

Report

Christians cry for help over Israeli persecution in Jerusalem

Palestinians Christians have sounded the alarm about the level of persecution they are facing from Israeli settlers backed by Israeli regime forces in the occupied holy city of Jerusalem (al-Quds) with a bid to drive out the religious community.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem who leads the Greek Orthodox church in the Holy Land has spoken out about the “darkness” Palestinian Christians are suffering in the holy land.

Speaking to British media, Patriarch Theophilos referred to the gloomy situation in Jerusalem warning “our presence in Jerusalem is under threat”.

He states “our churches are threatened by Israeli radical fringe groups. At the hands of these Zionist extremists; the Christian community in Jerusalem is suffering greatly. Our brothers and sisters are the victims of hate crimes. Our churches are regularly desecrated and vandalized. Our clergy are subject to frequent intimidation. The sworn intent of these radical groups is to extinguish the light of the Christian community from the Old City.”

He adds that by “working to exclude one community, the Christians, these radicals pose an existential threat not only to the Christian family but to the holy land itself”.

Experts say radical Israeli settler groups squatting on Palestinian land do not carry out such violations without a green light from Israeli authorities as far high as the Israeli cabinet.

Patriarch Theophilos does not speak for all Christians but he certainly echoes the warning by other Christians. For some time now, Church groups have reported attacks of vandalism and other crimes at their religious sites in the city.

Atallah Hanna, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem just recently spoke out about the struggles that Palestinian Christians have to face against Israel's occupation. ▶ Page 5

Report

E3 must match its speed with Iran

TEHRAN— As the Vienna talks enter a sensitive stage, the Western media outlets and the European troika, also known as E3, are trying to blame Iran for “slow progress,” but they seem to have forgotten that that ship has sailed.

As the Americans are accustomed to unilateral sanctions and pressure, and are not accustomed to speaking on an equal footing in international relations, it was expected that the negotiations would go on slowly.

However, what is happening in Vienna is the result of all parties' efforts to reach a lasting understanding.

According to Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh, in the previous weeks Iran noticed that the other side launched a disinformation campaign with the aim of gaining concessions inside the negotiation room, but when they realized that this path was fruitless and wrong, they tried to converse inside the room and move on.

Reports show that somehow good progress has been made in various areas such as nuclear issues, sanctions removal, and verification mechanism, although in some areas there has been more progress.

“The remaining issues are important, and we have reached a point where it shows us whether the other side has the will to move the negotiations forward,” Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

Iran has stressed that a “good agreement” can be achieved in a short time, but the other side has not shown enough seriousness by wasting time in the seventh round.

The E3 must remember that speed is key.

“Speed is important to us in the talks. Of course, it should be noted that speed is a two-way street and we cannot ▶ Page 2

No Country for Spies–Part One



▶ Page 3

Iran's Q3 non-oil trade rises 25% year on year

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 25 percent during the third quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23-December 21, 2021) as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, Iran traded 43.318 million tons of commodities worth \$27.156 billion in the mentioned three months, IRNA reported.

The official noted that the weight of the

traded goods in the mentioned period declined nine percent year on year.

As reported, the country exported 32.337 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$13.335 during autumn, registering a 17-percent rise compared to the figure for the previous year's same time span.

The Islamic Republic also imported 10.981 million tons of commodities worth \$13.821 billion in the said three months, to register a 37-percent rise in terms of value year on year.



**Iran's rowing league held at Azadi Lake**  
TEHRAN – The first round of the 7th edition of the Iran rowing league was held on Sunday in Tehran's Azadi Lake.  
Brazilian rowing coach Pedro Sena attended the competition.  
The Iranian men and women rowers participated in the competition.  
The rowers prepare for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Kashan is where you can dive into ancient Iranian culture

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Atmospheric spaces, rosewater, textiles, rugs, delicious dishes, and above all, hospitable people are some famous examples to describe Kashan in central Iran. The delightful oasis city is famed for numerous architectural masterpieces, a photogenic bazaar, and many old traditional houses some of which transformed into cozy boutique ho-

tels where sightseers may feel the traditional lifestyle.

Kashan is situated neighboring the route of travelers who are on their way to Isfahan, Shiraz, Tehran, and probably Yazd hereinafter. Moreover, it is a gateway to many sights, stories, and surrounding attractive villages to discover.

Its lavishly-decorated traditional houses,

According to Latifi, the value of Iran's non-oil trade also rose 25 percent during the ninth month of the current Iranian calendar year (November 22-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same month in the past year.

As previously announced by the acting head of IRICA, the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent during the first nine months of the current year (March 21-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year. ▶ Page 4

Interview

Beijing opposes expanding nuclear talks to regional issues: Chinese professor

By M. A. Saki

TEHRAN – A Chinese professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Shanghai International Studies University says that Beijing does not support the expansion of the Iran nuclear deal to all other regional issues.

“Despite the U.S. attempts to bundle the Iranian nuclear issue with other regional policies, China does not support the expansion of the Iranian nuclear issue to all other regional security issues,” Yuan Zhang tells the Tehran Times.

“The Iranian nuclear talks should not expand the topic of negotiations to regional issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli issue and the security of the (Persian) Gulf states,” the professor remarks. ▶ Page 5

particularly Brujerdi, Tabatabai, Ameri, and Abbasi house, feature incredible architecture, which certainly will enchant every visitor! Furthermore, the Sultan Mir-Ahmad public bathhouse is also a recommendable destination to see; its tile work, stucco, and ceiling lights are breathtaking.

Don't forget to roam through the domed bazaar, where you can find loads of ▶ Page 6

From Inside



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Interview



Scholar says U.S. less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A professor from Hamline University says that the U.S. reputation suffered greatly during the four years of Donald Trump's presidency so that the U.S. is now “less reliable of a partner”.

“The U.S. is less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump. This may be the new political reality with the USA,” David Schultz tells the Tehran Times.

During his presidency, Trump left certain international agreements, including the Paris climate accords and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Talks started in April 2021 to restore the nuclear deal after President Joe Biden announced that the U.S. is willing to return to the agreement. Talks are still underway in Vienna and some progress has been made, but Iran is seeking guarantees that the U.S. won't abandon any possible agreement again.

Indeed, U.S policies in recent years under the slogan of “America first” have caused the world to be more cynical about Washington's reliability.

Schultz says American leadership entails “diplomatic, cultural, economic, and military tools all coming together to support international agreements and institutions that support U.S. interests.”

Following is the text of the interview:

**What is your expectation about the Vienna talks? While American officials blame Iran for its stance, some European and Russian parties are talking about improvement in the negotiations.**

I have very low expectations for these talks. Even though in theory both ▶ Page 5

Four Iranian players nominated for 2021 world's best

TEHRAN – Four Iranian futsal players have been nominated for the best player in the world in 2021 in four categories.

Launched in 2000, FutsalPlanet Awards, presented by magazine FutsalPlanet, aims to honour the best players of international futsal annually.

Aliasghar Hassanzadeh, who is now the most capped Iranian futsal player, has been nominated for the best men's player in the world.

Hassanzadeh's rivals are Cristian Alejandro Borruto (ARG), Erick Olim Mendonça (POR), Esteban Cejudo Guerrero (ESP), Carlos Vagner Gualarte Filho “Ferrão” (BRA), Jovan Lazarevic (SRB), Alex Rodrigo da Silva Merlim “Babalu” (BRA/ITA), Jean Pierre Guisel Costa “Pito” (BRA) and Rodrigo Hardy Araújo (BRA).

Soheila Malmoli is nominated for the best women's player in the world. ▶ Page 3



## Iran FM visits Oman, says Tehran prioritizes strong ties with Muscat

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, who traveled to Oman on Monday morning for a one-day trip.

“My trip with the accompanying delegation to Muscat is one day. During this visit, we will have talks with high-ranking Omani officials and the Foreign Minister on the development of bilateral relations and some regional and international issues,” he told reporters upon his arrival at Muscat Airport.

Amir Abdollahian described the relations between Tehran and Muscat as long-standing and stable, saying that Iran is interested in promoting political and cultural cooperation to a higher level of economic and trade cooperation in the direction of stable and strong relations.

Referring to the quadripartite agreement on the revival of the transit line, he said, “This agreement has been signed by four countries: Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.”

The foreign minister stressed that Iran hopes that in this trip, considering the government’s view on neighborhood policy and the good things that have happened in the relations with Iran’s northern neighbors in recent months, Iran can create this neighborhood network in the Persian Gulf countries.

Amir Abdollahian also met with Fahad bin Mahmoud Al-Saeed, the Deputy Sultan of Oman.

In the meeting, Iran’s top diplomat referred to the historical, continuous and strategic relations between the two countries of Iran and the Kingdom of Oman, mentioning the important role of Sultan Qaboos, the late King of Oman in the formation of relations between the two countries and the continuation of relations between Tehran and Muscat.

Amir Abdollahian also conveyed the greetings of the Iranian president to Sultan Haitham, and appreciated the presence of the Omani delegation at the inauguration of the president.

Explaining the policy of the government in prioritizing cooperation with the countries of the region, the foreign minister considered Oman as one of the main priorities for cooperation in the region

and emphasized the comprehensive expansion of mutual cooperation in various political, economic and cultural fields.

In the field of economic cooperation, Amir Abdollahian emphasized the readiness of Iran to cooperate in the field of freight and passenger transportation, energy, tourism, airlines and other areas of cooperation.

He also explained Iran’s view of cooperation with the countries of the Persian Gulf region in the framework of the neighborhood policy, emphasizing the absence of any restrictions and exceptions in establishing good relations with the countries of the region.

Regarding the Yemeni crisis, Iran’s top diplomat referred to the principled view of Iran from the beginning of the crisis, which is based on a political and dialogue-based solution, while reiterating the need to follow a political path and dialogue to solve the problems of the Yemeni people.

He also appreciated the valuable efforts of the Omani government in transferring the martyred ambassador of our country in Yemen to Tehran for treatment.

Explaining the latest developments related to the Vienna talks, Amir Abdollahian stressed that Iran wants practical and constructive initiatives from the other parties for the talks to succeed.

He also stated that Iran is showing goodwill and seriousness in reaching a good agreement.

For his part, bin Mahmoud emphasized the close and fraternal relations between the two countries, the expansion of mutual cooperation and Oman’s interest in playing a role in the integration of countries in the region.

Referring to the rich history and culture of Iran, he emphasized the constructive role of Iran in the region.

Following the quadripartite agreement between Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to revive the transit line is also on the agenda of the Iranian foreign minister during the visit.

a three-day break for the New Year holidays.

Representatives of Iran and the P4+1 group began the eighth round of the talks on December 27. The negotiations are focusing on a lifting of all sanctions imposed on Tehran after Washington’s unilateral withdrawal from the agreement. The U.S. is not allowed to directly attend the talks due to its pullout from the landmark deal with Iran in 2018.

On Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said the negotiations in Vienna are on the right track.

Speaking to his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Amir Abdollahian said reaching a good agreement is possible if the Western side shows the required goodwill.

Iran has the required will to reaching a “good agreement,” he added.

“We can (therefore) reach a good agreement if the Western side is likewise in possession of such a good faith and will,” the chief diplomat remarked.

pessimistically or optimistically.

“We negotiate based on reality, and we report to the people accordingly,” he asserted.

It is also important to note that Iran won’t accept any artificial deadline. At the same time, Iran is not also satisfied with the speed of the negotiations. The E3 wasted a lot of time in the seventh round of negotiations and then agreed to negotiate on Iran’s initiatives.

If this will and level of authority by the other side is seen in the coming days, we can say that a good, stable and reliable agreement can be reached in the shortest possible time.

Of course, there are some challenges, including the U.S. unilateral approach to lift sanctions.

The previous U.S. administration unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA and imposed illegal sanctions on Iran, and the current administration has the same one-sided view in defining the sanctions that should be removed, and comes up with lists in this regard and imagines that it is the only one that can decide.

TEHRAN — Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Sunday afternoon held talks with Afghanistan’s acting Foreign Minister Molawi Amir Khan Motaqqi in Tehran.

In the meeting, Amir Abdollahian emphasized that history has proven that the bond between the people of Iran and Afghanistan is of kinship type.

He also said that the endeavors by the zealous people of Afghanistan showed that no foreign power can occupy and rule their country.

The Iranian foreign minister referred to the positive remarks of the Taliban leaders regarding formation of an inclusive government, stressing the need to provide acceptable indicators in this regard.

Amir Abdollahian also spoke of the humanitarian aid sent by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the suffering people of Afghanistan. He said Tehran will continue giving aid to Afghanistan and will also use regional capacities for more humanitarian assistance to alleviate the problems of the Afghan people.

The Iranian foreign minister also condemned the wrong policies of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan over the past 20 years and said sowing discord between Afghanistan and neighboring countries has been a pillar of U.S. policy in the region.

Amir Abdollahian stressed that Afghanistan’s assets frozen by the U.S. should be released and given to the country for humanitarian purposes and help improve the economic situation of the Afghan people.

The Iranian foreign minister also commemorated the memory of the Iranian diplomats martyred in Mazar-e-Sharif in August 1998 and reiterated the responsibility of Afghanistan’s governing body to protect the diplomatic missions.

At the meeting, the Afghan delegation presented a report on the new governing body’s efforts to counter Daesh and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan as well as policies related to fighting drug production and trafficking in the country.

Amir Khan Motaqqi, the acting foreign minister of Afghanistan, thanked the hospitality of the Islamic Republic toward Afghan refugees over the past 43 years.

Motaqqi referred to the affinities

# Taliban officials consult with Iranian officials in Tehran

*Iran FM says sowing discord between Afghanistan and neighbors has been a U.S. policy*



of the two nations, stressing that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always stood by Afghanistan and the new Afghan government also emphasizes that it is not hostile to any neighboring country.

The Afghan delegation also enumerated the U.S. atrocities against the people of Afghanistan. It said although the U.S. left Afghanistan following a humiliating defeat, it continues its policies against the Afghan people, and as a result 80% of Afghans are below the poverty line.

At the meeting, the two sides also discussed Iran’s share of water from the Helmand River. The Afghan delegation underlined its respect for international treaties, including the 1972 Helmand Agreement, saying the technical delegations (water commissioners) of the two countries will meet soon and will resolve related issues.

**Iranian Foreign Ministry assesses talks with Taliban as good**

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a regular news briefing on Monday that the current situation facing the Afghan people is a great concern for Iran.

“Due to United States mismanagement and aggression in this geography, we now see that

according to Afghan officials, 80% of the people of this country are below the poverty line. The people of this country now have problems with fuel, raw materials and medicine. The visit of the Afghan delegation to Iran was also part of this great concern and how we can try to improve the situation of the Afghan people and get the Afghan people out of this situation,” the spokesman stated.

The diplomat assessed the talks as good and said efforts were made to focus on border markets, energy trade, monetary and financial exchanges, establishing joint border free trade zones and meeting the needs of the Afghan people.

“We want to reach agreements and bring them closer to the point of implementation, and during this visit, these issues were addressed in the form of three different working groups,” Khatibzadeh explained.

He also said the visit by the Taliban delegation was successful.

During the visit, the Afghan parties were told that the necessities of an inclusive government must be such that it will be consistent with the future of peace in Afghanistan, the spokesman noted.

“Issues have been raised and we should take the time for the Afghan governing body to take a step in this direction,” he said, adding that

these issues were raised during the Iranian representative’s recent visit to Afghanistan.

“This is a roadmap and all actions are carried out within this framework,” Khatibzadeh asserted.

**We are not at the point of recognizing Taliban**

Responding to a question about recognizing the Taliban government, the spokesman reiterated that Iran is not currently in that stage.

“We are basically not at that point today. Characteristics and components that could lead to the recognition of a new government in Afghanistan were discussed at the meeting. It has been said before. Recognition is something that the governing body of Afghanistan should achieve through responsible behavior and the components that should emerge, and recognition is not something that should be given to them,” he stressed.

Khatibzadeh added that the view of Iran toward the situation of the Afghan people is an inclusive one regardless of their “region and ethnicity”.

“Our view is that all ethnic groups within Afghanistan should have their voices and demands heard. Regarding what we have said, Iran has hosted various Afghan groups in different situations, and in this visit, Iran has also hosted talks. There have been good talks between Afghan groups and we hope that the result will lead to a bright future for the Afghan people,” he remarked.

**Taliban officials meet Iranian special envoy**

During his visit to Tehran, Motaqqi met with Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the special envoy of the Iranian president for Afghanistan.

According to the Taliban Foreign Ministry, the meeting focused on bilateral economic and political relations between Afghanistan and Iran, increased flights, ground transit and other facilities, and the provision of facilities for Afghan refugees.

Upon his return to Kabul, Motaqqi said that his trip to Tehran was positive, saying, “We had positive meetings with the Iranian side in the fields of trade, oil, transit, politics and security.”

Speaking to the Afghanistan state TV, the acting foreign minister said, “Our goal is to establish good relations with the region, especially with neighboring countries.”

## Only 30 showed passports of foreign citizens while boarding Ukrainian plane: Iranian envoy

(Part 2)

TEHRAN - Manuchehr Moradi, Tehran’s ambassador to Kyiv, has said that only 30 passengers who boarded the ill-fated the Ukrainian plane at Imam Khomeini Airport in Tehran on January 8, 2020, carried passports of foreign citizens.

Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 was mistakenly downed by the Iranian military on January 8, 2020. It was mistaken for an invading missile by the United States.

“Only thirty people showed the passports of foreign citizens,” Moradi said in an interview with the Ukrainian UNN news agency on the second anniversary of the tragic incident.

Following is the text of the interview that first part of it was published on Monday.

**You said that during these sessions the names and surnames of the persons were named, but they were not pronounced officially. Have the names and surnames of these people been communicated to the Ukrainian side?**

Considering that the judicial authorities have not yet officially notified, of course, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Embassy cannot inform the Ukrainian side about this. If the names and surnames are officially reported by the court to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ukrainian side will definitely find out about it. Of course, such an opportunity for the families of the Ukrainians killed will exist if they appoint Iranian lawyers for themselves, and through them they can defend their interests in court, and thus learn about the quality of the process of investigating the case.

**The International Group for the Coordination of Assistance to Victims of Flight PS752, which includes Ukraine, Britain, Canada and Sweden, announced a meeting on reparations on November 22 last year. Has the Iranian side**

**refused to participate in this meeting?**

The Iranian delegation during the third round of negotiations announced that it does not officially recognize this so-called “international coordination group”. There are many arguments for this. First of all, it is that, according to the final statistics, of the 176 killed in this disaster, 146 people were Iranians, 11 were Ukrainians, 10 were Afghans, 5 were Canadians and 4 were Swedes. In addition, when leaving the airport, only thirty people showed the passports of foreign citizens, and the rest of the passengers entered the plane with Iranian passports.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, like many countries in the world, does not recognize dual citizenship. Therefore, persons with dual citizenship are considered Iranian citizens. In this regard, not a single British citizen is among the dead, since those persons about whom Britain claims to be its citizens, according to legal norms, are Iranian citizens. Therefore, we cannot perceive the presence of Britain in the coordination group, and therefore the composition of the international coordination group is inherently questionable, and the presence of Britain in it is called into question. Afghanistan from the very beginning of the meetings, taking into account the existing tendencies in this group towards politicization, left this group.

Obviously, Canada is the leader of this group more than other parties, and the government of this country pursues a hostile policy towards Iran and plays a greater role in decision-making than other members of the group. The government of Canada severed diplomatic relations with Iran a few years ago, and in international organizations has consistently taken the most radical and hostile position towards Iran. In this regard, this group is not cohesive enough, and does not have the necessary goodwill to resolve the issue.

Another point, which is very important, and, unfortunately, remains unnoticed by Ukrainian

friends, as well as the so-called “coordination group”, is that during the first round of negotiations in Kyiv, three other states (Britain, Sweden and Canada) during online meetings provided Ukraine with representative powers to negotiate payments with Iran and stated that in this case, there is no need to negotiate with other states. During this meeting, the Iranian side raised the specific question that if we reach an agreement on payments, will other states agree with this, and they clearly stated their support for any agreement between Iran and Ukraine.

Therefore, for these two important reasons, there is no argument in favor of negotiations with the so-called “coordination group”. We are nevertheless convinced that during the three rounds of negotiations with the Ukrainian government we achieved good results, however, unfortunately, the positions of some members of this group, especially Canada, contributed to deviating from the path in which the case was moving forward, in particular, on the issue of payments.

During the three rounds of negotiations, representatives of departments related to the issue of payments were also present, however, the Ukrainian side insisted that, they say, we were not in a hurry to negotiate payments, and after clarifying other aspects of the case, we would approach the issue of payments. In my opinion, if the mentioned countries seek to resolve the issue of payments, they should allow them to follow the path that was opened and encourage their citizens to receive the amount proposed by Iran. The issue of paying the amount for the plane is also being considered by UIA and the Iranian side. Therefore, it seems to us that there is no need to determine new dates and threats and ultimatums. The Islamic Republic of Iran also has no reason to start any negotiations under the pressure of threats and ultimatums.

*(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))*

## Source dismisses report on ‘2-year deal’ in Vienna talks

TEHRAN – A source close to the Iranian nuclear team has dismissed as “fake” a report claiming that Tehran and the P4+1 group (Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany) have agreed on an interim two-year deal in the Vienna talks intended to lift sanctions on Iran.

The source told Tasnim in Vienna that the report is “utterly false and fake”.

The London-based Rai al-Youm newspaper has claimed that Iran and the negotiating partners have completed a two-year deal by which the U.S. would lift all sanctions placed on Iran during the Trump administration and all of Iran’s enriched uranium would be shipped to Russia in return.

The new round of talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the termination of sanctions on Tehran resumed in Vienna last Monday.

The negotiations resumed after the parties took

## E3 must match its speed with Iran

From page 1 ► move at the speed of light and expected to do so, but the other side move with a slow speed. The speed of the two sides should be commensurate, and this will make the negotiations go faster,” the Foreign Ministry spokesman reiterated.

All sides have to continue negotiations that would result in a stable and credible agreement and this entails commensurate speed. Now, it is only Iran that is speeding up.

It is important to remember that the Vienna talks are being held to ensure that the United States would responsibly return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and fulfill its commitments and lift the sanctions it has imposed on Iran.

“In these negotiations we do not discuss or accept anything beyond the JCPOA. As I said before, Iran and the United States have exchanged views through informal written texts on four issues: sanctions removal, nuclear commitments, verification, and decision-making,” Khatibzadeh stated.

He added that Iran does not negotiate



SPORTS

## Four Iranian players nominated for 2021 world's best

From Page 1 ► The Palayesh Naft Abadan player has to compete with Amanda Lyssa de Oliveira Crisostomo “Amandinha” (BRA), Emily Micaela Marcondes (BRA), Janice Eloísa Da Silva (POR), Luana Verucia de Moura (BRA), Elizaveta Nikitina (RUS), Patricia González Mota “Peque” (ESP), Renata Adamatti “Renatinha” (BRA/ITA), Tatiane Debiasi Croceta “Taty” (BRA) and Débora Vanin “Miuda” (BRA) to win the accolade.

Iran futsal team custodian Alireza Samimi was nominated for the best men's goalkeeper in the world.

The other nine candidates include Vietnam's Ho Van Y (Vietnam), Andre Deko Pereira Coelho (Brazil), Didac Plana Oltra (Spain), Federico Perez Garrigos (Spain), Thiago Mendes Rocha Guitta (Brazil), Leonardo De Melo Vieira Leite Higuita (Brazil/Kazakhstan), Nicolas Sarmiento (Argentina), Dmitri Putilov (Russia) and Willian Felipe Dorn (Brazil).

Salar Aghapour has been also shortlisted for the best men's young player.

Aghapour's rivals are Antonio Pérez Ortega (ESP), Ernesto Claudino Gris (BRA), Kamil Gereykanov (RUS), Marcos Elian Ferreyra (ARG), Miguel Angel Cano Mellado (ESP), Muhammad Osamanmusa (THA), Pedro Henrique dos Santos Damaceno Ribeiro “Pedrinho” (BRA), Anton Sokolov (RUS) and Izaquel Gomes “Zicky” Te’ (POR/GNB).

## Rezvani remains president of Iran swimming federation

TEHRAN – Mohsen Rezvani was re-elected as president of Iran swimming federation on Monday for a four-year term till 2026.

In the elections held at the Iran's Academy Olympic in Tehran, Rezvani secured 55 of 58 votes cast.

There were three blank votes.

Rezvani has been chosen as president of the swimming federation for the third time in a row.

Iran Amateur Swimming Federation was founded on 1947.

## Iran to play India in 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup opener

TEHRAN – Iran will open the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup with a match against India in Group A on January 20.

Iran will also meet China and Chinese Taipei on Jan. 23 and 26 respectively.

The AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022 will be held in India from January 20 to February 6 in India.

It will serve as the final stage of Asian qualification for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Five teams will qualify directly for the World Cup via the knockout stage (including play-offs for fifth place or possibly sixth place), and two more teams will advance to the inter-confederation play-offs.

## Komeil Ghasemi to help Cambodian wrestlers to shine in Asia and World

TEHRAN – Iranian Olympic gold medal winner Komeil Ghasemi is going to help the Cambodia wrestlers in Asian and global

competitions in the future.

The wrestler was chosen as head coach of the Asian country in late 2021.

“Wrestling is not as popular in Cambodia compared to other countries. This lack of attention causes wrestlers to stay away from new and more advanced training methods. There is also the issue of weak wrestling techniques and tactics. These make things difficult for me. I have start from scratch, from the basics of wrestling, Ghasemi said in an interview with Khemer Times.

“A lot of work needs to be done in order to improve the skills and capabilities of Cambodian wrestlers. In the beginning and in the short run, the most important thing to achieve is to raise the technical and physical levels of the wrestlers. The most important thing to do in the next stage is for them to go against wrestlers who are technically and physically superior to them.

“Having the right training programs and confidence is very important. I will do my best and make sure that Cambodian wrestling will get the best results. The program will continue until the 2023 SEA Games.

“Cambodian wrestlers have the potential to perform well in Asian and global competitions in the future. This, however, requires long-term planning and adequate funding for the sport,” he added.

## Iraq defender Sulaka likely to miss Iran match

TEHRAN - Iraq football team defender Rebin Sulaka will likely miss the match against Iran in the 2022 World Cup qualifier.

Buriram Thailand club announced the defender has tested positive for COVID-19.

Iraq midfielder Mohammed Qasim Majid will also likely miss the match due to a foot injury.

Iraq are scheduled to play Iran on Jan. 27 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

It is a must-win match for the Iraqi team since the team sit two points behind Group A third-place team the UAE.

The third-place team will qualify for the play-off match.

## Faraz Kamalvand on verge of parting company with Naft Masjed Soleyman

TEHRAN – Faraz Kamalvand will part ways with Iranian top-flight club Naft Masjed Soleyman.

The 45-year-old coach will leave Naft Majed Soleyman by mutual consent.

Kamalvand was named Naft Masjed Soleyman coach in late September but failed to live up to expectations.

Naft Masjed Soleyman will host Esteghlal on Thursday in Matchday 15 of Iran Professional League.

## Omani midfielder Al-Alawi linked with Esteghlal

TEHRAN – Oman national football team midfielder Arshad Al-Alawi has been linked with a move to Iranian football club Esteghlal.

The Omani media reports suggest that Esteghlal have shown interest in signing the player.

The attacking midfielder is a member of Omani club Al-Shabab.

Al-Alawi also plays for Oman national football team.

The Iranian club have not confirmed the transfer so far.

# Iran FM sends congratulatory message to Tajik counterpart

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has sent message to his counterpart from the Republic of Tajikistan, Sirojiddin Muhriddin, congratulating him as well as the country's government and people on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and the friendly and brotherly country of Tajikistan.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan have achieved a high level of bilateral, regional and international relations over the past three decades by using deeply historical, cultural, civilizational and linguistic commonalities. Now a new chapter has begun in the relations between Iran and Tajikistan,” Amir Abdollahian said in the message, according to the Iranian foreign ministry.

In the message, the Iranian foreign minister announced Tehran's readiness to further develop all-out cooperation with Tajikistan and expressed hope that we will witness further expansion of the long-standing and friendly relations between the two countries.

The Iranian foreign minister also sent a similar message to Australia. In this message, he congratulated his Australian counterpart Marise Payne, as well as the country's government and people on the occasion of Australia's National Day.

In his message, Amir Abdollahian



said, “I hope that in light of mutual efforts and cooperation, we will see the flourishing of relations between the two countries.”

Earlier, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi received a message from his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon offering congratulations on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Tajik president expressed confidence that Iran and Tajikistan can further boost their relations drawing on their historical and cultural common grounds.

“Please accept my sincere congratulations and best wishes of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan to Your Excellency on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic

relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, an event of remembrance for the people of the two countries,” President Rahman told Ayatollah Raisi in the message.

He added, “During this period, our countries have continuously developed practical measures in order to achieve a high level of constructive relations, find new ways to strengthen comprehensive cooperation and provide a fruitful perspective for their expansion, and we appreciate the continuation of the two countries' efforts on this important path.”

The Tajik president continued, “Tajikistan is always in favor of the increasing development of our countries' relations in various fields with the spirit of good understanding, cooperation and trust, preparation and implementation of plans and

programs and consistent measures to achieve these goals.”

President Rahman reiterated, “I am confident that with strong determination and sincere and joint efforts of the two sides, we can enrich the relations between the two countries with historical and cultural common grounds with more significant results and in the highest interests of our peoples.”

Tehran-Dushanbe ties have been significantly boosted after Ayatollah Raisi assumed the presidency in last August. In his first foreign visit, Ayatollah Raisi traveled to Tajikistan on top of a high-ranking delegation to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit and held talks with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon.

Speaking with the Tajik leader, Raisi stressed that Iran and Tajikistan enjoy good capacities to expand ties. He said an increase in ties will pave the way for regional cooperation.

On the sidelines of Raisi's visit to Tajikistan, officials from both sides had also met and set the goal for promoting trade ties to €500 million per year.

The delegations also signed eight cooperation documents, in different areas including tourism, labor and energy.

Earlier in June, Dushanbe had hosted the 14th meeting of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee.

## No Country for Spies – Part One

TEHRAN – The election of Joe Biden to the U.S. presidency has been depicted by many U.S. politicians and pundits as an opportunity to heal wounds left by Donald Trump. But Biden's foreign policy, especially toward the West Asia region, proved in no uncertain terms that the U.S.'s inexorable journey toward decline continues unabated.

Over the course of his public service career, Biden fostered a self-created image of being a foreign policy savvy. One that enjoys unmatched experience and expertise in the corridors of American foreign policy.

But events ranging from Afghanistan to Yemen delivered a severe blow to his reputation. In August, the Biden administration carried out a chaotic and disorderly withdrawal from Afghanistan that led to the rise of the Taliban, the very same group the U.S. fought for two decades. The scene of Afghans clinging to and then falling from a U.S. airplane taking off from the crowded runway of Kabul's airport caused uproar across the globe.

In a bid to whitewash his disorderly withdrawal, Biden sought to put it in the broader context of reassessing American foreign policy. “This decision about Afghanistan is not just about Afghanistan. It's about ending an era of major military operations to remake other countries,” the U.S. president said in a speech from the White House 24 hours after the last soldier left Kabul.

Of course, the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan wasn't Biden's alone. It was the brainchild of the “establishment,” so to speak. But the way it was conducted reveals the extent to which American foreign policy toward the West Asia region has become messy and chaotic.

This chaos is also clear in many other hotspots. For example, Yemen is experiencing an American backing down on a Biden promise to pressure

Saudi Arabia into putting an end to its war on Yemen. After some diplomatic histrionics, the Biden administration gave up on its Yemen efforts and put the blame on the Sanaa-based government for the failure of the peace talks. The Biden administration also greenlighted a Saudi escalation of bombing in Yemen. The Saudis are now operating in Yemen as if they have a carte blanche from America.

In Syria, the Biden administration shelved previous plans for withdrawal and continued to maintain its illegal occupation of Syria's territories. In Iraq, the Biden administration insists on keeping its troops there against the will of the Iraqis.

The U.S. confused, and in some cases contradictory, policies toward the region is a sign of the U.S. decline in general. And U.S. allies in the region are already taking measures to adjust to this fact.

“America's problems in the Middle East and its environs didn't begin with the withdrawal. A distinct decline began 20 years earlier, with the reckless, costly and disastrous decisions to invade both Afghanistan and Iraq, followed by the decision to occupy them simultaneously and to attempt to create ‘democracies’ that would support U.S. interests,” wrote James Zogby, the president of the Arab American Institute, in an opinion piece for the UAE-owned newspaper, The National.

In many ways, U.S. allies in the region are trying to prepare themselves for post-American West Asia. A case in point is the efforts Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have done to wean themselves off defense dependence on an unreliable and increasingly unpredictable America.

U.S. intelligence agencies have assessed that Saudi Arabia is now actively manufacturing its own ballistic missiles with the help of China, CNN reported recently. Citing sources familiar with

the matter, the American news television said U.S. officials at numerous agencies, including the National Security Council at the White House, have been briefed in recent months on classified intelligence revealing multiple large-scale transfers of sensitive ballistic missile technology between China and Saudi Arabia.

The UAE has also received a rebuke from the U.S. for allegedly collaborating with China in the military sphere.

The Wall Street Journal reported in November last year that U.S. intelligence agencies learned last spring that China was secretly building what they suspected was a military facility at a port in the United Arab Emirates, one of the U.S.'s closest Mideast allies.

In December, Anwar Gargash, a diplomatic adviser to the UAE leadership, said the UAE ordered work halted on the alleged Chinese facility in the country after American officials argued that Beijing intended to use the site for military purposes. But the UAE official said the facility was not intended for military uses.

“We stopped the work on the facilities,” Gargash said. “But our position remains the same, that the facilities were not military facilities.”

The cases of Abu Dhabi and Riyadh seeking secret cooperation with China have been seen by many observers as an indicator of the two Arab allies of Washington trying to reduce their reliance on Washington. Because they believe the U.S. power in the region is on the decline.

The chaotic nature of the U.S. decision-making process is not limited to its foreign policy toward West Asia. It also heavily weighs on how it deals with the spies who put their lives in danger working for Washington in potentially perilous regions.

Continued

## Ayatollah Raisi meets Turkmenistan special envoy

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has met with the Special Envoy of the President of Turkmenistan Sardar Berdimuhamedow, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

The two Turkmen officials delivered a written message from the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, to Ayatollah Raisi.

Speaking on Sunday in a meeting with the Special Envoy of the President of Turkmenistan and the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov, Ayatollah Raisi stated that Tehran-Ashgabat relations are on the path to development, adding, “We are determined to take effective and

useful steps in political, economic, cultural and social relations for the benefit of our nations.”

Ayatollah Raisi called the bilateral meeting with the President of Turkmenistan in Ashgabat and the telephone calls between the two sides the beginning of a new chapter in the development of relations between the two countries and said, “In these talks, proper decisions were made to remove the existing obstacles on the path of the development of cooperation, including in the field of transportation and energy, and the ground for expanding and deepening relations between the two countries has been facilitated.”

Ayatollah Raisi pointed out, “Tehran

welcomes the proposals of the other side in the field of strengthening and promoting cooperation in various sectors, especially in the field of energy, trade and commerce, and there are no obstacles and restrictions in this regard.”

Expressing that Tehran attaches special importance to the development of relations with neighboring countries, the President said, “Iran and Turkmenistan are not just two neighboring countries, but also have kinship relations with each other and the two nations have deep-rooted and deep cultural and historical ties.”

In this meeting, the Special Envoy of the President of Turkmenistan presented the written message from Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



## Iran's Q3 non-oil trade rises 25% year on year



From page 1 ► Alireza Moghadasi said that Iran has traded over 122.5 million tons of non-oil products worth \$72.1 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

According to Moghadasi, the weight of trade in the mentioned period also grew by

11 percent in comparison to the figure for the previous fiscal year.

The official put the nine-month non-oil exports at 92.3 million tons valued at \$35.1 billion, with a 40-percent rise in value and eight percent growth in weight.

He noted that the value of the country's non-oil exports in the first nine months of the current year has exceeded the total value of exports in the previous year and the figure is expected to reach \$47 billion by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2022).

Moghadasi said the value of Iran's non-oil trade with foreign partners is expected to reach \$98 billion by the yearend.

## Industry Ministry aims to pursue knowledge-based development in automotive industry

TEHRAN – Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin met with Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari on Monday to discuss the knowledge-based development of the country's automobile industry, IRNA reported.

In this meeting, which was hosted by the Industry Ministry, the officials analyzed the automotive industry from the perspective of a knowledge-based economy.

Designing and developing new platforms and producing new car series based on them using the capacities of the supply chain, was among the solutions proposed in this meeting for pushing the country's auto industry towards development.

The officials also referred to the Industry Ministry's new structure and the formation of Transportation Industries Department within this structure with three separate offices including the auto industry, rail, and marine industries, and aviation industry.

Over the past few years, the Iranian automotive industry, as one of the country's major industries, has been facing serious problems and challenges such as accumulated losses, low quality of products, and high debts to parts manufacturers and the supply chain sectors.

Back in December 2021, Fatemi-Amin said his ministry has prepared a nine-axis program for evolution in the automotive industry which will be unveiled soon.

The mentioned program includes all challenges and solutions in this industry, the



Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin (L) and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari

minister noted.

“Car is one of the most political products and important issues in the country, which on the one hand is highly challenged and on the other hand has various capacities”, the official stated.

Pricing should be such that domestic manufacturing has an advantage, the minister further reiterated.

Based on the latest data released by the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, car manufacturing in Iran rose 4.7 percent during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Iranian carmakers manufactured 651,408 vehicles in the eight-month period of this year, while the figure was 622,144 in the same time span of the previous year.

# Development of South Pars phase 11 accelerating

TEHRAN – The managing director of Petropars Company, which is in charge of developing phase 11 of Iran's South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, has announced the implementation of two new contracts as of December 22, 2021 to accelerate the development of the mentioned phase, Shana reported.

According to Hamid-Reza Masoudi, the mentioned deals are concerned with the construction of an off-shore pipeline as well as the installation of the phase's SDP11B platform.

“The engineering, procurement and implementation activities corresponding to these two contracts have officially started since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] month [December 22, 2021],” Masoudi said.

In order to transfer and install the mentioned platform to position 11B in the shortest possible time,



after the necessary studies we awarded the project to an Iranian company in the form of an Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Installation (EPCI) contract, he said.

The required items and equipment for the project have been ordered or purchased by Petropars based on Long Lead Items (LLI) procurement method so that the project can be completed as scheduled, the official added.

Mentioning the offshore pipeline project, Masoudi said: “The gas and gas condensate

produced in the first phase of the project which is expected to be about 11 million cubic meters per day will be sent to onshore processing facilities in Pars 2 region through this pipeline.”

When fully developed, the South Pars phase 11 project will have a production capacity of two billion cubic feet per day or 370,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day. The produced gas will be fed into Iran's gas network.

Iran had previously awarded the development of phase 11 project to a consortium comprised of France's Total,

China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), and Petropars which is a subsidiary of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), however Total and CNPCI pulled out of the project in 2019 due to the U.S. sanctions.

Currently, Petropars is developing the phase 11 project after its partners left the contract.

The drilling operation for the first well of mentioned phase was officially started in December 2020. In the early production stage, the output of this phase will reach 500 million cubic feet (equivalent to 14 million cubic meters) per day.

South Pars is the world's largest gas field, covering an area of 3,700 square kilometers of Iran's territorial waters.

The giant field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate. The field is divided into 24 standard phases.

## Monthly transit of goods via Iran increases 53%

TEHRAN- Transit of goods via Iran has risen 53 percent during the ninth month of the current Iranian calendar year (November 22-Decemembr 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that 1.057 million tons of goods were transited via the country during the seven-month period.

Iran is one of the countries that have a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

In the south of Iran is the Persian Gulf, which is home to the world's major oil-producing countries. This region is considered the energy bottleneck of the world.

In the north of Iran is the Caspian Sea, which is the best bridge between Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan and can play an important role in trade between these countries.

The country, on the other hand, borders

Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to the west and east.

In other words, it can be said that Iran communicates with 15 countries through land and water borders, and at the same time it can act as a bridge between these countries (with each other and other parts of the world).

These countries have a large population and high income which can be effective as a factor in the development of transit and trade in the region.

### Iran enjoys a special transit status due to its strategic location

The connection of Central Asian countries with the Persian Gulf, as well as the establishment of trade relations between East Asia and European countries through Iran, is very cost-effective so that many of these

countries seek to establish such relations through Iran.

This status has provided the country with many opportunities and by optimal use of these opportunities through the expansion of the transportation network and reliable and efficient communication, Iran can achieve foreign currency earnings and economic growth, and make transit revenue a suitable



alternative to oil export while improving its strategic position in the region.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due. To take full advantage of its location for transit, the country has many plans underway and, on the agenda, to boost its transit capacity.

Some of these plans include developing Shahid Rajaei Port, Iran's largest and most-equipped container port in the south, and also Chabahar Port in the southeast of the country, connecting the ports to the railway network, development of transit via railway, and also some customs measures such as improving transit procedures in the customs offices.

## Commodities worth over \$696m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 2.115 million tons of commodities worth 202 trillion rials (about \$696.55 million) were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the weekly trade witnessed a 77-percent rise in value and 33-percent growth in weight.

The exchange experienced trade of 1.706 million tons of commodities valued at more than 144.543 trillion rials (about \$498.42 million) on its metals and mineral trading floor.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 399,000 tons of commodities worth nearly 55.524 trillion rials (about \$191.46 million).

Last but not least was the IME's



side market with 9,570 tons of commodities traded on it.

As previously reported, during the past Iranian calendar month (ended on November 21, 2021), 8.961 million tons of commodities worth \$2.357 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange, indicating 18 percent rise in the value and 24 percent growth in the weight of trades as compared to its preceding month.

The exchange sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 7.387 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$1.42 billion.

Items traded on this floor included 5.176 million tons of cement, 1.452 million tons of steel, 521,000 tons of iron ore, 172,000

tons of sponge iron (DRI), 31,445 tons of aluminum, 30,535 of zinc, 29,100 tons of copper, 560 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 200 tons of metallurgical coke, 81 tons of precious metals concentrate and 63 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the exchange saw trade of more than 1.53 million tons of commodities worth almost \$907 million on its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 447,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 441,510 tons of bitumen, 324,851 tons of polymeric products, 150,081 tons of chemicals, 135,000 tons of lube cut, 15,682 tons of oil, 13,850 tons of sulfur, 546 tons of insulation and 50 tons of argon.

It's worth noting that the IME's agricultural trading floor played host to trading one ton of saffron in this month.

Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded

12,222 points.

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

During the past week, the indices of Mobarakeh Steel

42,795 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities.

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

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

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

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

Company, Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company, Saipa Company, Social Security Investment Company, National Copper Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

## ICCIMA stresses need for maintaining industrial parks' infrastructure



TEHRAN – Members of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Industries Committee have stressed the need for allocating a portion of the national budget for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21) for maintaining the infrastructure in industrial parks across the country.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, in their latest meeting on Sunday, the ICCIMA Industries Committee members examined the issues related to the country's industrial parks which were mainly concerned with the reconstruction, repair, and maintenance of the infrastructure in these parks.

The attendees of the meeting emphasized that in order to resolve the infrastructure-related issues in the country's industrial parks a separate credit line must be defined in the national budget bill in this regard.

Speaking in this meeting, Industries Committee Head Alireza Samadi-Kolahi mentioned the old regulations for financing industrial parks, saying: “We tried hard to revive the old law that allowed the government to allocate a share of municipal value-added tax to industrial parks. But this law is no longer approved. But perhaps part of the provincial development budget can be allocated for this purpose.”

The government used to allocate a portion of the Municipalities' value-added tax to industrial parks, however, the law has been changed and this funding is no longer provided.

Further in the meeting, the attendees pointed to the government's plans for allocating 660 trillion rials (about \$2.2 billion) for a new fund called Iran Progress and Justice Fund, which is aimed to finance developing infrastructure in various provinces and noted that a portion of the mentioned funding can be allocated for maintaining the infrastructure in industrial parks.

According to the ICCIMA committee members, the infrastructures in industrial parks including sewage, water, treatment plants, access roads, etc., are worn out and have practically lost their efficiency, while there is no budget to reconstruct or maintain these infrastructures.

## TEDPIX drops 4,000 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 4,180 points to 1.332 million on Monday.

As reported, over 5.129 billion securities worth 29.371 trillion rials (about \$101.27 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index dopped 1,838 points, and the second market's index fell



# Scholar says U.S. less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump

From page 1 ▶ the U.S. and Iran want an agreement, in reality I do see the politics or incentives lining up. For Iran, as it gets closer to a critical mass in terms of enriched uranium, the hardliners see little incentive to reach a deal, especially given that they cannot trust the U.S. not to pull out again. For the U.S., while Biden would like to resolve the Iran issue to move on to Russia and China, he is distracted by the latter two and he also faces both internal political pressure and pressure from the Saudis and Israel not to compromise. Overall, an agreement is possible but difficult and it is hard to see what the terms would be.

Even when certain governments reach an agreement with the U.S. and abide by it, there is no guarantee that the U.S. won't leave it. Trump's abrogation of the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – is an example. Given such an experience, how can other countries trust the U.S.?



This is one of the major stumbling blocks in terms of reaching agreement here. The U.S. is less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump. This may be the new political reality with the USA.

Many American politicians and

political leaders are talking about U.S. leadership (except Trump who raised the motto of America first). What are the main requirements of such a leadership?

U.S. leadership requires American engagement in the world. The re-

treat inward makes that more difficult, as well as possibly the growing reluctance after Afghanistan to use force as an alternative. Leadership requires diplomatic, cultural, economic, and military tools all coming together to support international agreements and institutions that support U.S. interests.

What are your comments on Trump's criticism of Biden? Is he a serious rival to Biden in 2024?

For now Trump remains a serious rival to Biden in 2024, if both decide to run. There is a lot that can happen between now and the 2022 midterm elections. Remember, in 1982 Ronald Reagan looked certain to lose and then won big in 1984.

To what extent does U.S. foreign policy draw the attention of the American public?

Right now foreign policy is a minor issue for the public. The economy, the pandemic, and crime are far larger issues.

## Christians cry for help over Israeli persecution in Jerusalem

From page 1 ▶ In December, Hanna was hospitalized after Israeli regime forces struck him with gas canister attack at his Jerusalem church. From his hospital bed, he warned of his strong belief that the occupation forces had tried to have him assassinated, or at the minimum poison him to the extent that he is weakened and unable to continue his daily activities.

Hanna has been an outspoken critic of Israel's occupation of Palestine, and its persecution of Christians as well as Muslims in the occupied territories. On many occasions he has made powerful speeches within occupied Palestine and abroad. He has promoted Palestinian unity and raised the issue that Christian Palestinians in the occupied territories are oppressed and terrorized just as badly as Muslim Palestinians.

Just a few weeks before the regime attacked him with injuries that left him in a hospital bed, he spoke at a conference in the Turkish city of Istanbul devoted to raising awareness about the Palestinian issue warning that Christians cannot stay silent regarding Israeli crimes.

He says "there is no disunity between Muslims and Christians in Palestine.. We are all one family. Muslims here are our closest friends. The only danger and persecution we face is from the occupation."

"There is no disunity between Muslims and Christians in Palestine," said Hanna in his speech. "We are all one family. Muslims here are our closest friends. The only danger and persecution we face is from the occupation... Many Christians in the West support Israel. Yet Israel's actions go against all moral and religious values."

Given Hanna's highly vocal criticism of the occupation, Israel's blatant attack on his church shows how keen the regime has been to crack down on any form dissent no matter what m faith the individual belongs to.

The regime has also gone to great lengths to avoid putting its apartheid crimes under the spotlight. For instance even those visiting the occupied Holy Land, Israeli tour firms operating in Bethlehem do not give a full guided tour of the city and its Christian sites to avoid showing the settlement wall built in the Second Intifada (uprising) of 2003.

This apartheid wall which has expanded so vastly and infringed on so many Palestin-



ian rights including there ability to walk from town to town or village to village without making a massive diversion or being harassed at a checkpoint. It has not only infringed on Palestinians' movement, but also their dignity and the quality of their life.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 following a military offensive against a defenseless population. Since then, Israeli settlement activity has continuously expanded with illegal settler communities squatting, which are segregated from the native Palestinian population.

All settlements are considered illegal under internal law.

Such a system has been likened to apartheid by much of the international community including UN bodies, human rights groups, and even U.S. government officials such as former Vice President John Kerry.

A Palestinian citizen of Bethlehem, Fadi Qattan says "I can't visit the [Christian] holy sites... under the current [Israeli] separatist regime in Palestine with its checkpoints and separation wall".

Jews, Muslims, and Christians had once lived in great peaceful harmony across Palestine, with religious freedom for all. Yet Israel's illegal founding in the early 1920's by the British, a regime that would go on to receive widespread support from the United States, forced a mass exodus of the Palestinians living there, and the Christian population has since dwindled.

There are approximately 400,000 Palestinian Christians who live in the diaspora worldwide. There are also roughly 50,000 Christian Palestinian who remain living in the occupied territories despite the atrocities they face. Many have also emigrated because of the difficulties they endured living

under occupation.

Last Christmas, Israel initially blocked Palestinian Christian residents in the besieged Gaza Strip, who sought to visit Bethlehem for the holiday season. Eventually it allowed a number of Palestinians to leave, but only a small minority were given permits to leave, meaning that the majority were still barred from temporarily visiting Bethlehem the birth place of Prophet Jesus peace be upon him.

Similarly, in April last year, Israel imposed harsher restrictions on Palestinian Christians in Gaza hoping to visit Bethlehem for the religious Easter pilgrimage.

The challenges presented by radical Israeli settler groups backed by the regime's forces in occupied Jerusalem (al-Quds) to both the Christian and Muslim communities have been met with condemnation by the international community, including rights groups.

The Israeli Palestine conflict has often been misrepresented as one between Jews and Muslims, however Christians are suffering just the same. The reality is Zionism has taken over the name of the peaceful Jewish faith and it's extremist elements have deviated from the Jewish religion.

Experts widely agree that not all Jews are Zionists and not all Zionists are Jews. In fact many Zionists are Christian and Jewish extremists who have deviated from both the Christian and Jewish faiths and committed atrocities and war crimes and crimes against humanity in occupied Palestinian land.

However, there has been little action taken by the international community, no punitive measures or sanctions against the Israeli regime, that you would expect to see if this type of terror was practiced anywhere else in the world.

Critics argue Israel is literally getting away with murder as it has the backing of the United States which not only shields the Israeli occupation in the United Nations Security Council but America itself lives by the rule of the jungle.

The longer the world issues only statements of condemnation and takes no real action, the longer Palestinians will continue to suffer under the apartheid entity in the occupied lands; regardless of their religion.



China sees Australia and other nations as "tributary states."

In September, Australia signed a defense and security pact with the US and UK. The pact, known as AUKUS, provides a path for the Royal Australian

Navy to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

In December, Prime Minister Scott Morrison revealed that Australia agreed to buy K9 Thunder self-propelled howitzers from South Korea.

## Beijing opposes expanding nuclear talks to regional issues: Chinese professor

**"JCPOA is not just an issue between Iran and the United States"**

From page 1 ▶ Following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate the Vienna talks? Is there any glimmer of hope to reach an agreement?

The Vienna talks have struggled to move forward amid stumbles. Given the differences between the United States and Iran, the prospects for negotiations are oppressive, but there is also some hope. The most important reason for optimism about the prospects of the negotiations is that the resumption of negotiations is a widely shared demand of all parties. Whether it is the Biden administration that wants to fulfill its campaign commitment or Iran that wants to lift sanctions to revive its economy, it is in their respective interests to return to the negotiating table.

Of course, in order to push for a realistic agreement, the claims made by all parties should be legitimate and reasonable, and countries should not intimidate others at every turn, especially not by threatening to use military means to force the other side to make concessions.

Negotiations on the Iran nuclear deal should center on the Iranian nuclear issue itself, with the agreement aiming to establish controls and monitoring mechanisms to ban production of nuclear weapons, to lift sanctions against Iran, to restore crude oil exports, and to ensure compliance with the agreement and prevent any withdrawal from it.

How do you see China's role in efforts to revive the JCPOA? What are the main advantages of reviving the nuclear deal for China?

China formally called the talks on the JCPOA beneficial and considers it has entered a new stage.

China is firmly committed to political and diplomatic solutions to the Iran nuclear issue and to the effectiveness of the negotiations. China sees the Vienna talks as an opportunity to push the JCOPA back on track.

China maintains an objective and impartial position and advocates that all parties to the nuclear negotiations should work to maintain the negotiation process and explore creative solutions. China understands Iran's reasonable demand for lifting sanctions, supports Iran in safeguarding its legitimate interests, supports the negotiations, and will be willing to see an historic agreement reached in the Vienna talks.

Despite the U.S. attempts to bundle the Iranian nuclear issue with other regional policies, China does not support the expansion of the Iranian nuclear issue to all other regional security issues. The Iranian nuclear talks should not expand the topic of negotiations to regional issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli issue and the security of the (Persian) Gulf states.

The JCPOA is not just an issue between Iran and the United States. The revival of negotiations would contribute to regional political

**"China has no intention of replacing the U.S. in West Asia."**

China, besides Iran and Russia, is among the countries that are subjected to U.S. unilateral sanctions. What are the fallouts of U.S. embargoes on these countries? Do you think sanction policy is efficient?

China is firmly opposed to the U.S. governments successive "Long-arm jurisdiction" and sanctions against other countries. Those trade sanctions imposed by the United States on China prompt countermeasures and the damage will not only affect many countries and regions, but ultimately hit the United States' own interests.

Imposition of sanctions flout international law and international rules. Unjustified sanc-



tions cannot toxify a powerful regime nor hamstring its progress.

How can the Iran-China strategic partnership change the game in the region especially when it comes to encountering U.S. sanctions?

The year 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Iran. The two countries have reached a good strategic cooperation relationship. The China-Iran friendship had weathered the international changes. The China-Iran Comprehensive Cooperation Program opens up broad prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

The United States has been adopting a strategic contraction in the Middle East (West Asia) in recent years. After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the U.S. contraction posture has become more pronounced. There is a contradiction between the relatively aggressive U.S. attitude of maintaining the addition of new restrictions in the nuclear negotiations and the de facto U.S. behavior of strategic contraction from the Middle East (West Asia), which has also weakened the U.S. credibility in the negotiation process.

Some critics say China intends to replace the U.S. in West Asia. What characterizes China's attitude and policies in this region?

China opposes unilateralism and hegemonic politics, defends the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, and has no intention of replacing the United States in the Middle East (West Asia). Unlike the United States, which constantly demands that its Middle Eastern (West Asian) allies participate in the fight against China, China does not view its relationship with the United States as one of confrontation and cherishes its partnership with MENA countries. China values the development of friendly commercial relations with all countries around the world to realizing common prosperity

to build a global community of shared future. China believes that the long-term stability of the Middle East (West Asia) depends on development and cooperation.

China advocates mutual respect and considers Middle Eastern (West Asian) countries as cooperative partners, development partners and peace partners. China has no desire to export its development model, but it is willing to share its experience of modernization and independent development with Middle Eastern (West Asian) countries, including Iran.



## 14 Iranian handicrafts receive National Seal of Excellence



TEHRAN –The National Seal of Excellence has been granted to 14 high-quality works handcrafted by artisans of Alborz province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Ceramics, traditional blacksmithing, toreutics and leatherwork are among the works awarded with the National Seal of Excellence, Fereydoun Mohammadi said on Monday.

Since the province has been home to different ethnic groups, it has a wide variety of handicrafts, and the handicraft exhibitions that have been held so far have seen a high number of sales of works, the official added.

The National Seal of Excellence is given to high-quality, selected works to support craftspeople, improve the quality of their works and preserve the originality of this industry, and create sustainable employment.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally 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. In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC– Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Alborz province is surrounded by Mazandaran, Tehran, Markazi, and Qazvin provinces. Its name is driven by the Alborz Mountains. A significant part of the mountains is located in the north part of the province.

Historical resources and documents as well as archeological studies indicate that Alborz has a rich culture dating back to prehistoric times.

## Traditional locks on show at tourism ministry

TEHRAN –One hundred traditional-looking locks designed by Hassan Kokabi, a veteran locksmith from the northwestern province of Qazvin, have been put on show at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Tehran.

The five-day exhibition is organized to introduce handicrafts to those who are interested in this art and to learn more about traditional designs as well as the modernity of handicrafts, CHTN reported on Sunday.

According to organizers these works of traditional Ghofhsazi (locksmithing) are completely original and one-of-a-kind as the artist uses the old patterns of locks. He designs the locks during construction and includes animal shapes in an abstract way.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally 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 calendar 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 inflicted 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 Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

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

**A glimpse of traditional locksmithing in Iran**

Available evidence suggests that locks have been made in Iran since at least the



second millennium BC.

The most ancient lock, dating to the 13th century BC, was excavated at Tchogha Zanbil, a UNESCO World Heritage in southwest Iran. The lock consisted of a bolt and a tumbler and was probably used on a wooden door, according to Encyclopedia Iranica.

Numerous mechanisms are found in Iranian padlocks, including barbed spring, bent spring, helical spring, shackle spring, notched shackle, hook and revolving catch, and notched shackle with rotating discs, as well as combination and multiple mechanisms.

Until not long ago, every bazaar had a section for locksmiths (bazaar-e ghofhsazha), but the importation of machine-made locks from the West drove the locksmiths out of the city bazaars. Those in the villages, however, managed to survive until the 1970s.

In addition to animals, many new shapes for locks made of steel were inspired by objects and vessels such as the cradle, kashkul (a bowl in which dervishes put the alms and food given to them), suitcase, and lantern, as well as all kinds of geometric shapes.

Talismanic locks constitute a great number of locks and come in all shapes. These are often small and made of silver or steel inscribed with talismanic writing, and they have various functions, such as protecting a child from the evil eye, "locking" an enemy's tongue, and so forth.

Large wooden fixed locks, known in Iran as kolen, were and are still used on the entrance doors of houses and gates in villages, bazaar series, and caravansaries, and they are all made of wood with metal or wooden keys.

Fixed locks for chests and small boxes,

# Kashan is where you can dive into ancient Iranian culture

From page 1 ▶ Kashani traditions and souvenirs, like the rosewater which they sell anywhere. In addition, the best reason for coming here is the magnificent ceilings within the centuries-old marketplace.

Need some rest? Escape the city and go to the greenish Fin Garden, which is believed to be the epitome of Eden. Persian gardens are made-up to illustrate heaven! Natural springs, turquoise, fountains, and geometric designs dominate the peaceful garden and its beautiful bathhouse complex.

The modest yet amazing Agha Bozorg Mosque is the best example of an Islamic structure to visit in Kashan. This place of worship is well-known for its symmetrical design. Next for being in use as a mosque, it is a madrasa too! To be specific, a theological school.

Rosewater distillation ceremonies, which Kashan is highly famed for, draw visitors who want to enjoy the spirit of full-bloom flower farms, socialize with the locals, visit abundant historical sites, and see



how rosewater is traditionally made from harvesting stage to steaming damask rose petals either at homes or gardens. The distillation of flowers and herbs has a deep history in Iran. Many believe traditionally-distilled rosewater is of higher quality than that produced in factories probably due to shorter time intervals between the harvest and distillation practices. Golab or rosewater is a fragrant distillate of Mohammadi roses, which is used in dishes to flavor them or being consumed as a religious perfume as well.

Kashan embraces an archaeological gem as well; its Tepe Sialk has yielded interesting pottery pieces, metal tools, and domestic implements made from stone, clay, and bone that date from as early as the 4th millennium BC. Excavation projects at the site began in 1933 by a Louvre delegation led by Ghirshman... capping with a most recent project in 2009, which was led by Hassan Fazeli-Nashli, a faculty member of the Archaeology Department, University of Tehran. According to the Louvre, the oldest levels

document the occupation of the Iranian plateau from the Neolithic to the Chalcolithic over more than two millennia. Then, around 3000 BC, the site is integrated into the vast cultural area called Proto-Elamite during which specific writing appears.

The UNESCO-designated Abyaneh, also called the red-stone village, is situated around 90 km southward of Kashan. The ancient village is known for its gorgeous architecture, traditional clothing specifically from the inhabitants, and its old dialect of Persian that dates from the Sassanid era. Abyaneh is truly a living piece of history. Its people's ways of life and traditions have survived almost unchanged for hundreds of years. It would be an unforgettable day trip from Kashan.

Consider having a day trip to the serene Maranjab which is one of the best accessible deserts in Iran to get into. Explore the high dunes by camel, just wander around, pitch a tent, enjoy the sunrise, or wait till sunset and the hereinafter star heaven. The desert inspires everyone!

## Royal bas-relief restored to closest original state

TEHRAN –A Sassanid-era (224–651 CE) royal bas-relief in Naqsh-e Rostam, a massive royal rock-hewn necropolis, situated near Persepolis in southern Fars province, has recently been restored to its closest original state.

The bas-relief, which depicts Iranian king Bahram II (r:276–293) and a number of his courtiers, was damaged because of changes in weather, rain, and wind, and there were many cracks throughout, CHTN quoted Hamid Fadaei, director of the world heritage site of Persepolis as saying on Monday.

A team of experienced researchers, restorers, cultural heritage experts and archaeologists worked on the project for about five months, the official added.

Bahram II, the fifth Sasanian King of Iran, was the son and successor of Bahram I (r. 271–274). The Sassanid era is of very high importance in the history of Iran. Under Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions such as palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan that are amongst highlights of the ensemble.

Crafts such as metalwork and gem-engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state. In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanians. Rock-carved sculptures and bas-reliefs on abrupt limestone cliffs are widely deemed as characteristics and striking relics of the Sassanian art, top examples of which can be traced at Bishapur, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Naqsh-e Rostam in southern Iran.

The Achaemenid necropolis of Naqsh-e Rostam, meaning “Picture of Rostam” is named after a mythical Iranian hero which is most celebrated in Shahnameh and Persian mythology.

One of the wonders of the ancient world, Naqsh-e Rostam embraces four tombs are where Persian Achaemenid kings are laid



to rest, believed to be those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and Xerxes I, although some historians are still debating this.

There are gorgeous bas-relief carvings above the tomb chambers that are similar to those at Persepolis, with the kings standing on thrones supported by figures representing the subject nations below. There are also two similar graves situated on the premises of Persepolis that probably belong to Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III.

Beneath the funerary chambers are dotted with seven Sassanian-era (224–651) bas-reliefs cut into the cliff depict vivid scenes of imperial conquests and royal ceremonies.

The ancient region, known as Pars (Fars), or Persis, was the heart of the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great and had its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC. Alexander the Great defeated the Achaemenian army at Arbela in 331 and burned Persepolis apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

Persis became part of the Seleucid kingdom in 312 after Alexander's death. The Parthian empire (247 BC– 224 CE) of the Arsacids (corresponding roughly to the modern Khorasan in Iran) replaced the Seleucids' rule in Persis during 170–138 BC. The Sasanid Empire (224 CE–651) had its capital at Istakhr. Not until the 18th century, under the Zand dynasty (1750–79) of southern Iran, did Fars again become the heart of an empire, with its capital at Shiraz.

## Ilam needs to boost medical tourism

TEHRAN – Medical tourism needs to be developed in Dehloran, the western province of Ilam, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

This region's numerous hot mineral springs make it an ideal location for medical and health tourism, Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh said on Monday.

Natural hot springs are one of the

most beautiful and yet most amazing natural features of Dehloran that makes it a top destination for medical tourists, the official added.

People who suffer from joint pain, rheumatism, and skin disorders can benefit from these hot springs, he noted.

The Dehloran plain is best known for the excavations conducted at several prehistoric sites, which elucidated the origins and development of sedentary agricultural villages and towns in the region, and for surveys documenting the history of settlement into the modern era.

As a relatively small and remote rural area, it has always been affected by political, economic, and technological

developments in the adjacent regions of Khuzestan, the Zagros Mountains, and Mesopotamia. Beginning as early as the 3rd millennium BC and throughout its subsequent history, it was under the political control of kingdoms in one or another of these regions according to Iranica Encyclopedia.

Although no cuneiform texts have been found at any of the Dehloran sites, the most prominent mound, Tepe Musiyani, is possible to be identified as ancient Urua, an Elamite city known from Mesopotamian texts.

Dehloran has been on a trade route linking the Zagros Mountains with Mesopotamia; in the 1st millennium, the route linking the Achaemenid capitals of

Susa and Ecbatana passed through the region.

From the 18th century, Dehloran has been a winter resort for the local tribes.

**Medical tourism in Iran**

The developing health tourism industry is one of the most important fields of Iran's travel sector, which is trying to prove its capabilities and capacities in attracting medical and health tourists to the country.

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

considerable foreign currency.

Iran's two most popular medical tourist cities are Tehran and Mashhad, but the coronavirus outbreak has significantly reduced the number of travelers.

Iran is one of the major destinations for health tourism in the region, and patients with 55 different nationalities, mostly from neighboring countries including Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are seeking to use Iran's services and facilities in this field.

Iranian hospitals admitted nearly 70,000 foreign patients over the Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 2018 – March 2019) and it made an economic contribution of around \$1.2 billion to the

country, according to the medical tourism department at the Ministry of Health.

In April 2018, the rotating presidency of the International Health Tourism Conference of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was handed to the Islamic Republic for a three-year term.

Mohammad Jahangiri who presides over a national center for developing health tourism said in May 2018 that Iran can annually earn \$7 billion in medical and health tourism, though the sector now brings in only one-seventh or even lesser of the sum.

The Islamic Republic has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in the Iranian calendar year 1404.



# UN official calls for enhanced environmental cooperation with Iran

TEHRAN – UN Resident Coordinator in Iran, Stefan Priesner, has called for boosting cooperation with Iran in the field of environment.

In a meeting held on Sunday with Iran's Department of Environment Chief, Ali Salajegheh, the two sides emphasized the need for expanding cooperation in order to resolve environmental problems both in the region and throughout the world, IRNA reported.

Salajegheh, for his part, referred to the valuable and unique environmental capacities of Iran and urged the UN to play an effective and professional role in dealing with unilateral and unfair sanctions against the country.

On September 30, 2021, Priesner presented his credentials to Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian.

"I am fully committed to building even stronger cooperation for sustainable development between the United Nations and the Islamic Republic of Iran", Priesner said.

"My first priorities are to increase the Covid vaccine supply to help Iran overcome the pandemic that has devastated the lives of so many people around the world. I also encourage support by the international community for the Afghan population in Iran in the spirit of global burden-sharing."

The UN presence in Iran consists of 20 agencies, funds, and specialized programs.



Saber Masoumi, director of the environment and social development of the UNDP in Iran, said in December 2021 that Iran and the United Nations have successful environmental cooperation which should be shared at the international level.

The United Nations has two successful experiences, including the sustainable development and expansion of the environmental management of Lake Urmia and the wetlands of Iran.

Development capacities in Iran are vast, however, using the experience of successful countries can facilitate the movement, he highlighted.

Considering climate change as a serious threat to the future of the world, he stated that fighting climate change is a priority for the United Nations and according to the forecast, the future will not be satisfying.

One of the successful plans

that have been implemented in Iran for more than 20 years in cooperation with the UN, is the carbon reduction plan which has brought important achievements, that included in the Sixth Development Plan of Iran, he explained.

In 2009, a comprehensive management plan for the Urmia Lake catchment was signed, and this document was a reference and a base for future plans to rehabilitate the water body, he emphasized.

According to the cooperation document signed between the Department of Environment and the United Nations Development Program with the financial support of Japan, in order to stabilize the measures taken and generalize the achievements and successful experiences of previous years in reviving Lake Urmia, "environmental and sustainable livelihood management devel-

opment plan in Lake Urmia and Bakhtegan and Shadegan wetlands" is scheduled to be implemented in the next three years.

Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), has said UNDP strongly supports the environmental and development programs of Iran, considering the country's previous brilliant actions.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's Department of Environment chief Ali Salajegheh on the sidelines of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference which is held in Glasgow, Scotland in November 2021.

"We are fully aware of the environmental issues raised in Iran. Given the country's brilliant track record in dealing with environmental issues, UNDP certainly will support to help make a cleaner world," he stated.

Regarding the lifting of sanctions, Steiner added that "We will do our best to solve the problems that have arisen in the international arena caused by U.S. sanctions in order to pace up the development and progress of the environmental projects."

Salajegheh for his part expressed hope that cooperation will develop, especially in cases where we have not been able to use international facilities in the field of the environment due to sanctions.

## Critically endangered: just 12 cheetahs living in Iran habitats



TEHRAN – Studies show that the situation of Asiatic cheetahs in Iran is critical so that just 12 of the endangered species are currently living in natural habitats across the country.

Hassan Akbari, the deputy chief of the Department of Environment, said on Monday that only three of the cheetahs are female, IRNA reported.

To announce the population of animal species, just adult ones are taken into account. Therefore, the situation of Asiatic cheetahs in Iran is regarded as critical, he explained.

"Of course, measures such as increasing safety of roads and [installing] speed-reducing equipment have been taken around cheetah habitats, but the measures are not sufficient."

Over the past 60 years, Iran is home to the last known population of Asiatic cheetah, which once roamed across vast ranges

of the west and south Asian countries, from the Middle East to India. Listed as critically endangered by the IUCN, the Asiatic cheetah is among the rarest cats in the world at the subspecies level, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

Cheetahs' habitats in Iran are stretching over 12 million hectares of land area and over the past 16 years only experts collaborating with the CACP project have strived to count 48 cheetahs using trap cameras and other technical methods, Majid Kharrazian-Moqaddam, director of aquatic wildlife and biodiversity office at the DOE, said in August 2018.

Roadkill constitutes 70 percent of cheetahs' fatalities, as some 42 Asiatic cheetahs have been killed in the country during the past 16 years, 28 of them died in road crashes and 14 others were either killed in conflicts with guard dogs or due to other unknown reasons, he lamented.

For one Abbasabad-Mayami road, linking north-central Semnan province to Mashhad, the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, is one of the deadliest roads for Asiatic cheetahs as 8 cheetahs have been killed in this area over the past 10 years.

Roads fragmenting cheetahs' habitats are the main threats for the species, while guard dogs and stray dogs, drought spells, decreasing population of the prey species to support

the cheetahs, and habitat loss are also other factors endangering the sparse population of the cheetahs in the country.

Fourteen years ago, the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) proposed August 31st as the "National Cheetah Day" in Iran to encourage the conservation of the last remaining population of Asiatic cheetahs. The National Cheetah Day is now endorsed and celebrated by the Department of the Environment (DOE), Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project, and several Iranian NGOs every year.

In November 2021, Akbari said the Department of Environment plans to breed Asiatic cheetah in the wild so that the species is protected from extinction.

Currently, an action plan has been defined for 19 endangered species in the country. Our policies for the conservation of endangered species are set out in this roadmap, which needs necessary funds for the implementation, he added.

Emphasizing the need for natural growth of the species to have the ability to continue living in nature, he said that a creature that is born in a fictitious and artificial space does not have the ability to survive and continue living in the environment. "If we want to save the life of this species, we must protect its habitat."

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

#### Iran working with Green Climate Fund

TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) is working with the United Nations Green Climate Fund (GCF), under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to reduce the effects of climate change.

FAO and the Department of Environment as the National Designated Authority (NDA) of Green Climate Fund (GCF), partnered to bring together local, national, and international stakeholders in a three-day workshop, the last one in a series of iterative events held under the project "Green Climate Fund Readiness and Preparatory Program of Iran."

"Throughout the implementation of this Project, FAO as the delivery partner has always stayed committed to providing its technical expertise, data, and tools to support the country in its efforts to strengthen the national capacities to effectively access and efficiently manage, track and guide climate financing with particular attention to the requirements of the GCF," said Gerd Bodeker, FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

#### همکاری ایران با صندوق اقلیم سبز سازمان ملل

سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست به عنوان مرجع رسمی ایران در زمینه حفظ محیط زیست با صندوق اقلیم سبز سازمان ملل با محوریت سازمان خواربار و کشاورزی ملل متحد (فائو) در راستای کاهش تأثیرات تغییر اقلیم همکاری می کند.

فائو و سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست کشور به عنوان مرجع صلاحیت دار ملی ایران و صندوق اقلیم سبز با همکاری یکدیگر، این پروژه را پیش بردند و در قالب چند برگزاری چند کارگاه اقدامات را بررسی کردند، بر این اساس در آخرین کارگاه دینفعان محلی، ملی و بین المللی را به عنوان آخرین حلقه از زنجیره رویدادهای پروژه «برنامه آماده سازی جمهوری اسلامی ایران برای همکاری با صندوق اقلیم سبز» گرد هم آوردند.

گروld بودکر نماینده فائو در جمهوری اسلامی ایران گفت: در طول اجرای این پروژه، فائو، به عنوان شریک اجرایی، همیشه متعهد به ارائه تخصص فنی، داده ها و ابزارهای سیاستی خود برای حمایت از کشور در تلاش های خود برای تقویت ظرفیت های ملی برای دسترسی موثر و مدیریت کارآمد، ردیابی و هدایت تأمین مالی اقدامات اقلیمی با در نظر گرفتن الزامات صندوق اقلیم سبز بوده است.

## Volunteer school builders to set up headquarters

TEHRAN - The Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment of Schools has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Construction Basij Organization to set up a headquarters for volunteer school builders.

The articles of association of the headquarters has been prepared and approved, Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment of Schools said, adding that the headquarters will establish branches in all provinces of the country, IRNA reported on Monday.

The decision has been taken with the aim of promoting the culture of participation in building schools, especially in deprived and remotes areas, he added.

A total of 158 trillion rials (nearly \$585 million) allocated from the national budget to school construction, Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment of Schools added.

Last year (ended March 2021), school building benefactors allocated a sum of 33 trillion rials to construct educational spaces across the country.

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

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

A total of 36 trillion rials has been allocated to renovate the schools nationwide over the past 8 years, Seyed Mohammad-Ali Afshani, former head of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment of Schools, said.

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

A budget of 19 trillion rials has been allocated to rural development projects across the country, Ali Nikzad, head of the Housing Foundation,



said in November 2021.

The funding will be spent on building roads, schools, mosques, and expanding infrastructures, he added.

There are currently around 40,000 villages nationwide, each with over 20 families, he noted, highlighting that the reverse trend of migration from cities to villages is a source of happiness.

He went on to say that in the Iranian calendar year 1384 (March 2005-March 2006), just seven percent of rural houses were renovated and strengthened, while the figure has increased to around 50 percent and the rest will be completed by the next ten years.

#### 107,000 schools need renovation nationwide

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

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

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

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

## Climate change is causing Europe's largest glacier mass to rapidly melt

Researchers are bringing attention to the very real possibility that Iceland could lose nearly all of its ice in the next 100 years.

Iceland's third-largest glacier and the largest glacier mass in Europe is now dissolving at rates never before seen in human history.

That's because of human-caused climate change.

Ice all over the planet is rapidly melting. Scientists say all that water rushing into the world's oceans is not only making sea levels rise but could also be changing the ocean's circulation and fueling more extreme weather events like hurricanes and heatwaves.

Glaciologist Dr. M Jackson and her fellow researchers are bringing attention to the very

real possibility that Iceland could lose nearly all of its ice in the next 100 years.

They produced a short film called "After Ice" using historical pictures and new drone footage to show how quickly the landscape has changed.

Back in 2019, Iceland held a glacier funeral after a 700-year-old sheet of ice shrunk so much that scientists declared it dead.

Iceland has now lost so much ice that with less weight from the glaciers, the land is rising. That's making some harbors shallower, making it harder for boats to navigate.

Scientists are also worried about more volcanic eruptions as the ground there becomes increasingly unstable without glaciers holding it in place.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 10

New cases	1,932
New deaths	37
Total cases	6,208,337
Total deaths	131,915
New hospitalized patients	298
Patients in critical condition	1,962
Total recovered patients	6,053,241
Diagnostic tests conducted	42,608,102
Doses of vaccine injected	123,547,420



Sciascia perhaps, in the end, wanted to prove that the corruption that was and is endemic in Italian society helps only those who are part of the secret societies and loyalties and the political classes.