after Russia, Iran can play a key role in transferring gas from east to west of Iran and to the neighboring countries such as Azerbaijan.

This deal is also a big step for Iran as it would ensure stable gas supply to the country's northeastern regions which are far away from the sources of natural gas in the country.

CBI, Industry Ministry ink MOU to implement plan for funding production units

TEHRAN – Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with seven acting banks to collaborate on implementing a supply chain financing plan to provide facilities to production units across the country, IRIB reported.

The MOU was signed on Saturday, in a ceremony attended by CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi Amin, and Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi.

Under the framework of the mentioned MOU, CBI and the Industry Ministry will co-operate with the acting banks to provide facilities to production units in various sectors including metals, construction, automobiles, home appliances, machinery, foodstuff, as well as chemical and petrochemical industries.

Unlike traditional methods of providing direct facilities by financial institutions, supply chain financing is a form of financial transaction wherein a third party facilitates an exchange by financing the supplier on the customer's behalf.

Also, it refers to the techniques and practices used by banks and other financial institutions to manage the capital invested into the supply chain and reduce the risk for the parties involved

In this method, the production units can also receive other credit instruments such as bonds and negotiable instruments instead of cash facilities, which in addition to reducing the need for liquidity, bank resources are also directed to productive activities.

Based on the MOU, the plan is going to be implemented in a pilot phase and then will become fully operational after being finalized.

Speaking in the signing ceremony, Saleh-Abadi said the implementation of this plan will reduce the non-current receivables of banks and it will also make it easier to manage liquidity and monitor the appropriate allocation of banking resources.

Fatemi-Amin for his part said at the ceremony that with the supply chain financing, banks will pay facilities based on electronic



Representatives of acting banks sign MOU documents on Saturday as CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi (2nd R), Industry Minister Reza Fatemi Amin (1st L) and Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi (2nd L) look upon.

invoices under the framework of the country's comprehensive trade system.

"This makes receiving facilities transparent and companies cannot get multiple loans for one purpose," he added.

The official noted that this method is a very effective work in a financing process that increases access to financial resources and prevents the diversion of resources, in other words, by implementing this plan, manufacturing companies and banks will both benefit.

Further in the ceremony, Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi underlined some of his ministry's programs for developing the country's productive sectors, saying: "Our main goal is to be able to shorten all the avenues that lead the financing of production sectors to support manufacturing and exporting enterprises so that traders and producers are less concerned about financing."

Measures such as the supply chain financing scheme not only help and facilitate the financing process but also make the relationship between producers and the banking network more regular, he said.

According to Khandouzi, completing the financing chain, expanding the scope of the chain activities in industrial sectors, and completing the supporting banking network are three steps that should be monitored and followed in the pilot phase of the project and fully deployed next year.

TEDPIX drops 18,000 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 18,417 points to 1,378 million on Saturday.

As reported, over 5.907 billion securities worth 32.844 trillion rials (about \$113.25 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index lost 16,771 points, and the second market's index fell 26,883 points.

TEDPIX rose 38,000 points (2.7 percent) to 1.397 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company, Saipa Company, Social Security Investment Company, National Copper Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

to the same period last year, according to the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

The figure including oil increased 4.2 percent, IRNA reported.

The non-oil GDP reached 16.23 quadrillion rials (about \$54.6 billion) in the mentioned period.

The SCI put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on September 22, 2021, at 45.8 percent, while the unemployment rate was 9.5 percent.

Back in October 2021, International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest

World Economic Outlook report titled "Recovery During a Pandemic", had predicted 2.5-percent real GDP growth for Iran in 2021, with no change from the fund's previous report.

The entity had modified its forecasts of the global economic growth from six percent in its previous report to 5.9 percent; the fund expects the global economy to shrink even more in 2022 to settle at 4.9 percent in 2022.

Central Bank of Iran (CBI), in its latest report published in September, had put the country's GDP growth in

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- Capital market in a country eliminates the enterprises' need for external financing that requires forex rate risk; and plays an important role in risk sharing and the effectiveness of capital allocation in various economic sectors, and as a result increases economic growth and welfare in society.

In Iran, where the capital market plays a small role in the long-term financing of enterprises, the government can play an important role in the development of the capital market and take initiatives to develop this market and increase its efficiency.

Two recent measures taken by the Iranian government indicate that the government is determined to support the capital market and strengthen this market's role in the national economy.

The first one was the six clauses in the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21) on supporting the capital market.

The budget bill, submitted by president to the parliament on December 12, has paid special attention to the capital market and bourse companies.

The measures considered in the budget bill and its overall positive effects on the capital market includes 1- Reforming the price of gas feed, as well as electricity, water, oxygen and other utilities for the petrochemical units, refineries, steel reduction units, and downstream industries 2-Reducing taxes on production units active in the stock market 3- Strengthening Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund 4- Reducing the government's revenue from selling bonds 5-Eliminating subsidized foreign currency allocations 6- Eliminating pre-ordered pricing.

Reducing the taxes imposed on production units will make them more profitable and therefore their performance in the stock market will improve.

Also, the direct taxes collected from production units is expected to be injected into Capital Market

Government determined to support capital market



Development and Stabilization Fund in order to be used to improve and develop the market.

Based on the next year's budget bill, no subsidized foreign currency will be allocated to special entities to import certain goods. Experts and analysts believe that this decision is going to have a very positive impact on the stock market since it will prevent rent and unrealistic pricing.

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

The government's second measure, which is also for the profitability of production activities and bourse industries, and a promising market outlook, was approving a 10-article package to support this market in the meeting of the Government's Economic Coordination Headquarters on December 19.

The ten strategic decisions made in the mentioned headquarters are as follows:

1- Next year, the price ceiling of petrochemical units' gas feed will be 50,000 rials (17 cents) per cubic meter, ie the export rate. Also, gas fuel for steel mills will be 40 percent of the price of petrochemical feed, previously this reference was 100 percent, which has now reached 40 percent, ie each cubic meter will be a maximum of 20,000 rials (six cents). And, the rate for the cement industry's feed is equal to 10 percent of the feed rate of the petrochemical industry. Of course, all this requires the approval of the budget bill.

2- The production units' tax will be reduced by five percent next year.

3- The formula for the government's earning from the mines will not change next year.

4- Equivalent to the stock market transfer tax is allocated to strengthen Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund.

5- In addition to the previous securities, 300 trillion rials (about \$1.034 billion) will be allocated for

Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund, provided that the market situation is suitable.

6- 10 percent of the state-owned shares in the initial public offering market will be used for the stock marketing of the same shares.

7- The issuance of government bonds in the market is done by observing 50 percent of the inflow of resources to the capital market. That is, government bonds are issued in the months when the cash flow is higher

8- Central Bank of Iran (CBI) is required to announce the forex rate of government assets equal to 90 percent of the rate of the Nima system (Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA) in the last six months, which has been demanded by those active in the banking and stock exchange sectors.

9- The head of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) is invited to the meetings of Economic Headquarters and the committee of "V" of paragraph 5.

10- CBI sets an interbank interest rate of 20 percent to intervene in the secondary securities market.

As stated by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister, the serious message of this approved package is to harmonize and coordinate the policies of the CBI and Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry.

Speaking in a live TV program after the meeting of Economic Coordination Headquarters, in which the ten mentioned directives were approved, Khandouzi said, "The 10 decisions taken tonight at Government Economic Headquarters, and such a package, which indicates the convergence between the CBI, Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry, and Planning and Budget Organization (PBO), has been unprecedented for the capital market participants."

As the minister emphasized, the government's objective behind this package is the profitability of bourse industries and production, as well as creating hope for the people and those active in the capital market.

Car manufacturing rises 2.3% in 9 months yr/yr

TEHRAN – Car manufacturing in Iran has risen 2.3 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The data released by Codal website show that Iranian carmakers manufactured 669,320 vehicles in the nine-month period of this year, while the figure was 653,761 in the same time span of the previous year.

During the said nine months, Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) manufactured 325,557 vehicles, which was six percent less than the output in the same time span of the previous year.

The IKCO's monthly production stood at 42,894 in the ninth month.

SAIPA manufactured 253,584 vehicles in the mentioned period. Production by this automaker rose 8.14 percent in comparison to the previous year's same time span.

SAIPA manufactured 31,131 vehicles in the ninth month.

Pars Khodro manufactured 90,179 vehicles in the nine-month period of this year, with 23.8 percent growth year on year.

This automaker's monthly production stood at 11,498 in the ninth month.

Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister

Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki has said the country's car output is expected to increase by 50 percent in the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2022).

"Private carmakers are trying to increase their output," Sadeqi Niaraki said.

Noting that the annual demand for automobiles is about 1.5 million in the country, the official noted: "Production of one million vehicles is forecast for the current year, and we expect a growth of about 50 percent for the next year, and automakers are also proposing all kinds of facilities and sale options."

Meanwhile, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin has said that his ministry has a two-year plan for the auto industry based on which this industry will undergo serious changes and improve significantly.

"We must strengthen competition, improve management and economic mechanisms, and increase production in the auto industry in order to succeed in our plans," Fatemi Amin said.

"Our plan is to produce 1.6 million vehicles next year (begins in March 2022), which will increase to three million units in [the Iranian calendar year] 1404 (begins in March 2025),

and 30 percent of the production, equivalent to about one million units, should be sent to export markets," he added.

Iran's major carmakers had manufactured 900,714 vehicles in the previous year (ended on March 20), which was 4.3 percent more than the figure of its preceding year.

According to Codal data, during the past year, IKCO manufactured 480,338 vehicles, which was 21.9 percent more than the output in its preceding year, which was 393,812 vehicles.

SAIPA manufactured 317,321 vehicles, with a 12.6-percent fall from 363,379 vehicles manufactured in 1398. And Pars Khodro manufactured 103,055 vehicles in the past year, showing a 2.8-percent drop from the output of its previous year, which was 106,072 vehicles.

Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's programs for the current Iranian calendar year show that the manufacturing of 1.2 million cars has been put on the agenda.

Iran currently stands in 20th place among the world's top automobile manufacturers producing 821,060 vehicles by the end of 2019, according to the Organisation Internationale des Constructeurs d'Automobiles (OICA).

Annual demand for automobiles is about 1.5 million in Iran



the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21) at 6.2 percent.

According to the mentioned data, the figure was 4.7 percent with oil excluded.

Based on the mentioned data, the country's GDP stood at 3.477 quadrillion rials (about \$11.7 billion) with oil, while the figure excluding oil was 3.148 quadrillion rials (about \$10.5 billion).

During the said period, with the exception of the agricultural sector which experienced negative growth of 0.9 percent due to the drought and reduced crop production, other economic sectors, including oil, industries, and mining and services respectively grew by 23.3, 2.1, and 7.0 percent, respectively.

According to SCI, Iran's gross domestic product excluding oil grew 3.3 percent in the fourth quarter of the previous Iranian calendar year (December 21, 2020-March 20, 2021) compared to the same period in the preceding year, while the figure including oil grew 6.8 percent.

As reported, the country's non-oil GDP reached 1.57 quadrillion rials (about \$37.5 billion) in the mentioned three months.

The SCI data indicated that the country's inflation rate was 36.4 percent in the mentioned time span.

Q2 non-oil GDP growth stands at 3.3%: SCI

TEHRAN- Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) excluding oil grew 3.3 percent in the second quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (June 22 – September 22, 2021) compared

From page 1 ► Some analysts say the timing of the deal is to perhaps try and influence the duration of the terms in the ongoing talks in Vienna between Iran and the P4+1 group – Britain, France, Russia, China, and Germany to revive the Iran Nuclear Deal. The U.S. delegation is also in Vienna but does not negotiate directly with Iran or sit at the negotiating table because Washington withdrew from the accord under former President Donald Trump.

That means mediators go back and forth with messages from the negotiating table and the very nearby location of the American delegates.

Israel vehemently and regularly voices its disapproval at the negotiations let alone any lasting agreement. This is while Iran's lead negotiator in the Austrian capital, Ali Bagheri Kani among the other party's envoys, have reported some good progress during the latest round of talks aimed at removing the illegal and unilateral American sanctions on Iran in exchange for Iran returning to the set of retaliatory steps it took away from the deal in several stages in line with its legal contractual rights under the agreement.

However, other analysts say the deal to send helicopters and refueling planes will not have any impact on the talks, but rather satisfy Israel's (alleged) military superiority in the region.

After all, U.S. envoys have been shuffling from Washington to Tel Aviv, over the past month or two, more times than mediators have been shuffling between Iranian and the American delegations in Vienna.

What is surprising is the silence of the other parties to the nuclear deal of advanced offensive military aircrafts being sent to the source of instability and terror in West Asia.

When Iran made technological advances last week by sending three research devices with the aim of reaching orbit, another milestone in the country's space research program. The West made a lot of noise.

So, when it comes to peaceful space research, the U.S. State Department said, "The United States remains concerned with Iran's development of space launch vehicles, which pose a significant proliferation concern." Germany also urged Iran to stop sending satellite launch rockets into space, while France said, "these activities are all the more regrettable as they come at a time when we are making progress in the nuclear negotiations in Vienna."

An Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman noted, "as previously

A further \$3.1bn of U.S. taxpayers' money goes to Israeli military



stated, the Islamic Republic of Iran has the right to use peaceful technologies in the path of its scientific-research development according to international standards, and in so doing, it will not await the opinions of some countries that seek to impose their dictates."

The West claims that Iran can use its indigenously made rockets to place a nuclear warhead. Critics argue the argument lacks any merit as almost every intelligence agency in the world, including that of Israel, acknowledges Tehran has no intention of seeking nuclear weapons. Its missile program is for defensive purposes.

Western parties involved in the Vienna talks (preaching about diplomacy) issued their prescript statements of condemnation of Iran's space research advancements, yet they have not said a single word denouncing Israel receiving 12 war helicopters and two more refueling planes. Diplomacy? gone out of the window when it comes to serving Israel's dangerous thirst for military hardware.

No words to even denounce the timing of the military deal is a very clear and unfortunate sign of the double standards, which analysts say they have become accustomed to the West exercising.

The first helicopters are expected to arrive in Israel in 2026, while the

refueling planes are expected to be delivered before 2025. The regime is making attempts to bring forward the delivery of the refueling planes, and reportedly wants four of these eventually.

Israeli media have of course linked the refueling planes with a military attack against Iran's nuclear facilities. Israeli warplanes have the ability to fire missiles, the regime can, for example, flatten an entire neighborhood of residential buildings in the besieged Gaza Strip to the ground but when it comes to an attack on Iran that idea or plan gets a little more complex.

For the past two decades, reports have surfaced that Israeli warplanes cannot travel roughly 2000 kilometers to reach Iran and strike its nuclear facilities. The long journey would require planes that can refuel the fighter jets which the U.S. has but has refused to carry out that mission on behalf of Israel.

The signing of the new deal has reportedly made the same headlines feature across all Israeli media and around some parts of the globe as well.

Speaking to U.S. media some current and former senior Israeli military officials and experts say that Israel lacks the ability to stage an attack that could destroy, or even significantly delay, Iran's [peaceful]

nuclear program, at least not anytime soon. One current high-ranking Israeli official told the New York Times, it would take at least two years to just prepare an attack that could cause damage to Iran's nuclear project.

Here are some (not so quick) fire questions for the sake of clarity.

Can Israeli warplanes travel from the occupied territories to Iran to target Iran's nuclear program?

No. Hence the refueling airplanes from Boeing.

Can Israel fly its jets from a country closer to Iran, that way not requiring refueling planes?

Yes. But that country hosting the Israeli jets will get a taste of Iran's missiles too.

Can Israel with the refueling planes take out Iran's nuclear facilities which are spread across the country?

No. The regime is struggling with a small called the besieged Gaza Strip.

Can Israel jets with refueling planes damage Iran's nuclear facilities?

Not according to former Israeli military intelligence officers.

Can Israel jets with refueling planes drop a bomb on an Iranian site?

No. Iran has built up advanced defense systems and radar capabilities

For argument's sake. What if an Israeli fighter jet passes the defense systems and manages to launch a strike?

The jet won't make it back to the occupied territories.

What does that mean?

Jets fly from a base or airport, an Iranian missile would have reached and destroyed that base or airport before the Israeli jet returns.

Where would that Israeli jet land?

It would need to search for the closest airport or airbase.

Like somewhere in the Persian Gulf?

Doesn't make a difference. Whoever doesn't want an airport or airbase intact can make an offer.

So why get the refueling airplanes?

Ask the American taxpayers first. Any Israeli attack would need a green light from Washington.

If you want to know about the nature of Iran's retaliatory attacks and the precision of Iranian missiles that can travel up to 2000 kilometers and strike the intended target, Iraq's Ain al-Assad in the aftermath of the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani is a good example.

Costly Saudi weapons are no match for indigenous Yemeni capabilities

TEHRAN – Billions of dollars spent by Saudi Arabia on cutting edge Western military hardware mainly designed to deter high altitude attacks have proved no match for ballistic missiles and combat unmanned aerial vehicles that Yemeni armed forces have domestically developed and manufactured, a report says.

The report on Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network said Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a devastating military campaign against Yemen on March 26, 2015, spuriously claiming they would emerge victorious within months.

But more than six years after the onset of the war, Yemen has become a quagmire for Riyadh, and the kingdom has suffered enormous military and economic losses, which are estimated to stand at billions of dollars.

Despite massive efforts by Saudi media outlets to cover up the extent of damage caused to the country as a result of the military aggression against Yemen, the spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree once stated in a news conference that more than 10,400 Saudi soldiers have been killed and wounded in action.

Saree noted that 400 Saudi troops were killed and wounded throughout last year.

Moreover, at least 22,615 Saudi-sponsored Takfiri militants loyal to Yemen's former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi have been killed and wounded in battles with Yemeni army troops and their allied fighters



from Popular Committees.

Yemeni army soldiers and their allies have also managed to destroy more than 14,527 armored vehicles, tanks, personnel carriers and bulldozers belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition.

Yemeni forces have fired 1348 homegrown ballistic missiles at military sites and strategic facilities deep inside Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the report said, pointing to the attack on the kingdom's major production centers at Ras Tanoura, owned by state-controlled oil firm Saudi Aramco, in early March 2021.

While most of the Yemeni ballistic missiles have struck their designated targets inside Saudi Arabia, dozens have been intercepted and destroyed by Saudi defense systems. This means the Riyadh regime has had to spend huge sums of money to activate the systems for incoming missiles.

Al-Mayadeen highlighted that Yemeni air defense units downed as many as 20 Saudi unmanned aerial vehicles in 2021.

Yemeni army soldiers and Popular Committees fighters also shot down 11 US-built Boeing Insitu ScanEagle spy drones, a US-made MQ-9 Reaper drone, four Chinese-made CH-4 combat drones, two Chinese-made Chengdu Wing Loong drones and two Turkish-made Karayel reconnaissance drones.

The Boeing Insitu ScanEagle is a small, long-endurance, low-altitude unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) built by Insitu, a subsidiary of Boeing, and is used for reconnaissance. Each ScanEagle system reportedly costs US\$3.2 million.

The General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle is said to cost some \$11 million apiece.

The CH-4 drone has a range of 3,500 to 5,000 kilometers and a 30- to 40-hour endurance. It is capable of carrying six missiles and a payload of up to 250 to 345 kilograms.

The UAV can fire air-to-ground missiles from

an altitude of 5,000 meters, enabling it to stay out of the effective range of most anti-aircraft guns. It has price tags around \$1 million.

Additionally, Yemeni Armed Forces and their allies, using domestically-manufactured drones and ballistic missiles, carried out 62 large-scale operations against strategic and military targets deep inside Saudi Arabia last year.

According to the al-Mayadeen report, the sites came under attack across the kingdom, including the capital Riyadh, the southern border regions of Jizan, Najran and 'Asir, as well as the Red Sea port city of Jeddah.

The report said Yemeni forces conducted 29 aerial raids on King Khalid Air Base near Khamis Mushait, eight strikes against military aircraft hangars at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, plus ten attacks against Saudi Aramco-owned oil facilities in Jeddah, Riyadh, Jizan, Najran and Ras Tanoura.

Al-Mayadeen said Saudi Arabia is believed to have purchased approximately \$63 billion worth of Western military hardware since the beginning of the Yemen war, of which \$28.4 billion has been spent on arms purchases from the United States. Twenty deals, estimated to cost \$1.2 billion, were just struck last year with President Joe Biden's administration.

According to a report previously published by Foreign Policy magazine, Saudi Arabia used to pay \$300 million a day to rent two warships escorting six vessels involved in the Yemeni war.

Each of the warships housed 6,000 marines, as well as 450 military aircraft and pilots. The ships were equipped with artillery and long-range missile systems, which cost Saudi Arabia \$54 billion to lease both ships and submarines within six months.

The cost of analyzing information and extracting images and data from military satellites is said to be at around \$10 million a day, meaning that Saudi Arabia spends \$300 million a month and \$1.8 billion in six months for the purpose.

The cost of using AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) is estimated to hover around \$250,000 per hour, meaning it costs \$6 million per day, \$180 million per month and \$1.80 billion in six months.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has spent \$150,000 for each short-range missile, \$300,000 for medium-sized missiles apiece and \$500,000 for large-range missiles. It also spends another \$150,000 for the maintenance of military aircraft after every airstrike.

The al-Mayadeen report further highlighted that Saudi Arabia's budget for 2022 has contracted by more than 10 percent compared to the preceding year, as Riyadh intends to allocate 171 billion Saudi riyals to military expenditure. This figure hit 190 billion rials in 2021.

Saudi Arabia, backed by the United States and regional allies, launched the war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing Hadi's government back to power and crushing the popular Ansarullah resistance movement.

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

Despite heavily-armed Saudi Arabia's incessant bombardment of the impoverished country, the Yemeni armed forces and the Popular Committees have grown steadily in strength against the Saudi-led invaders and left Riyadh and its allies bogged down in the country.

Chomsky: U.S. moving towards fascism

Renowned American scholar and political activist Noam Chomsky has warned that the United States is moving towards fascism with massive social collapse and class warfare, criticizing the Republican Party for its complicity in the process.

He made the remarks in an interview with Democracy Now, an hour-long American TV, radio and internet news program, published on Thursday.

Chomsky said the Republican Party is "marching" the world to destruction by ignoring the climate emergency.

"The Republican Party, under Trump, and his minions — he basically owns the party — they have been in the lead of trying to destroy the prospects for organized human life on Earth, not just unilaterally pulling out of the Paris Agreement, but acting with enthusiasm to maximize fossil fuel use, to dismantle the systems that somewhat mitigated their effects, denial of what's happening, reaching a huge number of loyal almost worshipers, partly through their media system, in other ways," he added.

"When the United States is the most powerful, important country in world history, when it races to the precipice, has an impact on others. Other things that are happening are bad enough, but with the United States in the lead and marching to destruction, the future is very dim. And it's our responsibility here to control it, to terminate it, to turn the country back to sanity — don't even like to say "back" — turn it to sanity on these issues, before it's too late."

He also said that the Republicans are 100% opposed to allowing what their own constituents very much approve of while managing the propaganda system so that their constituents don't even know about it.

In reality, he noted, neoliberalism translates as bitter class war contrary to what it means in the

dictionary.

"Well, we have been through a 40-year, 45-year assault on the general population within the framework of what's called neoliberalism. And it's had a very serious impact. There are even some measures of it. So, the RAND Corporation, super respectable, did a study recently of the, what they politely call, transfer of wealth from the lower 90% of the population — that's working-class and middle-class — the transfer of wealth from them to the very rich during the last 40 years. Their estimate is on the order of \$50 trillion. They call it transfer of wealth. We should call it robbery," Chomsky explained.

"CEO salaries, management salaries have skyrocketed. A large part, probably a majority, of the population by now is basically surviving paycheck to paycheck, very little in reserve. If they have a health problem or something else, they're in deep trouble, especially with the lack of social support in the country."

The US professor further said it is "very possible" that Donald Trump will become US president again.

"The Republican strategy, which I described, has been successful: Do as much damage as you can to the country, blame it on the Democrats, develop all sorts of fanciful tales about the hideous things that the communists, the Democrats, are doing to your children, to the society, in a country which is subjected to social collapse, to atomization, to lack of organized ability to respond in ideas and actions that can be successful. And we're seeing it right now. So, yes, it's very possible that the denialist party will come back into power, that Trump will be back, or someone like him, and then we'll be simply racing to the precipice," he added.

"As far as fascism is concerned, there are some analysts, very astute and knowledgeable ones, who say we're actually moving towards actual fascism.

My own feeling is, I would prefer to call it a kind of proto-fascism, where many of the symptoms of fascism are quite apparent — resort to violence, the belief that violence is necessary. A large part of the Republican Party, I think maybe 30 or 40%, say that violence may be necessary to save our country from the people who are trying to destroy it, the Democrat villains who are doing all these hideous things that are fed into their ears. And we see it in armed militias."

Meanwhile, Chomsky described as a coup the January 6, 2021 deadly riots at the US Capitol, which the Republicans have been accused of fomenting.

Trump supporters attacked the Capitol after hearing him give a speech on election fraud in the 2020 presidential race.

"January 6th was an example of — these are people from basically petit bourgeois, moderately affluent Middle America circles, not — there were some militia types among them who really feel that it's necessary to carry out a coup to save the country. They were trying to carry out a coup to undermine an elected government — it's called a coup — and came unfortunately close. Luckily, the — and they're now taking — the Republican Party is now taking sophisticated measures to try to ensure that the next time around, it will succeed," he said.

"Notice they are treating the January 6th coup activists as heroes: 'They were trying to save America.' These are signs of massive social collapse, which show up concretely in the fact that people literally do not have enough financial reserves to put themselves through a crisis. And, of course, it's much worse when you go to really deprived communities. Like, household wealth among Blacks is almost nothing. They're in severe problems."

(Source: Press TV)

Archaeological expedition finds 50 historical sites, relics in Isfahan



From page 1 ► The Shahrestan Bridge, which spans the Zayandeh River a short distance southeast of the city, dates from the Sasanian era; the piers are, however, all that remains of the original structure, the upper part having often been rebuilt. After the Arab conquest in 642, the city came to be known by the regional name Isfahan. Under the Arabs, it served as the capital of Al-Jibal (“the Mountains”) province, an area that covered much of ancient Media.

Isfahan grew prosperous under the Persian Buyid (Buwayhid) dynasty, which rose to power and ruled much of Iran when the temporal authority of the ?Abbasid caliphs waned in the 10th century.

Toghril Beg, the Turkish conqueror and founder of the Seljuq dynasty, made Isfahan the capital of his domains in the mid-11th

century, and under his famous grandson Malik-Shah I (reigned 1073–92) the city grew in size and splendor.

After the fall of the Seljuks (c. 1200), Isfahan temporarily declined and was eclipsed by other Iranian cities such as Tabriz and Qazvin, but it regained its preeminent position during the Safavid period (1501–1736). The city’s golden age began in 1598 when the Safavid ruler ?Abbas I (the Great; reigned 1588–1629) made it his capital and rebuilt it into one of the largest and most beautiful cities of the 17th century.

According to Britannica, a French Huguenot jeweler and writer, Jean Chardin, spent 10 years in Isfahan between 1664 and 1677 and in his Voyages gave a detailed and graphic description of the city as it was at its zenith. It then had, he said, 162 mosques, 273 public baths, 1,802 caravansaries, and 48 madrasahs (religious colleges).

Isfahan was a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy during the 16th and 17th centuries, and now it is one of Iran’s top tourist destinations for good reasons. It is a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

Exceptional water reservoir undergoes urgent restoration

TEHRAN – Cultural heritage experts have commenced an urgent restoration project on an exceptional Ab-Anbar in central Iran. The underground water reservoir is of high importance in the realm of traditional Persian architecture as it is surmounted by seven mudbrick wind towers.

“The Ab-Anbar of Hosseinabad is one of the unique water reservoirs in the country as it has two tanks, two separate entrances, and seven wind towers,” a local tourism official said on Thursday.

The entire traditional structure is made of bricks, raw adobe, plaster, and sarooj, the official noted.

Such underground cisterns are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains. Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in

desert areas with an arid climate.

In the times of yore and harsh desert climates and no electricity, the Persians had to devise a way to store and keep water cool.

The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs by the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

With its winding lanes, a forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring to as a ‘don’t miss’ destination by almost all travel associates in the region. Yazd is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains.

Underground city added to national heritage list

TEHRAN – The underground city of Sefidshahr, along with six other properties across Isfahan province, has recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced the inscriptions on Saturday in separate letters to the governor-general of the central province, CHTN reported.

Khajeh Naein, Tehranchi, and Prvaresh mansions as well as Yavari Castle, Ahmad Khan Garden, and Sefidshahr Crypt were also added to the

prestigious list.

Such underground cities which can be found in almost every corner of the country are a distinctive kind of troglodytic architecture. Inhabitants would dig underground chambers as hideout spots for women, children, and the elderly to cope with infrequent attacks by foreign invaders.

Soaked in a rich history and culture, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran. Now, it is one of Iran’s top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city is filled with many architectural



wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It’s a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its ‘life-giving river’, the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan’s Islamic buildings, and the city’s majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling

hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning “Image of the World”), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Built in the early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.

Gateway to once Sassanid capital restored

TEHRAN – A team of cultural heritage experts has restored a stone gateway that once ushered people to Istakhr, the first capital of the mighty Sasanian Empire from 224 to 226 CE.

Istakhr (also spelled Estakhr) is located in the vicinity of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550–330 BC).

The tall stone gateway, which sits next to the remains of the city’s historical mosque, is one of the landmarks of ancient the city, CHTN quoted Hamid Fadaei, the director of the World Heritage site, as saying on Saturday.

While the stone texture has been restored over the past decade, maintaining the protection of the gate for many years has been one of the most basic restoration requirements in this historic site, the official added.

In the first step of the restoration project, the team documented various aspects of the stone gate, and the images recorded the extent of the damage, he noted.

After classifying the damages according to their type, origin, and severity, a final protection plan was prepared, he explained.



Appropriate restoration and preservation strategies were considered, and the project was completed successfully, he mentioned.

The ancient city of Istakhr was the seat of local governments and a royal residence of Persian kings during the Sassanid era. Moreover, it acquired importance as a center of priestly wisdom and orthodoxy.

Istakhr rose to fame when Ardashir I, the founder of the Sasanian Empire, chose it as his residence in 224 CE when the Persian nobleman dethroned a lawful ruler in Persia, Artabanus IV, king of the Parthian Empire.

The builders of Istakhr often reused architectural elements from

the monuments of Persepolis. The Achaemenid royal tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam are not far from Istakhr too.

Istakhr remained popular after the fall of Sassanids by Arab innovators. According to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the geographer Istakhri wrote that in the tenth century, its houses were built of clay, stone, or gypsum according to the wealth of their owners.

Furthermore, Istakhr has yielded many magnificent relics so far. An ancient trash pit at Istakhr proved to be a very valuable source of finds. According to archaeological sources, the entire site is perforated by several sewage or storage wellholes. The holes are often “locked” by caps of brick or stone, and therefore an approximately contemporaneous mixture of broken and discarded pots, personal ornaments, stone and bronze objects, and a large number of coins was preserved in them.

Today, Istakhr is nothing but a plain full of shreds, scattered architectural remains, and a few ruins. The walled-in area measured 1,400 by 650 meters and was surrounded by a ditch that was connected to a nearby river.

Fam tour ushers Iraqis to neighboring Iranian province



TEHRAN – On Saturday, a group of Iraqi travelers commenced a two-day familiarization tour across Kermanshah province, a local tourism official has announced.

The group entered the neighboring Iranian province through land borders today, Ali Saber said on Saturday.

The group is scheduled to visit historical and cultural sites, and then they continue their excursions to Bandar Abbas and Qeshm Island in southern Iran, he noted.

Because Kermanshah province shares a border with both the Arab and Kurdish parts of Iraq, there is an expectation that more tours will come from this country, he mentioned.

Last month, the province hosted a fam tour dedicated to Iraqi travel insiders, resulting in the organization of a tour just for Iraqi tourists, the official said.

“The province offers a special capacity for Iraqi tourists, particularly in the field of health tourism, which travel agencies should consider.”

Earlier this year the two neighbors agreed to abolish visa requirements for air travelers. The

announcement came after Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi met in Tehran, discussing various issues including visa waiver, a joint railway project, and increasing the level of trade.

Many domestic experts believe that medical tourism in Iran is a win-win opportunity both for the country and foreign patients, as they are offered affordable yet quality treatment services and the country gains considerable foreign currency.

Kermanshah embraces a variety of awe-inspiring historical sites including Taq-e Bostan and the UNESCO-registered Bisotun.

Inscribed into the base of a towering cliff, Taq-e Bostan comprises extraordinary Sassanian bas-reliefs of ancient victorious kings divide opinions. Late afternoon is the best time to visit, as the cliff turns a brilliant orange in the setting sun, which then dies poetically on the far side of the duck pond. Bisotun is a patchwork of immense yet impressive life-size carvings depicting king Darius I and several other figures. UNESCO has it that Bisotun bears outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing, reflecting ancient traditions in monumental bas-reliefs.

Another popular historical site of the province is the Temple of Anahita in the city of Kangavar, which is believed to have been built circa 200 BC. Several column bases and ruins of a wall remain from the magnificent Greek-style temple. The temple was used during the Parthian era (248 BC–224) as well as the Sassanid era (224–651).

Ecotourism in Iran: opportunities and challenges

(Part 2/2)

TEHRAN – Other Iranian wildlife attractions that can be targeted by nature lovers include Persian zebra, Persian yellow deer, Asian cheetah (rarely seen), Persian squirrel, bottlenose dolphin, humpback dolphin, purpura, turtles Sea urchins, short-nosed crocodiles (gando), and a variety of fish associated with coral reefs.

Threats and challenges of ecotourism in Iran

In general, the main challenges of ecotourism in the country can be expressed as follows:

- The lack of proper infrastructure structures such as transportation routes, health services, lack of signposts and providing tourist information, medical centers, and welfare and tourism service centers throughout the country.

- Worn-out and insufficient facilities in the country’s public transport fleet, especially for proper transportation in the tourism industry.

- Lack of proper marketing and advertising in the global tourism market to attract foreign tourists to the country

- Lack of necessary support for those involved in the tourism industry, especially ecotourism and adverse macro-management in the country’s tourism industry.

- Strict security view of foreign tourists and the lack of visa issuance

- Occurrence of social and cultural problems between the host community and tourists due to lack of proper planning for tourism development, especially ecotourism.

- Lack of priority for the development of the tourism industry in the macroeconomic development policies of the country by the country’s politicians and decision-makers.

- Lack of understanding of the true value of ecotourism attractions by the local community from the perspective of sustainable development.

- Lack of preparation of a comprehensive atlas of ecotourism areas and natural attractions in the country.

Suggestions and strategies for ecotourism development

Economically, ecotourism causes prosperity and development of areas with natural attractions, and this provides a good ground for the development and progress of these areas. Therefore, to remove the existing obstacles and develop ecotourism in Iran, it seems that the following items will be effective in the development of ecotourism in the country:

- Marketing management based

on information technology and extensive advertising in the global tourism market to attract tourists by participating in exhibitions, conferences, and content production for tourism marketing.

- Supporting the creation and development of businesses related to the tourism industry, especially ecotourism

- Participation of local people in decision-making and implementation of ecotourism programs and equitable distribution of income from ecotourism among local communities.

- Proper and wise management and planning for tourism development according to the social and cultural considerations of the host community and also the priority to protect the environment.

- Prioritizing the development of the tourism industry, especially ecotourism, taking into account the principles of sustainable development in the country’s macro-policies and land management.

- Public education and awareness and participation of all tourism stakeholders in tourism development planning.

- Necessary support and facilities for those involved in the tourism industry and continuous monitoring of their activities.

- Creating and strengthening

appropriate infrastructure for the development of the tourism industry by attracting investors.

- Establishing and implementing progressive laws and regulations in the field of tourism, especially ecotourism, as well as preparing comprehensive and detailed nature tourism plans in Iran.

- Using the capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the local community in managing the country’s tourism industry with government interaction.

- Establishing diplomacy and developing appropriate relations with other countries to attract tourists, taking into account the protection of national interests and security of the country.

- Preparing a comprehensive atlas of ecotourism and natural attractions of the country by mentioning the appropriate timing of tourism and its necessary permits.

- Preparation of a comprehensive eco-tourism plan of the four environmental areas by specifying the zones of residence, visit, etc.

- Providing insurance to support natural tourists, especially in the field of adventure tourism.

(Edited excerpts from a full article compiled by Iranian researchers Seyed Amir Mahmoud Mojabi and Sahand Dabiri)

Iran criticizes intl. community’s silence over martyrdom of anti-smuggling police forces

TEHRAN – Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary-general of the High Council for Human Rights, has criticized international bodies’ silence over the martyrdom of Iran’s police forces in the fight against criminals and armed smugglers.

In a letter to Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Gharibabadi asked her to make countries and organizations uphold their responsibilities against the elements that compromise the peace, stability and security of the people.

Referring to the martyrdom of 40 of Iran’s police forces from March 21 to December 3, 2021, in the fight against criminals and armed smugglers equipped with all kinds of smart weapons and heavy equipment, he said “The Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted a principled policy in the fight against all types of trafficking (drugs, human beings, goods, etc.) and has been one of the most successful countries in the world in these areas. Reliable reports and documents published by relevant international organizations verify this clear and successful record.



SHANA PHOTO
Hossein Hosseini

It goes without saying that the national will of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the continuation of the above humanitarian policy has incurred heavy financial and human costs to my country, including, among others, the martyrdom of more than 3800 thousand individuals and the injury of more than 12 thousand people of our law enforcement forces only in the field of counter-narcotic plans.

Although the actions of the Islamic Republic have been acknowledged by the international community and

most countries in the world, unfortunately not only it has not received the necessary cooperation and support of other countries which is still the case, but also the paltry assistance offered by international organizations in most cases face politically-motivated excuses and selective, arbitrary treatments of some countries.”

Noting ‘numerous statements by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or Special Procedures in support of some criminals who have been tried in a fair trial, he asked that “the big question arises

as to why not a single statement is issued condemning the terrorist and armed acts against the law enforcement forces of a country that has rendered the greatest services to the international community through the fight against drug trafficking, human trafficking, and organized crime?”

“I expect you to prove the reason to be of that important international mechanism by promoting its identity and standing and counter the instrumental, politicized, and selective approach in the field of human rights. Apart from condemning illegal and unilateral sanctions against the Iranian people, especially in providing the necessary equipment for the police forces in their unequal campaign against terrorist groups and international traffickers, as well as condemning the martyrdom of law enforcement personnel by these groups and traffickers and expressing sympathy with their families, you are expected to make countries and organizations uphold their responsibilities against the elements that compromise the peace, stability, and security of the people.”

“Breathing plan”: a savior to old trees, endangered forests



TEHRAN – A plan, called “breathing,” that banned any wood exploitation in endangered forests, has halted the cutting down of at least 550,000 cubic meters of forests annually or completely stopped the process.

In January 2017 in line with the laws regulating all aspects of policymaking and project management with regard to environmental factors Majlis [Iranian parliament] prohibited any exploitation of endangered forest by the fourth year of implementing the sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021).

According to the law, exploitation of forests for commercial and industrial purposes was planned to be brought to a halt by 2020. By that time all exploitation contracts have been expired and none has been renewed.

Annually, 550,000 cubic meters of forests were harvested from the northern forests before the implementation of the plan, which was equal to about one-thirteenth of the needs of the country’s industry, which has now been greatly reduced or completely stopped.

Iran’s intl. laboratory network cooperating with 7 countries

From page 1 ► in laboratory services, interlaboratory comparisons, training, standardization, renovation, and other projects of mutual interest.

It has introduced national laboratory capabilities to other countries by displaying 412 pieces of laboratory equipment.

Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mozambique are the countries collaborating with Iran in the network.

Technology diplomacy

In January 2021, Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science

and technology, said the country was planning to boost ‘technology diplomacy’ through expanding innovation and technology centers in export target countries.

Knowledge-based companies are seriously collaborating with the ministry of foreign affairs to expand target markets, IRNA quoted Sattari as saying.

Currently, some 6,000 knowledge-based companies are active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large

Natural habitat forests are useful, which according to the United Nations definition, forests provide more than 33 types of non-tradable services (that cannot be easily valued in the world economic system).

One of the most important services that forests provide to ecosystems is the production of oxygen. The next service is carbon sequestration, climate change adaptation, and increasing the air heat capacity, which reduces the temperature difference between day and night, thus reducing the crops’ water consumption.

Forests are the most important factor for the reproduction of biodiversity, which is the most important source of food supply for wildlife and maintaining the quality of the ecosystem.

According to forest experts, dense and quality forests store about 2500 cubic meters of water per hectare, so northern forests of the country are able to store 3.6 billion cubic meters of water annually.

Unfortunately, forests have been taken for granted in the country, as 6 million hectares of forests have been depleted since the 1330s (1950s) when there has been a total of 18 million hectares of forest, which today has decreased to 12 million hectares.

Currently, 1.6 million hectares of the northern forests remain in the country, which was 3.5 million hectares in the 1330s, so 2 million hectares of forest areas have undergone deforestation.

Half of the existing Hyrcanian forests are also deforested. In the Zagros, 30 percent of the forests have been exposed to complete depletion and we have lost 15 million oaks in the last two decades.

Iran’s forest area is approximately 12 million hectares with 0.2 hectares per capita, which is one-quarter of the world average, so attention to preserving the forest areas must be four times the global attention.

The implementation of the forest breathing plan has definitely had an effect on improving the condition of the country’s forests. Before that, thousands of trucks were logging timber from forest

areas, which had started two years ago, amounting to two million cubic meters per year, which decreased to 500,000 to 600,000 cubic meters in recent years, Hadi Kia Daliri, secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity explained.

It also caused the economic view to wood production changes to consider ecology and ecosystem, he added.

Since the 1330s (1950s), there has been a total of 18 million hectares of forest in the country, which today has decreased to 12 million hectares.



the great capacities in this area.

Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, as well as developing African countries are the main target markets for the export of technical and engineering services.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Hospital beds capacity rises to improve medical system

Health Minister Saeed Namaki inaugurated 23 health centers, including 201 hospital beds, in Lorestan, Kermanshah, and Khuzestan provinces on Tuesday.

Built on 26,935 square meters area, the centers were constructed with a budget of 2.9 trillion rials (nearly \$70 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

The Ministry of Health is scheduled to add 10,600 hospital beds to the capacity of the country’s medical system within the next 7 months.

Two years ago, there were a total of 140,859 beds in the country, which means 1.7 hospital beds per 1,000 population.

افزایش ظرفیت تخت های بیمارستانی

سعید نمکی وزیر بهداشت امروز به صورت مجازی ۲۳ مرکز بهداشتی و درمانی را شامل ۲۰۱ تخت بیمارستانی در استان های لرستان، کرمانشاه و خوزستان افتتاح کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، این مراکز در زیربنای ۲۶ هزار و ۹۳۵ مترمربع و با اعتباری بالغ بر ۲۹۸۰ میلیارد ریال ساخته شده است. وزارت بهداشت قرار است تا ۱۲ فروردین سال ۱۴۰۰ و ۶۰۰ تخت بیمارستانی به ظرفیت بیمارستان های کشور اضافه کند.

در انتهای سال ۱۳۹۷ مجموعاً ۱۴۰ هزار و ۸۵۹ تخت فعال در کشور فعال بود که اگر این میزان را به ازای جمعیت محاسبه کنیم، ضریب تعداد جمعیت به تخت مان، ۱.۷ تخت به ازای هر ۱۰۰۰ نفر است.

SOCIETY

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Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

7

IRCS expands activity in border areas to contain Omicron

TEHRAN – The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has enhanced its presence on the land, air, and sea borders to detect infected passengers and quarantine those with Omicron symptoms, IRIB reported on Saturday.

Passengers entering Iran must have a certificate of two doses of the vaccine, a negative test valid for 48 to 72 hours from the date of notification. In case of any symptoms or test positive, they will be quarantined for 14 days at personal expense.

The IRCS has been active in the field of vaccination, and has so far imported over 12 million doses of coronavirus vaccine to the country.

Since March 10, 2021, the IRCS with the cooperation of ministries of health and transport, is implementing a plan with the goal of rapidly identifying and testing incoming passengers and keeping them in quarantine facilities, if necessary; in order to prevent the spread of new strains.

A total of 471 members of the IRCS cooperate for carrying out the plan in 16 provinces across the country.

Thirty border checkpoints have been selected, including 18 land borders, nine air borders, and three sea borders, all incoming passengers will be tested and referred to the quarantine facilities in case of necessity.

Omicron and banned flights

On August 22, 2021, Iran announced that all travelers must have a negative PCR test certificate or a health card to enter the country during the Covid-19 pandemic, IRINN reported.

By the emergence of the highly contagious Omicron variant, countries are adopting new regulations to prevent the transmission of the variant, so that Iran’s National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control on November 27 banned ar-



rivals from the African countries.

So far, 43 cases of omicrons have been identified in the country and Tehran recorded the highest number of infections.

There are no direct flights from Iran to South Africa and travelers are not allowed to enter Iran, Iranians who want to travel must also be quarantined at the border to have two negative PCR tests.

Foreign tourists must buy coronavirus insurance from authorized companies when entering the country, and if they suffer from the pandemic in Iran, they will be provided with a place and treatment for 14 days.

Inbound passengers must have coronavirus insurance, which differs from the routine insurance coverage purchased by all tourists before the coronavirus era.

On December 25, 2021, Health Minister Bahram Einollahi said that the rapid spread of Omicron may pose serious threats to the country although he insisted that authorities had identified few cases infected with the variant.

Einollahi said that Iran has two “golden weeks” to expand booster vaccination coverage to more people in order to prevent a potential explosion in the number of infections with Omicron in early January.

Opportunities and threats facing Earth’s biodiversity

(Part 2)

Nitrogen boom?

The pursuit of alternative transport fuels has taken many twists and turns, all with ancillary costs as well as benefits. Recent attention has turned to ammonia as a fuel for shipping. It can power fuel cells or engines. It has almost double the energy density of hydrogen, and poses fewer issues in terms of storing and transporting fuel to where it’s needed. The problem? Ammonia takes lots of energy to produce and can cause environmental harm if not burned completely. As interest in ammonia fuel grows, the authors caution against false claims of it being a “zero carbon” fuel and point out potential downsides, such as increased air pollution, that might accrue from its use.

Airborne DNA detection

Increasingly sophisticated tools for detecting and identifying DNA are able to pinpoint the presence – or even past presence – of all kinds of organisms from bits of their genetic material floating through the air. This capability opens the door to a wide range of conservation-assisting endeavours, from characterising the members of a particular ecological community and locating

rare or endangered species, to tracking the expansion of the range of invasive organisms and nailing perpetrators of the illegal wildlife trade. So-called “eDNA” bio-monitoring is already in use for detecting the presence of micro-organisms, plants and fungi, and it appears to be feasible for tracking some animals as well. As the technology expands, so will its applications to efforts to understand and protect biodiversity.

Refrigerant redux

Widespread efforts have taken place in recent decades to reduce the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in air conditioners, refrigerators and other cooling systems because of their capacity to contribute to global warming. Unfortunately, one of the top replacement chemicals, hydrofluoroolefins (HFOs), appear to have plenty of environmental issues of their own. They form chemicals that pollute water and air as they decompose, and some produce potent greenhouse gases. Environmental contamination with this long-lasting HFC substitute appears to be on the rise. Unless regulation of the deployment and decommissioning of refrigerants improves quickly and dramatically, we risk further contributing to climate change with a shift in practice intended to help reduce its risks.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 1

New cases	1,002
New deaths	32
Total cases	6,195,403
Total deaths	131,639
New hospitalized patients	222
Patients in critical condition	2,676
Total recovered patients	6,039,171
Diagnostic tests conducted	42,078,937
Doses of vaccine injected	119,686,241

