

Report



Insurrection reflects slide to civil war, lack of democracy in U.S.

This time last year, Americans were still suffering aftershocks following a vicious attack on Capitol Hill by an angry crowd of former President Donald Trump's supporters.

Indeed a U.S. President was and still is convinced that he won the election, that the vote was rigged and the election was an illegitimate one which he, his supporters and a considerable chunk of the Republican Party do not recognize.

Even Americans themselves, if they hadn't before, have now lost faith in their country's election integrity. That's according to a new ABC/Ipsos poll which reveals that only 20 percent of the American public are very confident about their election system.

Among Republican supporters, the number is even lower, just 13 percent are very confident in their country's elections. The research finds that also among Republican voters a considerable majority of 59 percent have little faith in the system, saying they are either "not so confident" or "not confident at all".

The poll also asks Americans to sum up in one word the last U.S. presidential election; with an overwhelming majority responding with critical terms like treason, like riot, such as chaos, a setup and also in the top ten was disgust.

So much for American democracy.

The international community is used to hearing such kinds of allegations by Washington being leveled against other countries, who oppose American hegemony. Allegations by the U.S. that essentially seek to undermine a real democratic process being held elsewhere; but in essence, this time, the chickens have come home to roost.

Analysts say what America tries to commit overseas with its regime change policy took place back at home one year ago.

The country has never been so polarized; headlines in America have been dominated with fears of another civil war on the horizon.

Recent research has backed up what experts have been saying about the looming prospects of a civil war. Studies have found 80% of President Joe Biden's voters and 84% of former President Trump's voters view elected officials from the other party as presenting a clear and present danger to "American Democracy". ▶ Page 3

Report



Iranian Foreign Ministry: We are ready to negotiate on Ukrainian plane incident

TEHRAN — On Friday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry released a statement announcing that the Islamic Republic is ready to negotiate with the countries that lost nationals in the tragic Ukrainian passenger plane accident near Tehran on January 8, 2020.

The Iranian military mistook the plane for an invading missile. The tragic mistake happened five days after Iran attacked a U.S. military base in western Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of Iranian Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

176 people, including 82 Iranians, 63 Iranian-Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals, were killed on board.

The Foreign Ministry, while extending its condolences to the families of the victims, said it considers it necessary to make the following known to the public:

Following the accident, the relevant institutions in Iran, by announcing the main cause of the accident performed their duties with accuracy, transparency and speed and in accordance with domestic laws and international obligations. ▶ Page 2



Bringing Humanities to Life

▶ Pages 5-6

Domestic producers able to meet 95% of oil industry's technological needs

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji has said domestic producers are currently supplying over 70 percent of the oil industry's needed equipment, adding that this figure can increase to 95 percent, Shana reported.

Speaking in a meeting with the representatives of the country's oil and gas equipment manufacturers, Oji said: "Currently, a major part of the equipment and parts needed by all sectors (upstream and down-

stream) are supplied by domestic manufacturers."

The minister noted that various meetings have been held with domestic executors and contractors to ensure the implementation of the oil industry projects, adding: "We have also had several meetings with members of parliament about the next year's budget bill, because since most of the budget funding comes from the oil industry we have to pay close attention to it"



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Funeral ceremony held for 150 unknown martyrs

TEHRAN — A funeral procession was held for 150 anonymous martyrs of the Sacred Defense in Tehran. A large crowd attended the funeral.

In that regard, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei penned a message on Thursday. ▶ Page 2

Persepolis, Esteghlal, Gol Gohar ineligible to participate at 2022 ACL

TEHRAN – Three Iranian football clubs Persepolis, Esteghlal and Gol Gohar are not eligible to participate at the AFC Champions League 2022.

The clubs are not allowed to take part in this edition after failed to satisfy all of the mandatory criteria.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC)'s independent Entry Control Body (ECB) has decided to withdraw the license of Persepolis, Esteghlal and Gol Gohar (all clubs from Iran) to participate in the AFC Champions

League 2022 pursuant to Articles 14.4 and 14.5 of the AFC Club Licensing Regulations (read together with Article 4.1.4 of the Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body). Asian Football Confederation wrote in its statement.

The ECB determined that the three clubs had not satisfied all of the mandatory criteria (as required under Articles 3.1 and 3.2 (a) of the AFC Club Licensing Regulations) and, accordingly, should not have been granted licenses to participate in the AFC Champions

The indigenization and domestic production of oil and gas industry equipment have been always among the objectives of the Iranian Oil Ministry. However, the issue became further highlighted since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions and Washington's determination for cutting off the Islamic Republic's ties with the world advances in knowledge and technology, especially in the oil and gas sector. ▶ Page 4

Roadmap compiled to develop artificial intelligence

TEHRAN – The roadmap for the development of artificial intelligence (AI) was drafted after a year of scientific work with the participation of academic and industrial figures from both the public and the private sector.

The study of the national artificial intelligence development roadmap document started a year ago at the Research Institute of Information and Communication Technology, which was officially completed by the end of November this year.

The document is presented in two general sections, "application development" and "development of enablers"; Mohammad-Shahram Moein, head of innovation and development center of artificial intelligence at the Research Institute of Information and Communication Technology, said.

"In the application development section, the main goal is to use artificial intelligence in priority areas such as health. ▶ Page 8

league 2022.

Persepolis, Esteghlal, Gol Gohar have now been declared ineligible to participate in the AFC Champions League 2022.

Additionally, the ECB also rejected the extraordinary application submitted by Gol Gohar Sirjan.

The terms of the decisions were notified today. More information of the applicable procedures is set out in the Procedural Rules Governing the AFC Entry Control Body.

From Inside



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10 incredible fortresses everyone should visit while in Iran

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – A bridge between eastern and western parts of the world, Iran is home to countless ancient fortresses which draw the attention of thousands of sightseers and researchers each year.

Visitors may conjure up scenes of the past when soldiers and their commanders benefited from those fortified structures in an ever-changing world of invasion and conquest.

Forts and fortresses were normally constructed in every corner of the vast country along significant routes predominantly on heights overlooking steep slopes or cliffs.

Many of them were built using modest material such as stone, mud-brick, and mortar so that often leaving them no more than mounds of dirt for today's archaeologists.

Below, we have rounded up 10 most famous ones that are worth visiting at least once:

Qa'leh Babak

Visiting Qa'leh Babak, the ruined ramparts of the Babak fortress, is a cultural trip to the lair of 9th-century Iranian hero Babak Khorramdin who fought against Arab invaders until he died in 838 CE.

The crumbling ramparts of the fortress loom while one approaches the village of Kaleybar in East Azarbaijan province. It is a must-see as the views of the citadel and the surrounding mountains are simply breathtaking.

Occupying a cultural position somewhere between King Arthur and Robin Hood, the fortress can be reached via several access paths, though the normal route ascends stairs behind the seasonal Babak Hotel. After a short, stiff climb, the end of the stairs, and the views shine as you follow a muddy track, traversing gently to the right before climbing steeply to a hut that sells drinks in summer. Continue sidling right and ascending, and you'll eventually see the stone steps of the cleft. ▶ Page 7

Iran hopes calm will return to Kazakhstan

TEHRAN— Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh reacted to the recent unrest in Kazakhstan, expressing hope that tranquility will return to the Eurasian country.

In response to a question by journalists regarding the latest situation in Kazakhstan, Saeed Khatibzadeh said that as Tehran has reiterated time and again, stability and security of Kazakhstan is of high importance and "we hope that calm will be restored to the country as soon as possible."

Khatibzadeh added it's obvious the current developments in Kazakhstan are an internal affair but some foreign parties, by taking advantage of the situation, are seeking to stoke the unrest and destabilize the country.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman expressed confidence that the "intelligent" people and government of the "brotherly and friendly neighboring country of Kazakhstan will give an appropriate response to attempts by foreign ill-wishers."

Baghdad to host new round of Iran-Saudi talks soon: ambassador

TEHRAN – Iraj Masjedi, Iran's ambassador to Baghdad, has said Iraq will soon host the fifth round of talks between Tehran and Riyadh, Tasnim reported on Thursday.

Baghdad has so far hosted four rounds of negotiations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Calling Iran and Saudi Arabia as two countries with great potential, the ambassador said regional countries can resolve issues among themselves without paying attention to U.S. diktats.

Back in October, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said Iran and Saudi Arabia continue to advance their negotiations with the focus on bilateral and regional issues.

He said the talks between Tehran and Riyadh are in progress uninterruptedly, but the two sides have decided not to advance the negotiations publicly.

“We have held four rounds of talks with Riyadh in Baghdad. The last round was held at the time when we were in New York (for the UNGA). These contacts are now in progress uninterruptedly,” the spokesman said.

Khatibzadeh noted that the talks between the Iranian and Saudi delegations are focused on bilateral and regional issues, especially the Persian Gulf affairs.

Diplomatic relations between Tehran and Riyadh soured following the January 2016 execution of Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, an outspoken critic of the Saudi monarchy. Riyadh cut ties with Tehran afterwards, responding to attacks by angry protesters on its embassy in the Iranian capital.

All senior officials in Tehran, including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, condemned the attack on the Saudi embassy. Yet, Saudi Arabia recalled its ambassador from Tehran and expelled the Iranian ambassador from Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia's military campaign against



Yemen as well as the death of hundreds of Iranian Hajj pilgrims in a deadly crush in Saudi Arabia's Mina in September 2015 had prepared the ground for the deterioration of tensions between Tehran and Riyadh.

Iran has been a vocal critic of the Saudi-led attack on Yemen. In April 2015, then Iran's foreign minister submitted a letter to UN secretary-general outlining a four-point peace plan for Yemen. The letter was submitted three weeks after the Saudi-led air strikes on Yemen.

The plan called for an immediate ceasefire and end of all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a resumption of broad national dialogue and “establishment of an inclusive national unity government.”

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has said Iran welcomes dialogue with Persian Gulf Arab states, suggesting that Iran and these countries, including Saudi Arabia, can even establish cooperation in areas of security and defense.

“We can have close political, economic, cultural and even security and defense cooperation with each other,” Qalibaf said in an interview with al-Manar TV on the second anniversary of the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

“We have seen and will see no limit in having contacts and negotiations with Muslim and neighboring countries, whether Arab or non-Arab, and even we have not set any preconditions for negotiations with Saudi Arabia,” Qalibaf pointed out.

FM says Iran wants guarantees sanctions will not be reimposed



TEHRAN – Iran's foreign minister has said an agreement can be reached with world powers over its nuclear deal if Western parties have the will and intention to do so.

In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera broadcast on Thursday, Hossein Amir Abdollahian said an agreement could be reached if all sanctions were lifted.

An eighth round of negotiations aimed at restoring Iran's landmark 2015 nuclear deal is under way in Vienna, where Iran is still looking for guarantees that U.S. sanctions will be lifted.

The talks over the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), are taking place between Iran, Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia as signatory to the deal. The United States, which unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018, is participating in the talks indirectly.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. Iran remained fully committed to the deal one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal and imposed crippling sanctions on Iran under “maximum pressure” campaign against the Islamic Republic.

However, seeing no action by the remaining parties, particularly the Europeans, to compensate Iran for the sanctions, the Islamic Republic started to gradually remove bans on its nuclear program.

Tehran is now demanding a complete lifting

of U.S. sanctions, as well as guarantees that the U.S. will not pull out of the accord again. Iran is also seeking a period of time to verify that sanctions are effectively lifted.

“Lifting sanctions means lifting all forms of sanctions stipulated in the nuclear agreement, and the sanctions that Trump reimposed contradict the terms of the agreement,” Amir-Abdollahian told Al Jazeera.

“We demand guarantees that include not imposing any new sanctions, and not reimposing sanctions after lifting them under any pretext,” he added.

Iran's chief diplomat said the most “practical model” for this would be when it comes to Iran exporting oil and obtaining revenues through the country's own banking system.

Amir Abdollahian also said, “There's an informal and an indirect exchange of message with the Americans in Vienna – we hear good words from that delegation, but what is important to us is to see practical and serious American actions.”

Al Jazeera's Dorsa Jabbari, reporting from Vienna, said Amir Abdollahian seemed “quite optimistic.”

“The technical issues and the logistical issues they had over the agenda has been resolved,” Jabbari said.

“The foreign minister was very specific about Iran's position – he gave some very good examples of what they're looking for,” she added.

Iranian Foreign Ministry: We are ready to negotiate on Ukrainian plane incident

From page 1 ► Accordingly, in the field of aviation, the independent technical group responsible for accident investigation published a technical report of the accident within the framework of the International Aviation Convention (Chicago Convention 1944) and its annexes, with the interaction and cooperation of the relevant countries and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as well as a public statement that was welcomed by most of the countries participating in the accident investigation process.

In the field of criminal and judicial affairs of the accident, as it has been announced to the public, the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces and the Military Prosecutor's Office of Tehran, in accordance with their inherent and legal duties, have conducted the necessary criminal investigations carefully and with emphasis on justice.

So far, several hearings have been held in the presence of the families of the victims.

It should be noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has carried out the criminal and judicial process based on certain legal principles, including the principle of territorial jurisdiction of the place of the accident and the citizenship of the convicts, in compliance with the relevant laws and regulations.

Regarding efforts to condole the bereaved families and lessen their pain, the esteemed Council of Ministers, in good faith, on January 7, in a resolution, set a figure to pay to the families of victims (without any discrimination such as their nationality).

In line with the implementation of this resolution, a staff was formed in the Ministry of Transport, which has



taken the necessary measures to carry out the usual payment process and has so far made payments to a number of families in accordance with the relevant regulations.

In this regard, in a note to the embassies of the relevant governments, readiness to pay money to the survivors of 30 foreign nationals has been announced.

In the diplomatic dimension of the accident, the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomed the bilateral talks with related countries and declared its goodwill and provided the necessary

explanations on the various military, criminal, technical and legal aspects of the accident, and participated in three rounds of bilateral talks with the Ukrainian government in Kiev and Tehran.

In these negotiations, all aspects of the issue were examined in full detail by experts from both sides.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its readiness to engage with any of the relevant countries on bilateral negotiations in good faith, respect for the sovereignty of countries and domestic laws, and the international obligations of governments, in accordance with the

agreed agenda.

Meanwhile, Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi Iran's vice president and head of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, paid his respects to those who lost their lives in the Ukrainian plane accident, calling them “martyrs”.

“On the second anniversary of the tragic incident of the martyrdom of the passengers of the Ukrainian plane in one of the bitterest moments of the country, we pay tribute to the martyrs of this incident and cherish the memory of those loved

ones,” Ghazizadeh Hashemi stated.

About the measures taken to serve the families of these martyrs, he said the “loved ones” aboard the plane are classified as martyrs.

“Arrangements have been made to provide services to the survivors of the martyrs of the Ukrainian plane crash. So far, out of 133 Iranian families in this incident, the files of 73 esteemed families have been formed, and about other great families, there is a readiness to file and provide services in the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs,” he explained.

The vice president stressed that

Iran declares those killed aboard Ukrainian plane as martyr

Iranian, Norwegian FM's consult on Afghanistan, Vienna talks

TEHRAN— In a telephone conversation on Thursday evening, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Norwegian counterpart Anniken Huitfeldt discussed ties, regional and international issues as well as the ongoing nuclear deal talks in Vienna.

Referring to Iran's support for Norwegian membership at the United Nations Security Council, he expressed hope that the two countries' consultations on important regional and international issues would be strengthened.

In view of high economic and technological potential of the two countries, the top Iranian diplomats expressed hope that bilateral cooperation would be boosted to develop relations, the Iranian Foreign Ministry website reported.

The looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan featured high in the talks.

Amir Abdollahian said due to the cold winter, every day 5,000 Afghan women, children and men enter the borders of Iran, so that over the last four months the number of new Afghan refugees in Iran has reached about 800,000.

“We are working to provide services to these IDPs within the borders of Afghanistan, and if

the Norwegian government has plans to provide humanitarian assistance to these IDPs, we are ready to take the aid to the people of Afghanistan by land and air, he said.

Amir Abdollahian emphasized the formation of an inclusive government with the participation of all Afghan ethnicities.

The Iranian foreign minister also announced Tehran's readiness to continue consultations with Norway with regard to developments in Afghanistan and Yemen.

Amir Abdollahian also pointed to the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna, saying the overall atmosphere in the negotiations is currently positive, and if the parties return to their full obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran will also stop its remedial measures.

Amir Abdollahian emphasized that the Western parties should show their goodwill not only in words, but also in action, and the desired practical action is to lift the sanctions and the return to the JCPOA.

For her part, Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt praised Iran's efforts to help Afghan refugees, saying “Not only us, but also the entire international community should be grateful



for your humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, and your actions have been there from the past to the present.”

On the crises in Yemen and Afghanistan, she said, “In June, we will hold a meeting in Oslo focusing on the crises in Yemen and Afghanistan, and I invite you to participate in this meeting.”

Huitfeldt also said her country is “following the talks closely” and that Oslo is “aware of Iran's constructive cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.”

She also expressed hope that the Vienna talks would lead to a good agreement between the two sides.

At the end of the conversation, Amir Abdollahian invited his Norwegian counterpart to visit Tehran.

France: Bits of progress observed in Vienna talks

TEHRAN — Progress has been made regarding the Iran nuclear talks, France's foreign minister said on Friday.

Indirect talks between Iran and the United States on the removal of sanctions imposed on Iran resumed on Monday.

Western diplomats have indicated they are hoping to have a breakthrough by the end of January or early February, but sharp differences remain with the toughest issues still unresolved. Iran has rejected any deadline imposed by Western powers.

“I remain convinced we can reach a deal. Bits of progress have been made in the last few days,” Jean-Yves Le Drian told BFM TV and RMC Radio. “We have been heading in a positive direction in the last few days, but time is of the essence, because if we don't get an accord quickly there will be nothing to negotiate.”

The eighth round of talks, the first under Iran's new President Ebrahim Raisi, resumed on Monday after adding some new Iranian demands to a working text.

Another positive sign this week was the arrival in Vienna of South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister to discuss with Iran, the United States and other parties the possible release of \$7 billion of frozen Iranian assets held in the Asian country because of U.S. sanctions.

The ministry said in a statement that the vice minister had agreed with the Iranians that the release of the frozen assets “should take place in an urgent manner.”

“It will be discussed at the sanctions removal working

he hopes that the legal process and the process to investigate the case will soon be completed and he would see the peace of hearts of the survivors and the families of the martyrs by achieving the result and introducing the culprits.

While announcing that a number of these families live abroad, Ghazizadeh Hashemi said that the foundation under his leadership is ready to file a case for these families too.

The vice president added, “Today, by attending the graves of five victims of the Ukrainian plane incident on behalf of the three branches of government, including the president and the cabinet, we pay tribute to the status of these martyrs and extend our condolences to the families of the martyrs. The graves of the other victims of this tragic incident are scattered in 14 provinces of the country, and the officials will go and pay their tributes according to the plan.”

He added that meeting the families of these loved ones to offer condolences is on the agenda of the foundation.

Canada along with Britain and Ukraine are accusing Iran of snubbing the families of those killed by refusing to negotiate a settlement.

On Thursday, Canada, Britain, Sweden and Ukraine said they have tried repeatedly to negotiate with Iran but now find those efforts to be futile, so they will pursue other avenues in international law.

The decision comes after they claimed Iran ignored a Wednesday deadline to negotiate a settlement for the victims.

Funeral ceremony held for 150 unknown martyrs

From page 1 ► The message reads as follows:

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Peace be upon the unknown martyrs, unknown among the earth's inhabitants but well-known in the heavens. They are self-sacrificing people who

even after the passage of many long years since the moment of their martyrdom fill the country with the fragrance of spirituality and struggle on the path of God. They raise the flag of honor more than ever with their blood that was spilt on the path of

Islam and the Quran.

I send my greetings to the pure spirits of these martyrs and also to the waiting eyes and hearts of their fathers, mothers and spouses. I pray for God's overflowing bounty and mercy for all of them.

Insurrection reflects slide to civil war, lack of democracy in U.S.

From Page 1 ▶ 41% of those who would vote Democrat and 52% of of those who would vote for the GOP favor their states seceding from the Union to form their own separate country. And with a record number of firearms on the streets, there is certainly enough ammunition for people to take matters into their own hands.

What is of more concern, according to the Center for Politics, 30% of Republicans and 11% of Democrats say they are ready to resort to violence to save their country. That's 40 million Americans in total who are publicly declaring they are ready to fight in a country with 400+ million firearms. This is while voters are expressing increasing distrust for elected officials and media sources which they associate with "the other side".

Before Trump, many had already questioned what exactly makes America democratic. A political landscape governed by a two-party system, the "popular vote" does not choose the next president, unprecedented spending on the election itself, nowhere else in the world is this seen. The last election cost a record \$14.4 billion (according to an estimate from the Center for Responsive Politics), the majority of which was spent on campaigning with political donations.

Most of that money does not come from ordinary individuals. It comes from the pockets of billionaires and lobby groups or super PACs to be more precise, who undoubtedly want favors in return, once their "elected" officials are in power.

The controversial emergence of a two-party political system came about in the 1790's. Third parties do exist, but for Americans unfortunately only on paper.

For the elite, the Democrats or Republicans (despite the fact they are blaming each other for the current state of affairs), would rather it stays



that way. Two parties in control by an establishment with little attention being paid to reducing the inequality gap but more concerned with the military industrial complex. The facts on the ground speak for themselves.

In fact, since the January 6 armed violent attempt in Washington DC to "hang Nancy Pelosi" and stop the transition of power from one president to the other, the Republican Party has stepped up efforts to undermine a system already on the brink of collapse.

Republicans have put in place measures to try and make sure future efforts to halt a transition of power be more successful. The potential for a stolen election is now higher in the U.S. than before and analysts say the backlash that this would cause is likely to be a civil war.

The Republican Party is trying hard to enforce voter suppression, with GOP lawmakers making efforts to change election rules, in essence, to make it harder to vote as well as efforts to take control of election process including vote counting itself.

Republicans have encouraged and fomented doubt about the results of the 2020 election. They have passed new legislation in states under their control that inject more partisanship into the election administration. They have also sought to take over

key election offices from which they could exert unilateral power over vote-counting and post-election certification.

In Georgia for example, a new law gives authority to state lawmakers to review local election boards and replace them if the state election board determines they are underperforming. Georgia Republicans have also been quietly working to overthrow Democrats from their positions on county election boards. Similar to what state officials did in Arkansas.

It was the post-election certification process of Biden after all that led to the "stop the steal" march and the insurrection.

The director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, Wendy Weiser, says "what we're seeing is an unprecedented, multi-pronged assault [on the U.S. election system]", we're really seeing an all-out effort to undermine election administration in America."

Senior Republicans have strongly condemned their own fellow GOP members who dare to utter the words that the last election was legitimate. Meanwhile, on a federal level, Republicans continue to make arguments about the 2020 vote and continue to widely denounce the process and outspokenly question the legitimacy of the election results.

With the measures Republicans have taken so far and there may be more to come before the midterm Congressional vote and the next presidential election, it's difficult not to see the Democrats; should they lose, undertaking similar measures of voter suppression to try and return their hold on power.

And there you have it; a country descending into deeper polarization with a two-party system; leaders fighting among each other and militias armed to the teeth exchanging fire with running battles across the country, and with so much ammunition around. It's perhaps difficult for some to imagine but experts say it's a slippery (once unimaginable) slope that America is heading towards.

In January last year, as the White House made preparations for Biden to sit in the Oval Office, over 25,000 troops were deployed in the White House vicinity in Washington alone. At the time, that was five times more soldiers than the number of American troops occupying both Afghanistan and Iraq.

But the troops in Washington were not deployed to take part in the inaugural parade.

Biden had a monumental task of healing a divided nation, all the indications so far are that he has done the opposite.

The nation is more divided than ever. The American people are more armed than ever and the risk of violence breaking out is greater than ever. And what's worse is the question of whether the U.S. military is even capable of handling a civil war.

The U.S. armed forces are not exactly designed in nature to be an efficiently productive domestic player. The U.S. military's track record to occupy and deal with armed resistance in foreign countries has been a disaster. Who knows how it can handle an insurgency back at home?

IRAN IN FOCUS

JANUARY 8, 2022

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

3

SPORTS

Iran marks 54th death anniversary of Gholamreza Takhti

TEHRAN – The 54th death anniversary of Iranian legendary wrestler Gholamreza Takhti was held on Friday.

The memorial was held at Ibn-e Babouyeh Cemetery in southern Tehran, near Shahr-e Ray, where he is commemorated every year by the Iranians.

Takhti was born in Tehran on August 27, 1930 and was found dead in a hotel room on January 7, 1968.

He won the gold medal in the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, defeating Boris Kulayev from Soviet Union in the final match.

Takhti also claimed two Olympics silver medals in 1952 Helsinki and 1960 Rome.

He won two World Championships gold medals in 1959 Tehran and 1961 Yokohama.

The freestyle wrestler also seized a gold medal in the 1958 Asian Games held in Tokyo, Japan.

Takhti is the most famous wrestler in Iranian history. The legend was known for his chivalry and sportsmanship and continues to symbolize the essence of sports to the Iranian people.

Spain defeat Iran handball in international tournament

TEHRAN – The Spanish handball team defeated Iran 36-22 in the first match of the international tournament.

The match was held in Cuenca, Spain where Japan withdrew from the event after several players tested positive for COVID-19.

First match of the XLVI International Tournament of Spain, Memorial 'Domingo Bärceñas', played at the El Sargal sports center in front of some 700 people, because they could only attend 50% of the capacity due to the covid.

The tournament is part of the preparation for the 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship, which will be held in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia from January 18 to 31.

Iran are in Group B along with Saudi Arabia, Australia and India.

Saei elected president of Iran taekwondo federation

TEHRAN – Hadi Saei was elected as president of Iran taekwondo federation on Wednesday for a four-year term till 2026.

In the elections held at the Iran's Academy Olympic in Tehran, Saei secured 29 of 56 votes cast.

Mohammad Pooladgar came second with 27 votes. He was president of Iran taekwondo federation since 2001.

Saei, 45, is the most successful Iranian athlete in Olympic history and the most titled champion in this sport by winning nine world class titles (three Olympic titles in 2000 and 2004 and 2008, two world championships titles, four world cup titles and one world Olympic qualification tournament).

AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 Qualifiers: Iran learn fate

TEHRAN – Asia's futsal stars discovered their challengers following the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 Qualifiers virtual draw ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Thursday.

With host nation Kuwait already assured of a place in the tournament, the 30 participating Member Associations (MAs) were divided into the East and West Zones while the Central and South Zones were combined.

For the combined Central and South Zones, 12-time champions Islamic Republic of Iran were drawn in Group A alongside Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Maldives. Four-time runners-up Uzbekistan will face Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Nepal in Group B.

In the East Zone, three-time champions Japan will have China PR and Mongolia for company in Group A, while Chinese Taipei, Korea Republic and Hong Kong are in Group B.

Matches will be played between April 1-15, 2022 with UAE hosting the West Zone, the-afc.com reported.

In the West Zone, Iraq – who finished fourth in 2018 – will have Bahrain and United Arab Emirates for company in Group B, while Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine and newcomers Oman were drawn in Group A.

The ASEAN Zone was not drawn as the AFF Futsal Championship will serve as the qualifying competition for the AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2022.

The six group winners – two each from East, West and the combined Central and South Zones – will advance to the Finals.

They will be joined by the respective group runners-up from the Central and South Zones. The third team from the East Zone will be decided through a playoff.

The respective runners-up from the West Zone will also qualify with the fifth spot to be decided via a playoff between the third-placed teams from the two groups.

The Central & South Zone Qualifiers will be played in Kyrgyz Republic while the UAE will host the West Zone Qualifiers. The host for the East Zone will be announced in due course.

Two Iranian referees to officiate at AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022

TEHRAN – Iranian referees Mahsa Ghorbani and Mahnaz Zokaei will officiate at the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022.

The biggest-ever cast of talented and experienced women match officials have been assigned to the competition that will take place from January 20 to February 6.

With the expansion of the showpiece to 12 teams, a total of 32 match officials, comprising 16 referees and assistant referees from 15 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Member Associations, will take charge in potentially a maximum of 29 matches including the play-offs.

History will also be made when the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) makes its debut in the tournament from the Quarter-finals as well as potential play-off matches. An additional six video match officials will be appointed to the tournament, with the system being used across two venues in Navi Mumbai and Pune.

The match officials and VAR were selected based on their skills, technical knowledge, management competence and physical fitness.

Solhan Spor complete signing of Falahat

TEHRAN – Iranian setter Amir Mohammad Falahat joined Turkish volleyball club Solhan Spor.

The 22-year-old player has joined Solhan from Iranian volleyball team Paykan.

Falahat has signed for the Turkish club until the end of the season for an undisclosed fee.

Solhan Spor Kulübü sit 13th in the Turkish Men's Volleyball League.

Iran has a bright future: president

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has said that due to the blessings from the blood of the martyrs, Iran has a bright future.

Speaking on Thursday on the sidelines of attending the funeral of 150 anonymous martyrs, Ayatollah Raisi said, "Thanks to the blood of the martyrs, the future of the country is very promising and bright."

He added, "Today, the message of the martyrs resonates in the country and the scent of enlightenment and self-sacrifice is filling the air in society and among the people."

Emphasizing the continuation of the path of the martyrs and the need to pay attention to the message of the martyrs, the president said, "The message of the blood of the martyrs is the worship of God Almighty, sincere service, solving people's problems, and knowing the enemy."

Stating that the martyrs have given all a heavy duty and responsibility, Ayatollah Raisi said, "We participated in the funeral of the holy body of the martyrs to learn the lessons of self-sacrifice and sincerity from our martyrs first of all."

Referring to the message of the martyrs to the officials and those involved in the affairs of the country, Ayatollah Raisi said, "Today, we have a very heavy duty to serve the people sincerely and try to solve their problems. Hopefully, we will move the country forward."

Iran has held a burial ceremony for a number of

unidentified fallen fighters during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. The fighters are also known as the "unknown martyrs." Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei issued a message on the occasion of the burial ceremony for the unknown martyrs coinciding with the anniversary of the martyrdom of Lady Fatima Zahra (pbuh).

"Peace be upon the unknown martyrs, unknown among the earth's inhabitants but well-known in the heavens. They are self-sacrificing people who even after the passing of many long years since the moment of their martyrdom fill the country with the fragrance of spirituality and struggle on the path of God. They raise the flag of honor more than ever with their blood that was spilt on the path of Islam and the Quran," the Leader said in the message.

He added, "The burial ceremony of these travelers who are returning home coinciding with the anniversary of the martyrdom of Lady Fatima Zahra (pbuh) brings the good news that their memory will last forever. It also betokens the coming of great blessings for the country of the Imam of our Time (may my soul be sacrificed for him), God willing."

Ayatollah Khamenei concluded his message by saying, "I send my greetings to the pure spirits of these martyrs and also to the waiting eyes and hearts of their fathers, mothers and spouses. I pray for God's overflowing bounty and mercy for all of them."

Iran diplomat meets South Korean counterpart, says Seoul obliged to release assets

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Ali Bagheri Kani, met with his South Korean counterpart in Vienna amid ongoing talks in the Austrian capital aimed at removing U.S. sanctions on Iran.

South Korea's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Choi Jong Kun, who was in the Austrian capital Vienna, held talks with Iran's chief negotiator at noon on Thursday.

At the meeting, which was held at the request of the Korean side and at the office of the Islamic Republic of Iran's mission in Vienna, the Deputy Foreign Minister of South Korea referred to the importance of Seoul-Tehran relations and offered some explanations about Iranian blocked money in South Korea, adding that his country is trying to pay its debt to Iran, the Iranian

Foreign Ministry said.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister stressed that regardless of the outcome of the talks in Vienna, the South Korean government is obliged to release the blocked Iranian money and that unilateral U.S. sanctions cannot justify non-payment of debts to Iran.

It was also clarified at the meeting that South Korea's illegal and unjustifiable refusal to repay its debts to Iran would be a dark point in the history of relations between the two countries and that Seoul must act as soon as possible to release Iran's resources.

It should be noted that the meeting was not directly related to the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the P4+1 group and was conducted within the framework

of routine bilateral consultations between the two countries at the request of the Korean side.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said on Twitter that the Vienna talks are proceeding in the right direction. "Talks in Vienna are proceeding in the right direction. Iran's initiatives brought the talks back on track in a constructive atmosphere," he said, adding, "It is now up to the Western side to show good faith and commitment for a good deal."

While recent rounds of talks focused on crafting a document setting out the principles for result-oriented negotiations, the current round is expected to get down to brass tacks.

There are two main issues on the table in Vienna: First, how U.S. sanctions on Iran should be

Domestic producers able to meet 95% of oil industry's technological needs



From page 1 ► In the past few years, the ministry has been seriously supporting knowledge-based companies and startups, and in this regard, several events, exhibitions, and panels have been held to encourage the mentioned companies' contribution to the country's oil and gas industry.

Back in November 2021, Head of the Iranian Petroleum Industries Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPIEMA) Majid Mohammadpour said the Oil Ministry was going to define new mega projects in which commodities manufactured by the country's oil equipment builders would be used.

Mohammadpour noted that 40 percent of the construction capacity of the members of the IPIEMA is not being used, saying: "in order to completely use this domestic production ca-

capacity, new megaprojects in the oil industry are to be defined."

Underlining the positive steps taken by the new government administration, Mohammadpour said currently 85 percent of the equipment used in the country's oil, gas, and petrochemical industry is provided by domestic manufacturers.

The official noted that currently the knowledge for the production of 10 equipment groups including turbines, compressors, and catalysts have been indigenized and 10 new groups are also going to be added to this list in the near future.

According to Mohammadpour, in addition to supplying domestic needs of the country's oil, gas and petrochemical industries, the equipment and parts manufactured in the country are also exported to other countries like Turkmenistan, Qatar, Venezuela, Iraq, and Syria.

Referring to the 25-year Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Plan, he stressed: "Preparations must be made in the industrial sector. With regard to many types of equipment, we have been able to build equipment similar to Chinese ones with lower prices, and we can be superior in this agreement."

'Parliament bill to amend stock exchange law is aimed at supporting shareholders'

TEHRAN – Member of Iranian Parliament Economic Committee Mojtaba Tavangar has said the parliament's new bill for amending the country's stock exchange law is aimed at protecting the shareholder's capital in the market.

Following the fluctuations in the stock market during the last two years which rose serious concerns among shareholders, a bill was presented in the parliament to amend the mentioned law, however, some of the articles of this bill have been widely criticized by shareholders and those active in the market, IRNA reported.

According to Tavangar, amending the stock market law was put on the agenda since last year, when the stock market started a downward trend.

One of the most important issues discussed at the Parliament Economic Committee was to study the situation of the capital market in order to take the necessary measures to change the laws related to this market to improve the trading process and to prevent such fluctuations.

This was one of the issues repeatedly emphasized by the MPs, he said.

The official noted that the amendment of the mentioned law is focused on the educa-



tional and consulting aspects to raise awareness among shareholders and to prevent any possible abuse by scammers.

As reported, changing the composition of the Supreme Council of the Stock Exchange, disclosure of financial statements of the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), promotion of public knowledge about the stock market, allocating a portion of SEO's net profit to the Stock Market Development and Stabilization Fund, and changing the structure of some legal entities related to the stock market are among the amendments proposed in the new bill.

The draft of the bill for amending the stock market law, which was published by the Parliament Economic Committee a few days ago, has been facing a wide range of criticism from shareholders and market activists and this has led to different views by market experts about the need to amend this bill.

Pistachio exports bring Iran over \$738m in 9 months

TEHRAN– Iran exported 111,122 tons of pistachio worth \$738,456,417 during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Rouhollah Latifi said Iran's pistachio was exported to 70 different countries during the mentioned nine months, IRNA.

Importing 32,713 tons of pistachio valued at \$188.785 million, China was the first export destination for Iranian pistachio, while India, Russia, Iraq, and Kazakhstan came next, importing 10,859 tons, 6,710 tons, 6,233 tons, and 6,150 tons of pistachio, respectively.

According to Latifi, of the total exported pistachio, 13,745 tons worth over \$152.393 were pistachio kernels which were shipped to 54 different countries including India, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iraq, Germany, and



Turkey.

Iran also exported 275 tons of sliced pistachio kernels valued at over \$3.358 million in the mentioned nine months, Latifi said.

The UAE, Qatar, Iraq, Turkey, and Germany were the top importers of the sliced pistachio kernels.

The official noted that the country's pistachio exports decreased 19 percent both in terms of value and weight during the said time span compared to the previous year's same period.

According to the Director-General of the Iranian Agriculture Ministry's office of cold and dry fruits Darab Hasani, the country had exported 203,637 tons of pistachios worth \$1.371 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021).

As recently announced by the secretary-general of the Iran Pistachio Association (IPA), the production of pistachio in Iran is estimated to fall 70,000 tons in the current year.

Hossein Rezaei said that the next year's sprouts have also

TEHRAN– Iranian tire manufacturers produced 18,023 million car tires in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021).

This number of produced tires weighted over 194.690 tons, with three percent drop year on year.

According to the statistics, in the mentioned period, 112,457 tons of passenger cars were produced, showing five percent fall year on year.

In the period under review, some 20,778 tons of van tires were also produced, indicating a 14-percent growth. Meanwhile, 42,115 tons of truck and bus tires were produced, with no change from the figure of the past year.

Production of the tires of light agricultural vehicles experienced a decline of 21 percent to stand at 2,606 tons, while that of the heavy ones also declined four percent to stand at 12,989 tons.

Production of the tires of road building and industrial vehicles also fell 20 percent to 3,747 tons in the period under review.

In the first nine months of the present year, 14,205 tons of bicycle and motorcycle tires were produced, showing 16

Over 18m car tires produced in 9 months



percent growth.

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

Selecting the motto of "Pickup in Production" for the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020), and the slogan of "Surge in Production" for the year 1399 (March 2020-March 2021) in-

dicates the Islamic Republic's determination to achieve this goal.

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

It is clear that among different ministries, the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade was one with a somehow

Renewables prevent emission of 61,000 tons of GHG in a month

TEHRAN – Generating electricity from renewable sources prevented the emission of Green House Gases (GHG) in Iran by 61,000 tons during the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar (November 22-December 21, 2021).

Electricity generation from renewables in the mentioned period has led to economizing on the consumption of natural gas by 27 million cubic meters and water by 21 million liters in the said month.

As reported, 94 million kilowatts of electricity has been generated from the renewable sources in the ninth month.

Renewables account for about seven percent of Iran's total power generation, versus natural gas' 90 percent share.

Based on Iran's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), the country was aiming for 5,000 megawatts (MW) increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

But in the final year of the plan, only one-fifth of the figure was achieved.

Iran was supposed to become a regional hub in the field of energy in the past Iranian calendar decade (March 2011-March 2021), but evidence shows that the country is facing a shortage even in the supply of electricity inside the country, an issue that many believe that could be achieved

by developing renewable energy and increasing efficiency of the thermal power plants.

After the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal, in July 2015, many foreign delegations came to Iran for making investments and constructing renewable power plants in the country.

However, following the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, foreign investment in the country's renewable industry has fallen significantly.

Government has a 4-year plan to add 10,000MW to renewable capacity

In mid-October, 2021, Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian said his ministry welcomes foreign investment in the country's renewable energy industry.

Speaking in the Second Belt and Road Energy Ministerial Conference which was held by the National Energy Administration of the People's Republic of China (NEA) through video conferencing, Mehrabian said: "The current government has a four-year plan to increase the capacity of the country's renewable power plants by 10,000 megawatts."

Referring to Iran's potentials and capacities in the renewable energy industry, the official announced the country's readiness to attract investment to develop the renewable energy industry for a green and inclusive energy future in Iran.

According to the former Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, the country has great



potentials in the field of renewable energies and can have a significant role in developing the region's market for such energies.

"Relying on the high potential of renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, etc., the Energy Ministry has planned good measures in order to implement new policies for creating positive changes in the development of the country's renewable energy sector," Ardakanian has said.

And in last November, the head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA) said that in line with the plan for generating 10,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity from renewable sources through domestic and foreign investment, the private sector has already announced its readiness for generating 32,000 MW.

Speaking in a news conference, Mahmoud Kamani said that the private sector's readiness in this due is expected to rise for generation of 60,000 MW of electricity.

TSE's main index drops 2.4% in a week



TEHRAN– TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 34,000 points (2.4 percent) to 1.363 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, Iran Khodro Company, National Copper Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

As stated by Market Analyst Peyman Hadadi, the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year indicates

that the government has a more positive view of the market for the upcoming year.

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

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

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



A great teacher

By Syed Abdolmajid Shakoori

“Teacher” is a holy term taken from the features of God, the Almighty, who said in the Holy Quran Surah Al-Alaq verse 5 that “... taught man what he did not know”.

The most important feature of the prophets, according to the Holy Quran, is that they educate people and they are introduced as the teachers of people. Surah Al Imran verse 164 says “Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.”

About the greatness of the position of teachers, it is enough to say that the greatest teacher of all times is the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who felt honored for this position. But not every teacher is worth this position because:

There are two kinds of teachers in the universe; one group includes the Almighty God, the divine prophets, their guardians, and the divine scholars whose claims are real and rational and invite human to real and rational matters leading them to true happiness. Quran in Surah Al-Anfal verse 24 has recommended mankind to accept Their advices “Believers! Respond to Allah, and respond to the Messenger when he calls upon you to that which gives you life. Know well that Allah stands between a man and his heart, and it is to Him that all of you shall be mustered.”

The other group of teachers are the devil and his tormentors who invite mankind to unrealistic and irrational things, corrupt and mislead people and society. As it is stated in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 205 “And when he turns away [from You], he creates turmoil in the earth and destroys crops and lives; and Allah is not pleased with turmoil.”

There are also two kinds of



students; those who accept Satan’s invitation and choose him as guardian. Satan educates these people and instructs them what to do and what to say. This is Satan who misleads them and makes them his devout servant. With the help of his students, Satan deprives people of having a healthy society. Satan takes away any opportunity for right thinking and interfere in prophets’ teachings and guidance. Hence, Satan becomes a teacher through his students to cheat the world and lead human to irrational and unrealistic goals.

Satan has admitted in Sura Sad verse 82 “I swear by your Might, that I will seduce all of them.” Satan’s agents and trustees become scientists and scholars and mislead people and make them hypocrite and arrogant. Imam Sadeq (AS) has advised people to avoid choosing such people as their teacher saying

“The only knowledge of value is that from the divine learned (Al-Kafi – Vol. 1, Ch. 1, H 12).

The second group are wise people who accept God and Prophets’ invitation and become their spiritual children, prophets and guardian and their new status form their identity “And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you – when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided,” Surah Al Imran verse 103. By this invitation, God save Human from earthly temptations and move him toward beauty and truth and guides him through highroad [to salvation] which has been asserted in Surah Fussilat, verse 30: “Indeed

those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah!’ and then remain steadfast.” These people will never change their direction and sacrifice everything on their way. These are people who God has said about them “Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so, of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least,” Al-Ahzab verse 23. This resistance will lead to their victory as God has promised “Believers, if you aid Allah, He will come to your aid,” Surah Muhammad, verse 7. Hence God helps them to benefit from their knowledge and moral deeds and God opens the doors of knowledge to them and by following the prophets’ teachings, they acquire wisdom and dignity.

Given that only these people are worth to be teacher, the Quran has commended people to choose only them for their teacher “Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed”, Surah Yunus verse 35. Imam Kazem (PBUH) also has been quoted as saying “Knowledge depends on teaching, and teaching depends on wisdom, and there is no knowledge except from the divine learned because the Quran has said they are the ones who carry the message.” God in Surah Fussilat verse 33 indicates “And who is fairer in speech than he who calls to Allah and acts righteously and says: ‘I am a Muslim.’”

To sum up, it can be said that God is the first teacher of mankind and He has taken responsibility over the educating of His people by sending his prophets. Repeating the word “Lord” two thousand times in the Quran, God has made it clear that He is the mentor. He has bestowed to His people the ability of learning and has sent His prophets to help them to embrace the truth. Those who achieve the position of a teacher under the divine Lordship and training of the Holy Prophet Mouhamed and the Infallibles undertake to transfer their knowledge to others because their knowledge is a gift from

God and they must share it with others. These teachers are tasked with realizing the innate talents of human beings, which are like seeds sown in the human body. These teachers have characteristics which are mentioned in the Quran and the words of Infallibles. These Quranic characteristics, as admitted by everybody, are manifested in the character of Allameh Mesbah Yazdi. For this reason, the Supreme Leader, in his message of condolence on the occasion of the demise of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, mentions him as a great teacher.

Some of these characteristics are:

1) A teacher must know what he wants to teach. When Prophet Moses (PBUH) was commissioned to be trained by a teacher, God guided him to a more knowledgeable person. “And found one of Our worshippers to whom We had given from Our Mercy, and to whom We had taught knowledge of Ours. Moses said to him: ‘May I follow you so that you can teach me of that you have learned of righteousness?’” (Surah Al Kahf verses 65-66)

2) Teachers must be honest in their work. Holy Prophet (PBUH) says whoever seeks knowledge for the God’s sake, he will not get it except that he becomes selfless, humble, fears God and works hard for religion; such a person will benefit from knowledge. He has also said whoever learns some knowledge and for the sake of God share it with people, may God give him a reward equal to rewards for seventy prophets.

3) A teacher must believe in what he says and teaches. A teacher without passion, love and faith in what he wants to teach cannot educate others.

4) A teacher must think deeply about what he learns and consolidate his knowledge.

5) A teacher must stand up for right. As it was mentioned earlier “So, give the good news to My servants. Who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are

people of understanding, (Surah Az-Zumar verses 17-18.) Imam Sadiq also has said “The word of wisdom is the lost property of the believer. Wherever he finds it, he is most deserving of it.”

6) A teacher should know that his actions are more fundamental than his speech. Teachers’s actions show that their teachings are worthwhile.

7) A teacher must love to see his student’s progress. If a teacher’s motives for education are earning a living or showing off and boasting, he will fail to bring up mature students.

8) A teacher should be patient and never give up in the face of disruptive students nor take an aggressive stance against them.

There are many other characteristics for a great teacher such as taking no action when ignorant, seeking help from God for ignorance, boasting of knowledge, not making business from religious knowledge, not associating with tyrants and oppressors, not having ambition, observing justice among students, giving knowledge to the deserving and keeping it away from incompetent etc. Teachers who have such characteristics are the friends of God and the closest people and heirs of the prophets, they are the ones whose pen is superior to the blood of the martyrs. To look up to at these people is like worship and their death is a rift in religion.

All of Ayatollah Mesbah’s students and his visitors recognize the above said characteristics in him, and as it has been mentioned in the message of condolence of Supreme Leader, he is truly a great teacher.

Conclusion: Ayatollah Mesbah was a great teacher who had all characteristics of a divine teacher; he had both a high level of knowledge and a sincere belief in what he taught. He patiently educated his students with great love and interest.

A few words in praise of prominent thinker

By Hojjatoleslam Ahmad Hossein Sharifi

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi was not only an objective model of Islamic ethics in terms of individual and social life, but also he is also scientifically considered one of the greatest moral and ethical theorists in the Islamic world.

I even believe that we can consider him the reviver of Islamic ethics and savior of Qur’anic ethics from the circle of Aristotelian ethics and Greek anthropology.

Undoubtedly, no contemporary scholar has been as much (quantitatively and qualitatively) preoccupied with the Islamic ethics. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi’s scientific and educational measures taken in reviving Islamic ethics can be summarized as follows:

1. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi presented ideas of Islamic ethics systematically, academically and innovatively. The three-volume book of ethics in the Qur’an is unique in its kind.

2. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi saved Islamic ethics from the circle of Aristotelian thought, both in terms of form, format and content as well as in terms of values, anthropology and epistemology and presented a Qur’anic model of the scope of Islamic ethics.

3. In addition to analyzing scientific discussions on ethics Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi embarked on instructing and teaching thinkers and experts in the field of ethics and philosophy of ethics.

4. For the first time, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi defined scientific and long-term courses for training of ethics instructors for seminaries and universities.

5. For the first time, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi systematically taught Islamic ethics and designed training courses in three levels: Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree and Ph.D. degree in Islamic ethics and moral education.

6. For the first time, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi established and founded a religious and seminary



school called “Roshd” Theological School with the aim of training specialists and moral mujtahids.

7. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi proposed the compilation of the “Great Plan of the Moral School of Islam” and even pursued this plan until the last days of their blessed life.

8. As many seminary scholars have not read even a single book on the philosophy of ethics, Allameh Mesbah Yazdi has been pursuing the plan of compiling the encyclopedia of the philosophy of Islamic ethics for many years!

The wise theorist

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi was very fond of reading books and always recommended reading original and important books. One day, he told me that some days “I was doing scientific activities for up to 16 hours.”

But he never contented himself with merely studying or ultimately summarizing and categorizing the material of others or arranging the files and data collected, but he was creating something new by contemplating the material and the data using the power of God-given genius.

In other words, he was not one of those scholars who merely collected the contents of others or finally presented them in regular parts and sections for the use of others and/or he was not like those whose art is at most like the art of a meat grinder, that is, their utmost effort and ability is to express the scattered words of others in an orderly and categorized manner.

The lessons and speeches as well as what he wrote and said was the result of his own reflections and thoughts. He seldom utters a word without first thinking. He was a thinker in the true sense of the word.

Perhaps he had the greatest share of reason and thinking in matters. This feature made him a unique theorist who has a theory in many conventional sciences in the seminaries as well as in many humanities. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi had dozens of innovative theories in various fields of science, some of which have been reflected in the four-volume book “Guidelines”.

According to some great contemporary philosophers such as Ayatollah Fayyazi, Ayatollah Mesbah is the creator of a new philosophical school.

As Ayatollah Fayyazi has interpreted, “If an expert wants to deal with the problem in a calculated way, he must say that Ayatollah Mesbah has founded a special philosophical system that has the thoughts of Sadr al-Muta’allehin (Mulla Sadra).”

The wise sage

Ayatollah Mesbah was a scholar full of knowledge, science, wisdom, ethics and mysticism. He was always upbringing, teaching and educating others and during the last thirty years of his blessed life, he traveled to about 30 countries of the world and explained the Islamic ideas and intellectual foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran in scientific and academic forums.

During the last thirty years of their blessed life, Ayatollah Mesbah traveled to more than 80 cities and towns and spoke to audiences fascinated and thirsty to hear Islamic truths in the fields of ethics, politics, law, religious democracy, and defending the foundations of religious thought.

He delivered more than 6,000 speeches to various strata of the people i.e. Ayatollah Mesbah delivered an average of 200 lectures per year!

And this is the characteristic of the divine men and true sages who, like a physician, are looking for the sick, disease and treatment of pains and agonies:

Once I was admitted to visit him and said, “I have been invited to lectures and various scientific meetings in universities near and far of the country and I have done my job so far, but now I doubt whether such a job with such a scope is a duty or not? In response to my question, Ayatollah Mesbah said, “Do not doubt the correctness of this path and respond positively to these invitations with as much strength and power as possible.”

Then, in order to show the importance of this work, he said, “Westerners who calculate profit and loss for all their programs, when invited to a 20-minute lecture at a scientific conference in another country, they respond willingly and confidently.”

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Ayatollah Mesbah's solutions for bringing Islamic Humanities into daily life

By Samaneh Nourizadeh

TEHRAN – Sheikh Abbas Ali Shameli, who is one of Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi's students and has received his Ph.D. in Culture and Values in Education from McGill University in Canada, throws light on his teacher's activities out of Iran.

Shameli, who is also a member of Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, says "Ayatollah Mesbah, influenced by Allameh Tabataba'i, believed that Quranic studies should create a new course for topical interpretation of Quran in Islamic Seminary of Qom. And our learned and well-educated scholars who have put most of their energy into sequential method is better now to pay more attention to topical method. From the beginning of my studies, Ayatollah Mesbah classified the interpretation of Quran into 10 different topics including education, The Quran, theology, methodology, guidance, anthropology, sociological ethics and psychology which are available in his publications for those who are interested."

The cleric emphasized that topical interpretations of the Quran and rational sciences were among the most important innovations of Ayatollah Mesbah and of course big achievements for Iran and the world. He added that Ayatollah Mesbah also made lots efforts in rational sciences including logic of philosophy, mysticism, and theoretical ethics.

He added that Ayatollah Mesbah also launched World Institute for Compilation of Encyclopedia which left a huge influence on rational science. "His efforts in Quranic studies, rational studies and Islamizing sciences will be continued by his students and will bear fruit in the next century because we believe there is a long way till we succeed in creating an Islamic version of social sciences and human sciences. Ayatollah Mesbah opened our eyes toward this path and prepared the ground for us, and we must take the next steps toward it.

Shameli believes Ayatollah Mesbah also established the Toloo-e Andisheh Center where the scholars who were his students gathered together and were sent to other cities and countries for the protection of religiosity. Mesbah used to speak up during the important political and social events such as the Assembly of Experts, the Presidency, and the Parliament etc. and encouraged his students to effectively participate in such events. He strongly believed that Prophet Mohammad's religion should influence and guide human beings in all aspects, social and economic and religious version of life must be different from irreligious version, and if achieved that is the true Mohammad's Islam.

"I think Islamizing sciences and the production of religious sciences which were inaugurated by Ayatollah Mesbah will be continued by his students, but it takes a considerable amount of time. Renaissance took three centuries, from 16th to the end of 19th century, in Europe where cultural and scientific reform took place, science and philosophy were finally separated and the current scientific courses were formed in the west. Perhaps we need a similar Renaissance and time span for Islamizing sciences, till Ayatollah's scholars be able to educate new generations who succeed in the productions of religious sciences in different social and human fields," Iranian scholar notes.

"Ayatollah Mesbah put emphasis on taking advantage of western science and insisted to send a group of students at Islamic Seminary of Qom to other countries to help with the Islamizing process of sciences," Shameli remembers, noting that "Ayatollah Mesbah stressed we should continue living in other countries despite our country's financial difficulties, because The Office of Cooperation between Seminary & University had found out that university instructors were deficient in terms of beliefs, values and religious teachings, while seminary instructors were familiar only with some general information not enough for Islamizing procedure. Therefore, he decided to educate a new generation of postgraduate seminary students and promote them to MA and Ph.D. levels in both seminary and university concepts to be able to accelerate

the procedure of Islamizing sciences and production of religious science."

Making remarks on equivalent reflections between Ayatollah Mesbah and other prominent Islamic scholars in the world, Shameli argues, "Ayatollah Mesbah, same as Muhammad Baqer al-Sadr in al-Madrasah al-Qur'aniyyah believed if we want to apply Quran and Quranic teachings to real life, we must move from sequential interpretation toward a topical interpretation which means we have no way but to open new courses of Quranic studies."

"Ayatollah Mesbah also believed that if we want to be fruitful for human being, we should move from traditional Quranic studies and interpretation and open a new course of topical interpretation. Topical interpretation means to find a problem and look it up in the Quran and find the truth in the form of question and answer," he continued.

The story of Ayatollah Mesbah's life is never limited to the theoretical and abstract scholastic arguments. In fact, he always looked for the visible and sensible results of those arguments in people's daily life. Emphasizing the importance of this approach, Shameli says that "Sheikh Alameh Mesbah and Muhammad Baqer al-Sadr both believed that if we want the Islamizing procedure to be implemented properly and constitute real achievements, we must render Quranic researchers experts and super experts at one of the branches of social or human sciences to be able to raise technical questions. Ayatollah Mesbah thought that the students who received their Master Degree [in

related social and human sciences] in Qom and Iran must be sent to popular universities in the world and receive a Ph.D. degree if they are to be used for an Islamic mythology. This was one of the most important consequences of Ayatollah Mesbah's efforts to send us as students to foreign countries to take advantage of western science for the Islamizing process of the sciences."

"Ayatollah Mesbah always stressed that in the future we will be more cooperative in the development of human sciences and will move toward teamwork and interdisciplinary majors. He emphasized that teamwork and interdisciplinary majors are currently two standard indexes in the world which accelerate the production of science. Therefore, if we want to Islamize something, we must use a team of several people so they can view that thing from different angles," he remembers.

One of Ayatollah Mesbah's wishes for the future was that his students move from basic and theoretical critique toward comparative studies and field research. He also paid attention to moral education and emphasized that what has been presented in the field of moral education has been limited to expressing problems and vices. And in the second volume of Ethics in the Quran, in a chapter related to ethics and psychology, he sought to present the human psychological theory as a theoretical basis for education and ethics:

"He paid attention to the functions of religion and the employment of religion in political and social arenas. He believed that secularism means individualization and privatization which is not in line with what God and Prophet have said. His second emphasis was on religious theoretical explanation of Velayat-e-Faqih and the employment of religion in human's life. The idea of religious democracy against western democracy and the right of sovereignty among human beings, both politically and socially, is specific to God. And God Almighty has entrusted this right to the Prophets and Imams. But this right has inevitably been delegated to Velayat-e-Faqih in times of absence because it is the closest model to the model of a government. Ayatollah Mesbah not only in theory but also in practice was a keen follower of the Velayat-e-Faqih and always encouraged his disciples to respect it."

Looking at life of Ayatollah Mesbah from a different POV

By Mohammad Mahdi Ebrahimi Nasr

TEHRAN – The Iranian filmmaker says during the production of his documentary about Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, it was like he knew something is happening which must remain in minds of the people.

January 2, 2022 marks the first anniversary of late Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's demise. Ayatollah Mesbah was a prominent religious scholar and thinker who had a considerable impact in advancement of philosophical thoughts and Islamic jurisprudence in Iran.

In 2019, news spread mentioning a different documentary about the life of Ayatollah Mesbah. The film evoked diverse reactions within the country. So, we arranged an interview with Ahmad Sharifzadeh, the filmmaker who produced the documentary.

Sharifzadeh says that part of the footages he used to produce his film was actually filmed by some members of Mr. Mesbah's family and this makes his film, somehow unique.

"One of the fruits of film for me was that perhaps I did not precisely know what I was doing, but it seems that the documentary casted a different light at Mr. Mesbah's life," Iranian filmmaker says.

Following is the text of interview:

Why did you produce "That Winter?" Did Owj Arts and Media Organization or Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi Office order it? Was it your own idea?

There is a lot I can say about "That Winter." In fact, no one ordered it. Of course, there were investors, the investor was Owj Arts and Media Organization but no one had ordered it.

Where did you get the idea?

We had some experiences in the production of documentaries about religious scholars but we tried to do more about the contemporary scholars.

Do you mean this was some sort of a personal experience of those scholars?

Perhaps I had to have personal relation with him. For example, sometimes it is said the late Ayatollah Seyyd Ali Ghazi was like this or that, but for me, from the moment that I was born I liked to know how the late Ayatollah Behjat was! Because I had seen him going to mosque, praying, etc. then I liked to know more. Approaching the scholars is a big topic.

How did you start with making a documentary about Ayatollah Behjat and end up by a documentary about Ayatollah Mesbah?

When Mr. Behjat moved from Najaf to Qom, he began to socialize for a short time and about seven people gathered around him. Only one of the seven people are now alive. There were two or three prominent persons among them one of whom was Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. The other two were Hassan Pahlavani and Seyyd Enrahim Khosroshahi. When Ayatollah Behjat passed away, one of these people whose philosophical and political views were different from Ayatollah Mesbah told me that Ayatollah Behjat had one true student and that was Mr. Mesbah.... From that moment it struck me to approach Mr. Mesbah. Also, we had an interview with him about Ayatollah Behjat which is available in the documentary about Mr. Behjat.

When did you start to know Ayatollah Mesbah?

It is not possible to live in Qom and not to know him. I watched



the events after reformations era. For example, I remember the sit-down strike of the scholars of Qom in favor of Ayatollah Mesbah. I remember I had gone to Shiraz to see my parents during the strike. When I returned, I saw that Qom was in chaos. Mr. Mesbah was not my subject at that time. I was attracted to him gradually and almost after the production of "That Winter".

Were you happy with your work when the production was finished?

I was sure "That Winter" was a good film. Now after three years from its production, If I'd want to make it, I may do it differently, but I am sure everything in "That Winter;" even the music, is well thought. It was better if we had made the music, but we could not due to shortage of financial resources. But we made the best choice based on our conditions. Whoever watches the film, thinks we have made the music. The music we chose was from a Spanish group which had not been used before. I believe "That Winter" showed that what we have heard about some of our renowned figures are not true. Our scholars are misrepresented. "That Winter" is not a political film.

One of the most important scenes of the film is about voting and elections.

Mr. Dehghani did us a favor and allowed us to use the scene in which he talks about the parliament and is related to people's votes. This seems to be the most important scene of the film in knowing Ayatollah Mesbah and the political part of the movie. In this scene, Mr. Mesbah discusses about a topic which media had misinterpreted for the audience. One of the closest people to Mr. Mesbah after watching the movie was surprised and told me he had no idea about it.

When one reads Ayatollah Mesbah's books, especially those about topical interpretation of the Quran, he understands that there is a big difference between what people say about him with what he writes in his books.

As you said, when you read Mr. Mesbah's books you say what a free-thinker he is. You don't find him politically affiliated to any specific political party. I had a two-hours interview with professor Legenhausen about Mr. Mesbah that if you listen to, you will know the free-minded personality of Mr. Mesbah. For example, when someone is converted from Christianity to Islam, it is interesting that Mr. Mesbah tells him just talk about Christianity. I was surprised in that interview when Professor Legenhausen was talking about Mr. Mesbah. I told him Mr. Mesbah is not like that. He said I was wrong and trust his memories of Mr. Mesbah.

Why you did not use narration

to explain why it is important to talk about Mr. Mesbah?

One of the fruits of "That Winter" for me was that perhaps I did not know what I was doing, but it seems that the documentary casts a different light at Mr. Mesbah's life. Everything in the work is intentional. There is no interview in it because we wanted audience to make a direct contact with Mr. Mesbah. There is no narration throughout the film and there are just captions to show location and time of the scene and also some headlines from newspapers because events must be studied from their historical context. Newspaper headlines reported and attributed something to him which was not true.

Did you consult with Mr. Mesbah about what you were planning to do?

No never. There was institute's camera recording Mr. Mesbah's speeches and we set up our camera. Mr. Mesbah was very clever. He knew what was going on, but his trust was gradually built. At the start, we did not go close to him but after the session, the camera recorded him when he was in the back room but we kept distance and did not even use microphone for him. He had a bad health in 1394 which was the cause of his death. We recorded three or four sessions and he got sick. The project stopped during his illness. After he recovered, he looked very fatigue which is clear in the next 60 sessions we have recorded.

It seems that Mr. Mesbah recovered one more time to leave some things behind from himself and he did it. One of the advantages of our work was the fact that he has narrated his biography in 34 sessions. It is not part of these 70 sessions and that has been done after "That Winter". Mr. Mesbah has narrated his biography for his family in 34 sessions, each two hours. When he went to Tehran for a check-up, I requested his family to accompany them. They rejected but I told them "Hospital is a place that we may be able to come close to him". His family did not agree with this suggestion and we gave them a camera for recording films in hospital. Physicians decided not to do surgery on his liver and suggested to work on his eye problem which was a minor surgery. I placed the camera in the corner of the room and recorded everything. But Mr. Mesbah had agreed with us to go to hospital for working and our group went to the hospital and started "That Winter" and we had him alone for 36 hours.

Finally, Mr. Mesbah trusted us. We recorded everything he did. We went to his sessions whenever they were held and after 20 sessions, he noticed what we were doing.

There seems to be a certain script throughout the documentary!

Yes. Our relationship with Mr. Mesbah gradually was established. There is a part in "That Winter" where he tells professor Legenhausen "think that they do not exist". We created this atmosphere for him. during all 70 sessions that we were with him, we never asked him to do something, not even to move his foot a step further. If we had done it, he would have thrown us out of the room. Mr. Mesbah had never allowed any group to join the sessions and sometime did not even let in the camera of the institute.

In one scene, he wanted to visit his spouse. I asked Mojtaba and his son if was it possible for us to be there? He said "Haj Agha will not allow". I told them "We will stand out and just listen to his voice". I asked him to talk to Mr. Mesbah about it. From the first day of recording till the end of the editing which took three and a half years, I did not speak with Mr. Mesbah more than two sentences. That was our way when working with all the scholars and it worked. That means we tried not to intervene as if we did not exist.

Perhaps this is the reason he is comfortable before the camera.

Sometimes I left the camera in the room and waited outside to make him comfortable. Interestingly, Mr. Mesbah felt comfortable with the camera; none of the scholars were so comfortable in front of camera. It was like we did not exist but this happened after several sessions. For example, the scene in hospital in which his phone rings. A call with Mr. Mesbah about a political issue in the hospital made him angry. In one of the calls, he said "I think continuing the conversation is not wise".

Did you film the parts in his house?

We had no problem with filming him. But for the scenes inside the house, we had taught his family to do it by themselves.

What were the manifestations of that trust and bond?

I got married in 1395. I gave an invitation card to Mr. Mesbah's grandchild who used to take films for us from the inside of the house. I told him that I will be very happy if Mr. Mesbah comes to the ceremony. My brother called me on the wedding day and said that Mr. Mesbah had arrived and his companions were waiting in front of the door. I told my brother that I had sent him a card out of respect, but I do not know anything more. Anyway, he joined my wedding ceremony for an hour. It was a wonderful time. I feel that he had seen our efforts and wanted to encourage us to continue our work, though he had never let any group to go to his house for filming.

My admiration for him grew when I produced the documentary not for his fans but for his critics. Of course, his fans are among audiences, but it is not made specifically for them. Mr. Mohammad Ali Abtahi had watched "That Winter" in the Haqiqat Film Festival and told me "You have sanctified Mr. Mesbah". I answered, "I have narrated Mr. Mesbah". Some audience with different attitude from Mr. Mesbah or some with irreligious attitudes said "how cool Mr. Mesbah is." After the production of the movie, I was sure some people would not allow it to be released. We wanted to make the film in such a way that the general audience do not think we have judged Mr. Mesbah and I have not had any judgment so far. Of course, "That Winter" is my film which shows Mr. Mesbah from my eyes at that time. It may differ during the production of the new work I am currently making.

From page 1 ► Remember where you join the stone path, as you'll need to return the same way. There are no signs, though the route is fairly obvious. Bring sunscreen in summer and be prepared for icy conditions in winter.

The fort consists of several stone towers and lodging areas stretched in a space of nearly ten thousand square meters and the origins of the monument are said to date from the Sassanid era (224–651).

Qa'leh Dokhtar

Nested on a conical cliff, Qa'leh Dokhtar is now a ruined fortress rampart which is situated near Firouzabad-Kavar road in southeastern Kerman province.

Qa'leh Dokhtar (literally meaning the Maiden Castle) was made upon the order of Ardashir I, the founder of the Sasanian Empire (224–651) in 209 CE. The fortified palace contains many of the recurring features of Sasanian architecture such as long halls, arches, domes, recessed windows, and stairways.

Narratives suggest the monument is named after the ancient Iranian goddess Anahita, to whom the term “Maiden” refers.

The entrance to the castle is through a tall gateway within a large, rectangular tower. Inside, a broad stairway leads up to a rectangular hall, with blind niches on either side of two large buttresses at the east end.

Alamut Castle

Cuddled on top of a hill, the fabled ruin of Alamut Castle is situated in a relatively remote village amidst the Alborz mountain range.

The access path to the well-fortified castle starts about 700m beyond the little cherry-growing village of Gazor Khan. It was once sheltering the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070–1124), spiritual leader of Islam's heretical Ismaili sect, known as ‘Assassins’.

In popular myth, Sabbah led a bizarre, much-feared mercenary organization whose members were dispatched to murder or kidnap leading political and religious figures of the day.

In the early 1930s, British-Italian explorer and travel writer Freya Stark described her exploration of the place in her book “The Valleys of the Assassins”.

Qal'eh Rudkhan

The Seljuk-era fortress of Qal'eh Rudkhan defends a steep, wooded spur of the Alborz mountain range some 50km south of Rasht and makes a pleasant day trip, especially when coupled with a visit to nearby Masuleh.

Occupying an area of about 50,000 square meters, this medieval structure which is made of brick and stone has been built on two sides of a jagged rocky region so its architecture benefits from natural mountainous features.

Archaeological evidence,

10 incredible fortresses everyone should visit while in Iran



A view of Qa'leh Babak in East Azarbaijan province, northwest Iran.

uncovered by digging, indicates the foundation of the structure was built in the Sasanian era (224–651) and rebuilt in the Seljuk era (ca. 1040–1157).

To access the castle one has to go through a hilly winding route in a dense forest. Upon arrival a big entrance gate flanked by relatively tall towers welcomes visitors.

Arg-e Bam

Arg-e Bam and its cultural landscape are highly regarded as an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement built in vernacular technique using mud layers.

Located on the southern edge of the Iranian high plateau, in Kerman province, the massive fortress and its environs were almost completely brought down to earth due to a devastating earthquake on December 26, 2003.

The origins of the adobe fort can be traced back to the Achaemenid period (6th to 4th centuries BC) and even beyond. The ensemble was at crossroads of important trade routes as well in its heyday sometime between the 7th to 11th centuries.

However, most of what visitors now see at the site are exact replicas of the original structure being restored from 2004 onwards.

Shush Castle

Located in the ruins of the ancient city of Susa in the Khuzestan province, the relatively-new Shush Castle was constructed by French archaeologist Jean-Marie

Jacques de Morgan in the late 1890s, as a secure base for archaeological exploration and excavation.

The castle is similar to medieval monuments in France. However, it was built by local craftsmen with bricks taken from two other archaeological sites, the Achaemenid Darius/Dariush castle and the Elamite Choqazanbil ziggurat.

De Morgan managed to convince the French government of the time of the necessity of sponsoring the construction of the stronghold, which was used as a haven for his team and a place to carry out their studies.

Arg-e Rayen

Another impressive fortress-citadel of the country, Arg-e Rayen is a castle within a castle where visitors may walk through its dark passages and hidden inner

courtyards.

Situated on the margins of a harsh desert near the ancient city of Rayen, the adobe fort still stands tall despite several earthquakes and other natural disasters, which have been flattened similar nearby structures.

Covering an area of about 20,000 square meters, the castle was inhabited until 150 years ago. The history of life in Rayen is said to date from the times of the Sasanian dynasty and even deeper.

Qal'eh Zahak

Constructed in prehistorical times, Qal'eh Zahak served as a government building and a fire temple during the Parthian era (247 BC – 224 CE).

In those years, Zoroastrianism was the official religion of the ruling kings, who likely used part of the fort as a fire temple.

The fortress bears depictions of animals and bizarre symbols. Moreover, it includes a square-shaped hall made of bricks.

It is unidentified why the fort is named Zakhak. However, narratives say Zakhak was the name of an Arab king who conquered parts of Iran.

Later, the fortress was served as a military post given its position close to the Iranian border with other nations in the northwest, including Turkey and Armenia.

Qal'eh Portugaliha

The decaying Qal'eh Portugaliha was constructed in the early 16th century by Portuguese colonizers. It is now a tourist attraction where you can soak up the silence while traveling through time.

Made from reddish stones on a rocky promontory at the north end of the island, the castle was cut off from the rest of the island by a moat, traces of which remain. The stronghold involves an arms depot, water reservoir, barrack, prison, church, command center, and central hall.

Muscular-looking walls, chambers, and archways as well as sets of rusting cannons in the courtyard still give the area a scenic beauty. A subterranean church featuring vaulted ceilings, a watchtower, and a submerged cistern are amongst other attractions of the site. Also, the upper levels of the fort offer wonderful views of the island, its village, rugged mountains all surrounded by the blue waters of the Persian Gulf.

History of the Portuguese Castle of Hormuz Island goes down in time when Commander Afonso de Albuquerque ordered the construction of a fortress in 1507 after his troops capture the island in the early 16th century.

For visitors, it seems to be easy to imagine the hustle and bustle of Portuguese military forces five centuries ago!

Qal'eh Iraj

Situated in the southeast of Tehran province, Qal'eh Iraj (also known as Gabri fort by the locals) was once one of the largest military fortresses of ancient times.

Archaeological estimates suggest the crumbling fortress dates from the Sassanid era (224–651), however, some experts believe it belongs to the time of Kayanids, a semi-mythological dynasty that is mentioned in the Shahnameh, Ferdowsi's magnum opus.

Measuring about 3,000 square meters in area, the fortress has lost its towers some centuries ago – maybe by erosion, and only lengthy and tall clay ramparts have been left. Based on evidence from excavations in 2008, archaeologists believe that the Iraj fortress was likely abandoned shortly after construction.

Magnificent Teppe Hasanlu legal boundaries demarcated

TEHRAN – Legal boundaries and prop-erties have been finalized for Teppe Hasanlu, which is a magnificent Iron Age site in northwest Iran.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tour-ism, and Handicrafts announced the ex-act boundaries of the site along with 14 other ones including two churches, a bridge, and a school in separate letters to the governor-general of the mountainous province, CHTN reported on Friday.

Teppe Hasanlu has so far yielded vari-ous significant relics to glimpses of an-cient life in the region. Some 65 years ago, an Iranian man, named Emamqoli Mohammadi Hasanluei, unearthed a mil-lennia-old gold bowl in the debris of a burned building.

It is here, when in 1958 archaeologists came across a layer of an Iron Age city that had been frozen in time – a ‘burn layer’ containing tens of bodies preserved in ash and rubble. Teppe Hasanlu consists of a 25m high central mound with massive fortifications which is thought to be once a citadel surrounded by paved streets and an outer town with houses, stables, and temples.

Engraved with images of gods and rit-u-als, a stone cylinder with gold caps, a figurine of laminated ivory, and a sword-hilt with a bronze guard, the Gold Bowl of Hasanlu is named after the man who dis-covered it almost 3000 years later not far from a skeletal hand of an individual who had been fleeing with the piece at the end of the 9th century BC. The excavation was led by the celebrated anthropologist and archaeologist Robert H. Dyson, Jr., who shined at Iran’s archaeology scene in the mid-20th century.

In no time it became evident that the bowl epitomized a unique and signifi-



cant example of the ancient goldsmith's expertise, demonstrating a high degree of technical mastery and a wide range of ornamental motifs that were deemed to provide a key to the religious and mytho-logical traditions of its time.

Over the years, the bowl has been dis-cussed in countless scholarly books and articles including an analysis by Ma-rie-Therese Barrelet (1911-1996) as one of the greatest finds of the decade. Im-ages of the crumpled yet still dazzling bowl appeared in newspapers around the world, and scholars began publish-ing their interpretations of the images etched onto this magnificent artifact.

According to the Britannica Encyclo-pedia, Hasanlu was inhabited from about 2100 to about 825 BC, but the richest pe-riod yet excavated dates to the 10th and 9th centuries BC. The period, often called “Mannaean” after the name of the people who lived in the area, is characterized by gray pottery accompanied by black and red varieties, the black ware being of a much finer quality and probably made in imitation of metal vessels.

The Gold Bowl of Hasanlu is being kept at the National Museum of Iran in down-town Tehran.

Historical sites struggle with flood disasters in southern Iran



TEHRAN – Flash floods have inflicted serious damage to several historical sites and buildings across Hormozgan province in southern Iran.

Initial estimates suggest about 85 billion rials (some \$286,000) are needed for the restoration of the sites, ISNA quoted provincial tourism chief Sohrab Banavand as saying on Friday.

Amongst the flood-hit structures are a public bathhouse and seven fortresses including the 16th-century Qal'eh Portugaliha, which was constructed by Portuguese colonizers on Hormuz Island, the official noted.

Moreover, torrential rain triggered flooding in the provinces of Fars, Kerman, and Sistan-Baluchestan claiming the lives of at least eight people.

Known as the province of islands, Hormozgan is located on the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf. It embraces arrays of islands among which Kish, Hormuz, Hengam, and Qeshm are the most popular ones and top tourist destinations in the southernmost parts of the country.

Over the past couple of decades, the

coral Kish Island has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop, and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever-growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks, and retail complexes.

Hormuz, which is mostly barren and hilly, is situated some eight kilometers off the coast on the Strait of Hormuz, which attracts many tourists by its colorful mountains, silver sand shores, and great local people.

Hengam Island has scenery rocky shores, serene sunset, and kind natives, which can attract travelers who enjoy a relaxing trip by spending time on this tranquil island.

Qeshm Island is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. The island also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves, and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a haven for nature-lovers.

Seals of excellence granted to works by Tehran crafters

TEHRAN – 32 quality works handcraft-ed by the natives of Tehran province have gained the national seals of excellence, the deputy provincial tourism has said.

A panel of national juries picked the winners from a shortlist of 43 handi-crafts, Parvaneh Heydari said on Friday.

The selected works include personal ornamentation, paper-maché, traditional lock, Kilim carpet, filigree, Batik technique of wax-resist dyeing, and embossed met-alwork, the official added.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first glob-ally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports



stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calen-dar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the

same period last a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has in-flicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1398. Of the figure, some \$190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heri-tage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamenta-tions with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

