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Report Email puts 'disgraceful' UK PM under mounting pressure to resign

After the British Prime Minister denied breaking the government's own lockdown rules on so many occasions, new evidence has emerged showing Boris Johnson was potentially lying to the public on multiple occasions.

At a time when the country was ordered by the government to observe the most strictest of lockdown measures, a leaked email proves Downing Street staff were holding a party breaking all the lockdown rules.

The email by the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary Martin Reynolds, leaked to British media shows government staff were invited to a party in the Number 10 garden during the height of nationwide lockdown to "make the most of the lovely weather" on May 20 last year.

This was the same time when many in the country were suffering psychological torture from isolation after being banned from meeting more than one other person outdoors.

Reynolds sent the email to over a hundred employees in Downing Street, including the Prime Minister's advisors, speechwriters and door staff.

In it, Reynolds, who has run Johnson's private office since October 2019 says:

"Hi all,

After what has been an incredibly busy period we thought it would be nice to make the most of the lovely weather and have some socially distanced drinks in the No10 garden this evening. Please join us from 6pm"

British media reports say around 40 government staff broke the law and gathered in the garden that evening. ► Page 5

Interview

Now pendulum has swung back to the left in Latin America: professor

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - Professor emeritus of international relations at Webster University says that the pendulum has swung back to the left in Latin America, but the right remains very strong.

"Now the pendulum has swung back to the left, but the right remains very strong, and this is an illiberal populist right that resembles many of the features of Trumpism in the U.S.," Daniel C Hellinger tells the Tehran Times.

Three weeks ago, a 35-year-old former student protest leader defeated his far-right rival José Antonio Kast in Chile's presidential election.

The leftist candidate Gabriel Boric will lead a country that has been rocked in recent years by mass protests against inequality and corruption.

He told supporters he would look after democracy, promising curbs on Chile's neoliberal free market economy.

Some political observers argue that Boric has breathed a fresh air into leftist movements in Latin America.

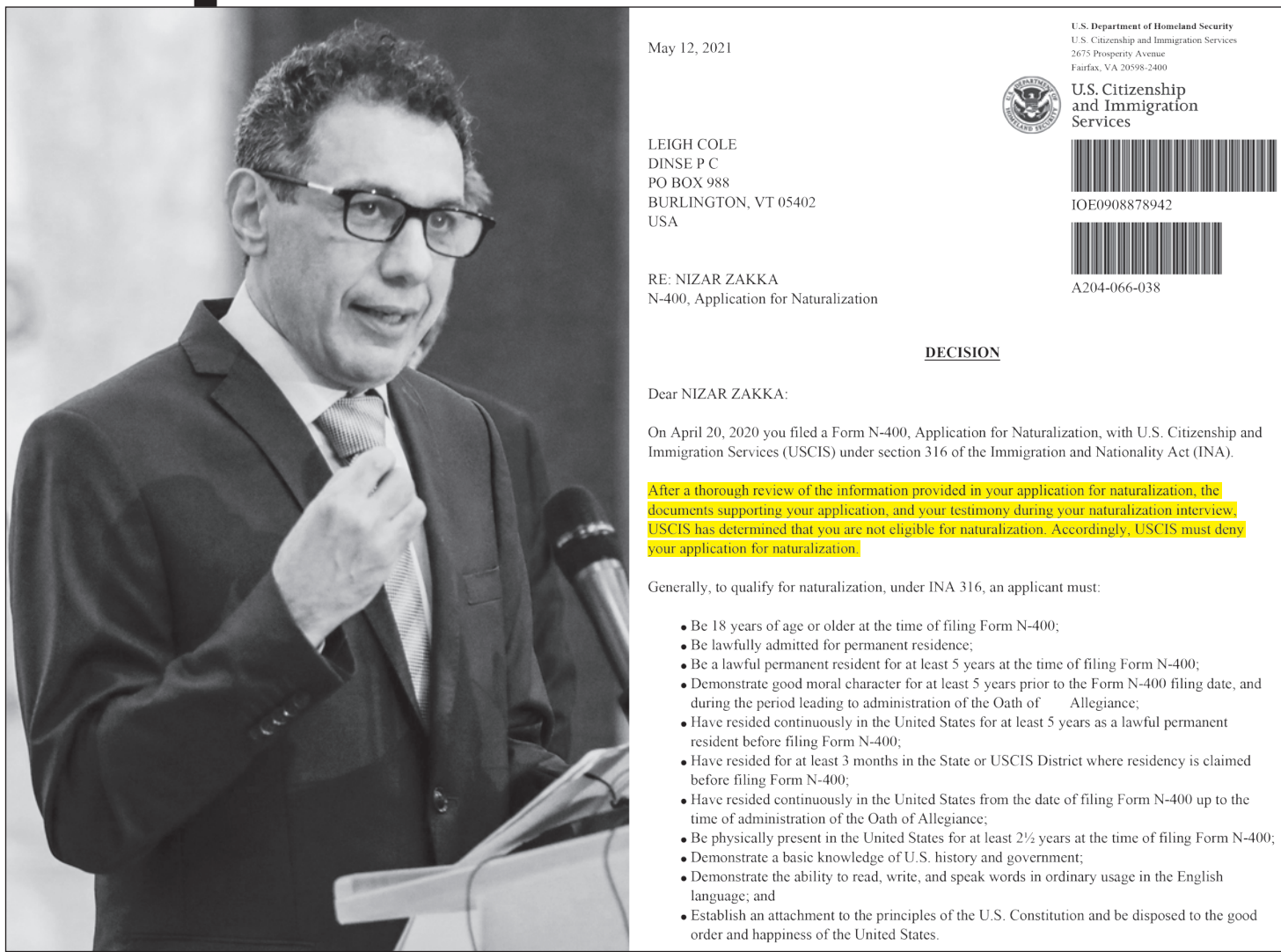
Following is the text of the interview with Hellinger, an expert on Latin America:

How do you see the process of democratization in Latin America, especially when it comes to Chile?

Chile is one of the few places in the world where we can be somewhat optimistic about the state of democracy. Last year we had the election of a constitutional assembly that will eliminate most of the unconstitutional provisions that were left in place after the transition from military to civilian rule in 1990. We also have a new, young president, Gabriel Boric, who was a leader of mass protests demanding that the country's unusually unequal levels of socio-economic inequality be narrowed. ► Page 5

No Country for Spies-Part Two

► Page 3



Oil, gas condensate output expected to rise 144,000 bpd in next Iranian year

TEHRAN - Considering the new resource allocations for the development of the oil industry in the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21), the country's crude oil and gas condensate production is expected to increase by 144,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the next fiscal year.

According to Tasnim News Agency, in the budget bill for the next year, special attention has been paid to improving oil and gas production and development of energy infrastructure across the country in order to boost the oil output to 3.952 million bpd.

The country's oil transmission network is also expected to expand fourfold to 10,758 kilometers next year, the report said.

Iran has been gradually boosting crude oil production to get ready for a strong comeback into the global market as the talks with world powers over the nuclear deal show signs of progress.

According to a Bloomberg report, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has stated that the country's oil fields are going through overhaul operations and connections with oil buyers are being re-established.



Iran beach volleyball league kicks off

TEHRAN - The second edition of the Iran's Beach Volleyball League started on Sunday in Bandar Abbas in Hormozgan Province.

The competition has brought 11 teams across the country together. The final week of the competition will be held in Ramsar, Mazandaran Province in May.

Seleucid, Parthian relics unearthed in UNESCO-tagged Bisotun

TEHRAN - In a recent excavation in Bisotun, an ancient UNESCO-tagged site containing bas-reliefs and inscriptions of Darius the Great, archaeologists found relics and architectural remains dating from the Seleucid (312 BC-63 BC) and Parthian (247 BC - 224 CE) eras.

Some historical objects and remnants of some architectural structures were discovered during the first archaeological season of Iron Age Tepe Gohareh, located four kilometers from Bisotun, western Kermanshah province, Ramin Chehri who leads the excavation said, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

These findings date back to three different time periods, probably to the Seleucid, early Parthian, and mid to late Parthian, he added.

"In the most optimistic estimates, the country could return to pre-sanctions production levels of almost four million barrels a day in as little as three months," the report published in May 2021 stated.

Back in November 2021, NIOC Head Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said his company was planning to boost the country's oil production capacity to the pre-sanction levels or nearly four million bpd by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022). ► Page 4

Interview

Nazemi happy to be nominated as best referee of year

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Gelareh Nazemi has expressed her happiness for being nominated as the best futsal referee in the world in 2021.

"I'm very happy to receive all the kind messages for being nominated among the best of the world. I'm proud of it," said Nazemi in her interview with Tehran Times.

She is the first female referee to officiate in an Asian Football Confederation (AFC) men's futsal competition.

"It's the fourth consecutive year, since 2018, that I'm a candidate to receive the prestigious award in the futsal world," she added.

The Iranian elite female referee was the timekeeper at the 2021 FIFA World Cup final showpiece between Portugal and Argentina. ► Page 3

In the middle of the Islamic period, however, a cemetery was established on the site, damaging the architectural layers from the late Parthian era, he mentioned.

It is hoped that the next season of excavation at Tepe Gohareh will reveal more about the Seleucid and Parthian ages of Bisotun and the Central Zagros region, he noted. ► Page 6

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Interview

Russia's Ulyanov: Extraterritorial sanctions are illegitimate, counter-productive

By Saeed Azimi & Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Substantive progress is being made as the talks in Vienna are being held in a calm atmosphere. However, Iran and the P4+1 group (Russia, China, France, UK and Germany) have differences over a number of issues.

Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian ambassador to the international organizations in Vienna and Moscow's negotiator at the Vienna talks intended to revive the JCPOA, assesses the current atmosphere as "positive" despite the fact that atmosphere was "nervous and not positive" in the seventh round.

The seventh round of the talks began on November 29. It started since a new government came to power in Iran. Six rounds of talks were held until June, which had begun in April 2021.

"I must tell you that the atmosphere in the course of the seventh round which lasted from November 29 to December 16 was rather nervous and not positive," Ulyanov told Tehran Times in an exclusive interview on Tuesday.

However, the ambassador added that the parties were able to reach a common ground and find a solution.

"We managed to find a solution collectively and the seventh round ended on a positive note," he noted.

Russia's top negotiator assessed the atmosphere in the eighth round of talks as "business-like and pragmatic." ► Page 2

Abdolhossein Zarrinkub's book on Rumi's life story published in Bosnian

TEHRAN - Iranian litterateur Abdolhossein Zarrinkub's book "Step by Step Up to Union with God" ("Stepen po stepen do susreta s Bogom") has been published in the Bosnian language.

Buybook, a publishing house in Sarajevo, is the publisher of the book, which is about the life, thoughts and spiritual journey of the celebrated 13th-century Persian mystic and poet Jalal ad-Din Rumi.

Elvir Music has rendered the book from its Persian edition first published in 1980.

With his great expert initiative, Zarrinkub illustrates the poet's life and spiritual journey from childhood, travels with his father at the age of thirteen from Khorasan and Baghdad to Anatolia, to eventually settle in Konya.

Zarrinkub also scrutinizes the revelation Rumi experienced in his childhood, the God-fearing and the adulation he praised, the years spent in search of knowledge in various traditional schools of that age, until the moment when he decided to leave everything behind and ► Page 8

Mohsen Rezaei: Iran-Nicaragua cooperation is ‘a slap in the face of U.S.’

TEHRAN— Mohsen Rezaei, the Iranian vice president for economic affairs, met on Monday with Nicaraguan minister of economy and finance, minister of mines, and the senior assistant to the president for trade, promotion of investment and international cooperation, as well as the managers of the country's oil and energy sector.

The need to strengthen cooperation between Iran and Nicaragua, especially in oil and energy industries, was among the topics discussed between the two sides.

Rezaei called for the efforts by officials from the two sides to increase the level of trade to develop the welfare and progress of the two nations.

Emphasizing that the development of cooperation between the resilient countries is a “strong slap in the face” to the U.S. and the other oppressive powers in the world, he stated, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has always stood by the resilient governments and nations of Latin America, especially Nicaragua.”

Referring to Iran's action in sending gasoline to Venezuela despite U.S. opposition, the vice president said that this action sent a message to the governments and nations of the world that the era of pressure and coercion against other countries is over.

Rezaei called the U.S. interference in the internal affairs of countries an insult to nations and stressed, “In this situation, governments and nations that want freedom and resistance must work together and help develop each other's welfare and development by expanding comprehensive relations.”

He added that resistant governments and nations, through strengthening and developing relations and cooperation, can prove to the world that having a revolutionary spirit is in line with economic progress.

Referring to the vast capabilities of Iran and Nicaragua, the vice president said that Iran is ready to comprehensively develop relations between

the two countries and exchange experiences in various technical fields, including oil and energy, petrochemicals, refinery construction, and construction and development of ports and forming joint ventures.

Rezaei praised the efforts to establish a joint Iran-Nicaragua bank and exchange experiences in the field of economic, commercial and academic research and studies. He also expressed hope that his visit to Nicaragua would be the beginning of a new era in relations and cooperation between the two countries.

For his part, the Nicaraguan minister of economy and finance praised the Iranian and Nicaraguan governments and nations' resistance against the extravagance of the oppressive powers and said that both sides must work to develop cooperation in various fields.

He also pointed to existing investment opportunities and capacities in oil, energy, and port development in Nicaragua, calling for the use of Iranian experience and Iranian investment in such fields.

The Nicaraguan minister of mines also pointed to the huge mineral potential in Nicaragua, especially in gold mines, stressing the importance of facilitating joint cooperation and the presence of Iranian investors in this sector.

Appreciating the presence of the Iranian vice president at the inauguration of the Nicaraguan president in the current sensitive situation, the senior assistant to the Nicaraguan president for trade, investment promotion and international cooperation said that the obstacles for trade between the two countries can only be removed through hard work and initiatives.

Rezaei attended the inauguration ceremony of the Nicaraguan President, Daniel Ortega at the Revolution Square in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, on Monday evening.

The vice president was received by Ortega upon arrival.

Russia's Ulyanov: Extraterritorial sanctions are illegitimate, counter-productive

“We want the JCPOA to be restored, fully, 100%”

From page 1 ▶ “During the eighth round, which started on December 27 and still continues, the atmosphere is much better. It is business-like, pragmatic, and positive,” he added.

According to the ambassador, the Westerners are concerned about Iran's developing nuclear program.

“I observe some concerns on the part of Western participants in the talks in connection with continuing development of the Iranian nuclear program.”

Iran has repeatedly stated that if the parties return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it will reverse its nuclear program in accordance to the JCPOA. But the condition set by Iran is clear. All parties must fully return to their JCPOA commitments.

“This is, I believe the only negative element which I can mention in connection with your question. Otherwise, the atmosphere, I repeat, is positive and business-like,” Ulyanov asserted.

Answering a question about the Iranian delegation's position in the talks, the ambassador evaluated the Iranian delegation's position as positive, saying that the new negotiating team adapted themselves very quickly.

“Very positively. As a diplomat I know that it's not easy for professionals to join a new process,” he noted.

“The Iranian part of the Vienna talks had to accommodate itself to the Vienna realities, experience, practices, and the Iranian colleagues did it very fast, maybe I say, incredibly fast, as they are very



good professionals,” he remarked.

About the economic benefits of the JCPOA for Iran and a fear by foreign companies to invest in Iran due to the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, the Russian diplomat noted that this makes Iran's demands for guarantees “justifiable”, stressing Russia's support for Iran.

“Well, you touched upon one of the most difficult questions. Indeed, the Iranian side, in an absolutely

justifiable manner, insists on some guarantees. Guarantees that the previous adventure with JCPOA will not be repeated. This is absolutely understandable and we support this position of Iran

in this regard. The problem is that in practice, in view of specifics of the Western governmental order, and the role of private sector, and relationship between private companies and governments, for them it is not easy to find a solution.”

About restrictions the Americans can impose on activities of foreign companies in Iran, Ulyanov said,

“The government is not able to compel the private business to go to Iran, especially if private companies do not have the sense of safety, I would say. We raised this issue with the participants in the Vienna talks, first of all the Iranian delegation, which is very active in this regard. I believe there is some progress, insufficient, so far, but some progress.”

According to the Russian diplomat, Joe Biden's statement in October made U.S. committed to the JCPOA, praising the move but of course, there is a catch. “I believe the statement President Biden made in October last year was helpful in this regard. President Biden

committed the United States with full compliance with the JCPOA as long as Iran does the same. I believe it's a very good, positive formula. The problem is that it will remain valid as long as Mr. Biden stays in the White House. So, we are trying to elaborate additional guarantees or additional provisions which could make Iran a more attractive partner for private business from different

countries. We are doing our best, and this work is not yet completed.”

Regarding various scenarios at the negotiating table, Ulyanov said Russia agrees with Iran regarding the full revival of JCPOA.

“We want the JCPOA to be restored, fully, 100%. We want sanctions to be lifted,” he reiterated.

Stating that a new deal is entirely out of question, the Russian negotiator said, “Regarding (a) hypothetical completely new deal, I believe it is absolutely unrealistic. It would take years and years to elaborate a new deal.”

Iran has time and again rejected the possibility of a new deal or an interim agreement.

The Russian envoy added that Russia fully supports Iran that the extraterritorial sanctions are illegal.

“In our national capacity, Russian national capacity, I can tell you that we are fully on the side of Iran. We don't recognize extraterritorial sanctions. We believe that they are absolutely illegitimate and extremely counter-productive. But the reality is that we need to find a solution acceptable for everybody,” he asserted.

He added that a main body of anti-Iran sanctions in many areas including oil and trade will be lifted.

“I can tell you for sure that as a result of the Vienna talks, the main body of anti-Iranian sanctions will be lifted, including in the most important areas, such as oil, trade, and many many other areas,” he concluded.

Iranian FM holds talks with senior Qatari officials

TEHRAN— Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian who was visiting Doha held talks with top Qatari officials on Tuesday morning.

During the meeting with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir Abdollahian extended the Iranian president's greetings to him.

He examined the latest developments in bilateral ties in areas of politics, security, trade and economy. Iran's top diplomat referred to the existing capacities for expanding economic relations between Iran and Qatar, underlining the need for forging cooperation in economic areas given the existing advantages of Iran.

Amir Abdollahian further outlined the Iranian administration's approach to relations with neighboring countries, emphasizing exchange of delegations at high levels for consultations between Iran and Qatar.

He also pointed to Iran's views toward the region and declared Tehran's readiness to develop interaction with regional nations bilaterally and multilaterally.

The top Iranian diplomat then spoke about the Vienna talks over removing the illegal sanctions against Iran as well as the issues related to Afghanistan and Yemen.

The Qatari emir, for his part,



outlined his views regarding these matters.

Sheikh Al Thani also stressed the importance of ties between Iran and Qatar and cooperation on regional issues. He underlined that Qatar is interested in expanding cooperation with Iran.

Later in the day, Iran's foreign minister met with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani. The two foreign ministers discussed issues of mutual interest.

Amir Abdollahian said ties between Tehran and Doha is based on bilateral and regional cooperation and underlined the need to expand cooperation, particularly in areas of trade, economy and investment, and to coordinate exchange of high-ranking delegations.

Amir Abdollahian stressed the priority of neighbors in the foreign policy of the Raisi administration, saying Iran welcomes expanding ties with

regional countries, adding holding regional dialogue to establish stability is of high importance.

For his part, the Qatari foreign minister outlined the Doha leadership's views regarding expansion of relations with the Islamic Republic. He underlined that Doha is interested in expanding cooperation with Tehran, especially in economic areas.

The two top diplomats further discussed, among others, regional and international issues, particularly developments in Afghanistan and Yemen.

On Tuesday afternoon, Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the Hamas political bureau and the Islamic Resistance Movement, met with Amir Abdollahian at the Iranian embassy in Doha.

During the meeting, the foreign minister pointed to Iran's principled view on the Palestinian issue which has

created a problem in the heart of the Islamic Ummah by the Western-backed and the child-killing Zionist regime.

Pointing to the crimes of the Zionist occupiers against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, their brutal acts against Gaza and other Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, he condemned the aggression and crimes of the Israeli regime against the Palestinian people and disrespect to their sanctities.

Amir Abdollahian also stressed Iran's support for the legitimate defense of the Palestinian people and their resistance against the occupation of the Zionist regime.

For his part, Haniyeh praised the support of Iran for the struggle of the Palestinian people in the fight against the Zionist regime, and called for mobilization of Islamic, Arab and international communities to take firm stances against the rebellions of this regime.

On Monday night, Iran's foreign minister left Oman for Qatar.

Amir Abdollahian held two rounds of talks with Oman's foreign minister, and met with the chief negotiator of Yemen's National Salvation Government Mohammad Abdul Salam in Oman.

He also attended a cordial meeting with Iranian expatriates in Muscat.

partnership with Iran during his visit to Tehran in March 2021.

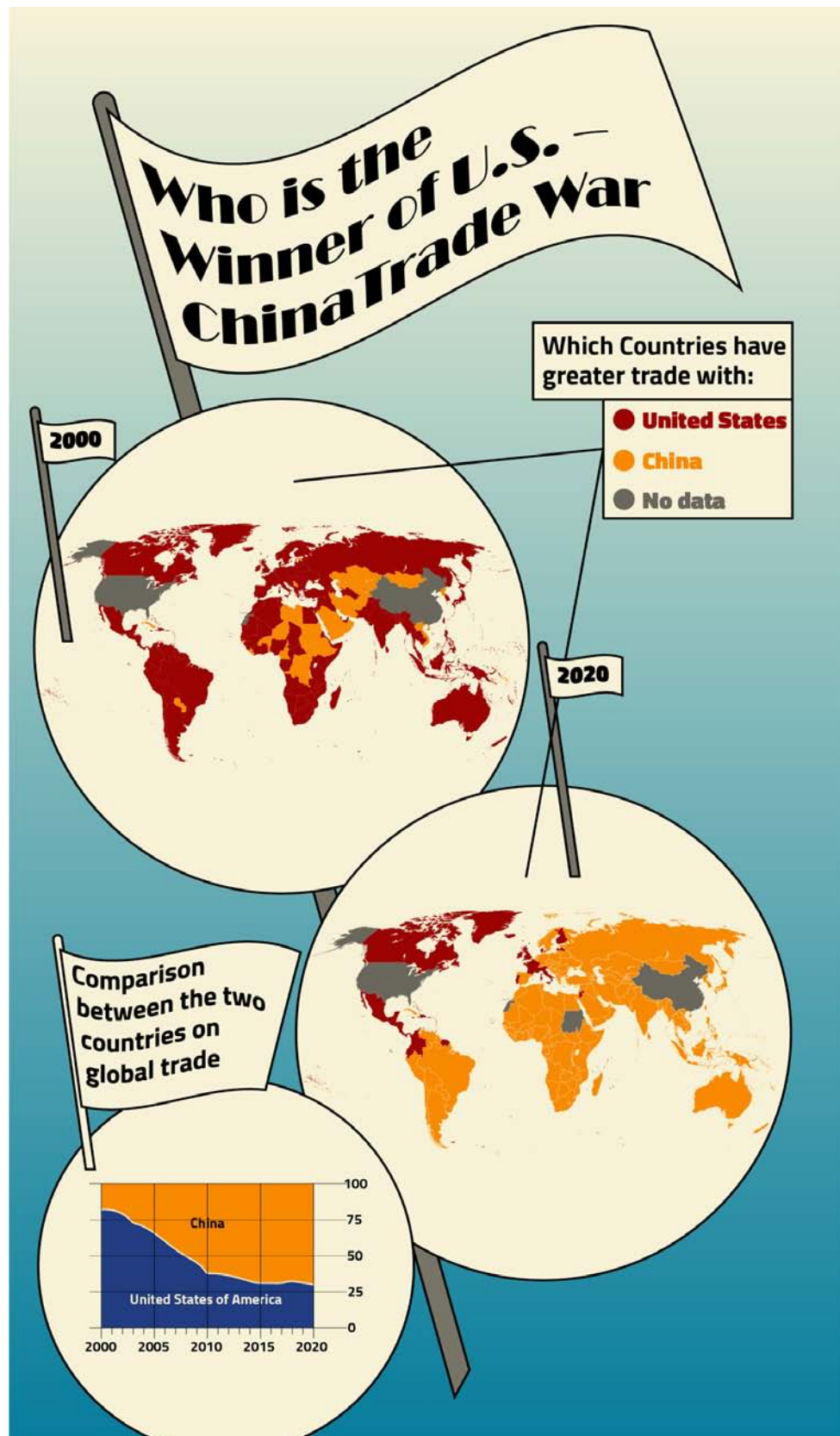
According to the ambassador, various issues will be discussed during Amir Abdollahian's trip to China this week.

Ambassador: Amir Abdollahian's visit to China is of utmost importance

TEHRAN — Mohammad Keshavarzadeh, Iran's ambassador to Beijing, said on Tuesday that Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian's upcoming trip to China is of utmost importance in the current situation.

Iranian and Chinese foreign ministers have repeatedly met in recent years, Keshavarzadeh wrote in a tweet on Monday.

He added that China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi signed the 25-year comprehensive



No country for spies – part two

TEHRAN – The dark side of the U.S.'s approach toward its spies is not oftentimes reflected in the mainstream media, which plays a pivotal role in keeping public opinion in the dark about what happens to people, particularly those unnaturalized, working as spies for the U.S. government.

The U.S. government has given the cold shoulder to spies who once worked for it and now experience difficulties. It exploits these personal difficulties to force them into keeping doing the same job that got them bankrupt in the first place: espionage.

It's typical of the United States to let down those who put their lives in grave danger doing perilous jobs such as spying for it. A case in point is Nizar Zakka, a U.S. permanent resident of Lebanese descent who is running up against legal red tape on his way to naturalization.

Another case is Imaad Zuberi, an American spy who used his business cover to approach world leaders and the international business elite in a bid to spy for the U.S. After more than a decade of spying for U.S. intelligence agencies, Zuberi was sentenced in February last year to 12 years in prison for alleged offenses ranging from tax evasion to foreign-influence peddling and campaign-finance violations.

A key aspect of the Zuberi case, however, has played out in secret court filings and hearings: Zuberi was a longtime U.S. intelligence source for the U.S. government, according to The



Wall Street Journal.

Xiyue Wang, a Princeton doctoral student who was convicted of espionage for the U.S. and imprisoned in Iran from 2016 to 2019, is also tasting the taste of U.S. negligence of its past spies.

He is now consumed by a legal process he initiated against Princeton University which he accused of letting him down while serving time in prison.

In the waning days of last year, Wang announced that he filed a lawsuit against Princeton for not helping him.

Perhaps, the most prominent case of a spy falling into wretchedness is Nizar Zakka who is now entangled in the never-ending paperwork required by relevant U.S. government agencies for him to get naturalized.

Zakka has been asking favors from various people inside and outside the Biden administration to help him with getting naturalized ever since U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) rejected his application for naturalization in May 2021, according to insiders in Washington.

On April 20, 2020, Zakka submitted an application for naturalization with the USCIS. The answer he received from the agency was so disappointing to him that he decided to reach out to some influential people in Washington, including U.S. envoy for Iran Rob Malley, to save what can be saved. As a result, he has been tackling with emotional and psychological distress after discovering the bitterness of being left to his own fate.

After reviewing the application of

Zakk for naturalization, the USCIS turned down his request and denied him naturalization.

Of note, Zakka obtained permanent resident status in mid-April 2012, and in April 2020 he submitted his application to USCIS, which in turn rejected his application due to Zakka's long-time absence from the U.S.

He was arrested in Tehran in 2015 and convicted of spying for the United States. Zakka was released from prison in June 2019. In private meetings, Zakka had repeatedly confessed that he was spying for the U.S. government. He also confessed that he was implicated in espionage schemes targeting Iranian women and girls.

The USCIS decision led Zakka to seek help from a number of influential people in Washington to help him with naturalization.

Zakka sought help from Malley, the insiders revealed to the Tehran Times, but it is not clear yet if he got any help in this regard.

The case of Zakka, as well as others, is indicative of the fact that the U.S. government's ill-treatment of its spies is not an exception, but a rule. Equally important is the duplicity with which the spies solve their problems in the U.S. While they privately admit that they were spying for the U.S. government, they keep denying their involvement in espionage on behalf of Washington publicly, a behavior that is not lost on the public.

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Nazemi happy to be nominated as best referee of year

From Page 1 ▶ “I expected to be among the nominees of the best referees in the world because I officiated at the 2021 FIFA World Cup in Lithuania and was selected as the fourth referee in the final match,” explained the 38-year-old.

When asked about her chance to win the 2021 award, Nazemi said: “It’s hard because both female and male referees have been considered for selecting the best referee award but I am hopeful of winning the award,” she said.

Nazemi will have to compete with Nurdin Bukuev (Kyrgyzstan), Juan José Cordero Gallardo (Spain), Mohamed Hassan Hassan Ahmed Youssef (Egypt), Alejandro Martinez Flores (Spain), Valeria Nicole Palma Palma (Chile), Chiara Perona (Italy), Maria Estefania Pinto (Argentina), Antony Riley (New Zealand) and Irina Velikanova (Russia) to win the accolade.

“Mr. Nurdin has a big chance to win the prize because he whistled the 2021 World Cup final and is one the best referees in the world. But I still hope to reach the award after four years,” she said.

“It is the result of more than 20 years of hard work to reach this point. We could break the barriers in the way of female officials. We could convince the AFC and FIFA to accept and approve us as hijab-wearing referees. It’s the path that I’m proud of,” concluded Nazemi.

Persepolis striker Alekasir sidelined for rest of season

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team forward Issa Alekasir will miss the rest of the Iran Professional League season due to a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL).

The 32-year-old forward suffered the injury on Saturday in the match against Padideh in Mashhad.

The MRI revealed the injury included a torn ACL, keeping him out for the rest of the season.

It could be a major blow to Persepolis who are seeking to win Iran league title for the sixth year in a row.

Safi first Iranian tennis player to be ranked within top 100

TEHRAN – Tennis player Meshkatolzahra Safi is the first player from Iran to be ranked within the top 100 of the junior world rankings and, while her appetite and desire means her ambition stretches way beyond such a statistic, it is certainly a milestone worth marking.

The 17-year-old is ranked No. 87 in the girls’ rankings following a highly productive 2021 during which she claimed 10 junior titles across both singles and doubles.

“Although this is not my ultimate goal, it gives me a great feeling to be a motivation for other Iranian junior players and to encourage them,” Safi told itftennis.com.

“Over the past years, perhaps the belief of the Iranian players has been that it is difficult to achieve something at international level. I hope that my improvements will encourage players and coaches to double their efforts.

“For me, I compare my ranking with the standards of international players and try to be much better than I am now,” she added.

Beginning her tennis journey in Karaj, the capital of the Alborz Province, Safi claimed her first national titles aged 10

before competing at successive ITF Asia Development Championships.

Citing such competitions as pivotal in her on-court evolution and vital in terms of being a portal to junior tennis throughout Asia, she continued to progress and sealed her maiden ITF junior titles in 2019.

This preceded a stunning 2021 campaign and something of a breakthrough year as Safi topped the podium on six occasions in singles events, including a career-best victory at J2 Shymkent in October.

Her achievements are mounting and Safi is a determined individual, eager to forge a sporting career within a country not known for its tennis prowess. The backdrop is not an easy one, but Safi appears strong-willed and tenacious.

“To tell you the truth, it has been a tough journey so far,” she said.

“At the beginning, I felt it was very difficult and the experience of other preceding players was showing there was little hope for big tennis achievement, especially with limited resources and support. But I have big motivation.

“It is not easy to improve as a female player in Iran, especially when some people might tell you that there is no future in tennis, compared to other sports in Iran with big achievements. It is promising for me to have people around me to encourage me,” Safi said.

Chinese ambassador meets Iran’s NPC president Khosravi Vafa

TEHRAN – Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua met president of Iran’s National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa on Tuesday.

The meeting took place at Iran’s NPC headquarters in Tehran.

The 2022 Winter Games will be held in Beijing, China but several of the nations executing a diplomatic boycott of Beijing 2022 already have strained relations with China.

“The official motto for the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics is ‘Together for a Shared Future’. We will do our best to protect the health of all athletes in the Games during the COVID-19 period,” Chang Hua said.

Khosravi Vafa also said Iran has always supported the country’s people with disability over the past years.

“Iran and China Paralympic Committees have good relationship together and we will send our Para athletes to Beijing,” he said.

“Politics and sports should not mix and we condemn the U.S. and the other countries who have boycotted the Winter Games. We will send our athletes to the 2022 Winter Paralympic Games,” Khosravi Vafa added.

Kamalvand steps down as Naft Masjed Soleyman coach

TEHRAN – Faraz Kamalvand parted ways with Naft Masjed Soleyman football club.

The 45-year-old coach left the Iranian team 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 Matweek 15 of Iran Professional League (IPL).

Naft Masjed Soleyman sits 15th in the IPL 16-team league.

Iran responds to U.S. National Security advisor threat

TEHRAN – Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry, has reacted to a statement by U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan who warned about potentially harming U.S. citizens sanctioned by Iran.

Regarding Sullivan’s statement about Iran’s new sanctions on American officials, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said, “The United States is used to unilaterally placing sanctions and putting pressure [on other countries] and it is not used to speaking [with them] on equal footing in line with international law.”

He added, “It must get accustomed [to the fact] that it cannot treat binding international rules as its domestic ones. What happened in the evening of January 3, 2020 was a flagrant war crime against high-ranking Iranian nationals.”

Khatibzadeh further noted, “The Islamic Republic of Iran will sue those who perpetrated, ordered, supervised, and played a role in this flagrant crime and will not spare any effort to bring them to justice.”

He said, “The only benefit of such desperate comments is that we consider them as accomplices to those who committed the crime at midnight of January 3. We will neither forgive nor forget and will do our utmost to pursue the US crime at that midnight.”

Iran has recently updated Counter-terrorism Designations regarding American Individuals Involved in the Terrorist Act against General Qassem Soleimani and his companions, which resulted in Iran designating more than 50 American individuals involved in the assassination of Iran’s top commander two years ago.

Iran hopes security, stability be restored in Kazakhstan

TEHRAN – Iran has expressed hope that Kazakhstan will soon be able to restore stability, security and calm.

In remarks about the ongoing events in Kazakhstan and the human casualties during the unrest, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed sympathy with the Kazakh government and people.

He also offered condolences to the families and relatives of those killed in the unrest.

Khatibzadeh said the legitimate government of Kazakhstan and its noble people will definitely foil foreign plots aimed at causing unrest and destabilizing the country and will leave behind these tough days.

In the end, Khatibzadeh reiterated that the Islamic Republic of Iran will stand by the friendly and brotherly country of Kazakhstan and hopes that stability, security and calm will be restored there soon.

Earlier, Khatibzadeh had said stability and security of Kazakhstan is of high importance to Iran.

Responding to a question by journalists regarding the latest situation in Kazakhstan, Khatibzadeh said as Tehran has already reiterated, stability and security of Kazakhstan is of high importance and “we hope that calm will be restored to the country as soon as possible.”

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

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

A few days after Iran marked the second anniversary of the assassination of General Soleimani, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced the new designations. “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in accordance with the ‘Act on Countering Violations of Human Rights and Adventurist and Terrorist Actions of the United States of America in the Region’, particularly, Articles 4 and 5, and in addition to the American individuals including Donald Trump[1], Michael Pompeo[2], John Bolton[3], Mark Esper[4], Gina Haspel[5], Christopher Miller[6] and Steven Mnuchin[7] and also Matthew Tueller[8], Steven Fagin[9] and Rob Waller[10] who were listed respectively on 19 January 2021 and 23 October 2020, identifies and imposes sanctions as set forth in the abovementioned Act on the following persons for the role they played in the terrorist act of the United States against Martyr General Qassem Soleimani and his companions, in glorification of terrorism and in violating the fundamental human rights,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It added, “The said persons, as the case may be, have taken part in decision-making, organizing, financing, and carrying out the terrorist act or have otherwise justified terrorism which is a threat to the international peace and security through supporting such egregious terrorist attack.”

The statement continued, “It is reiterated that United States by conducting the callous terrorist act has flagrantly breached its international legal obligations in countering terrorism and terrorism-financing, in particular, the obligation to refrain and desist from organizing and

participating in terrorist acts and the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights which constitute internationally wrongful acts entailing the international responsibility of the United States. As such, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in conformity and compliance with its human rights obligations and also duties in combating terrorism and countering terrorism financing, in particular the state terrorism perpetrated by the United States and to ensure the international peace and security, imposes the sanctions as stipulated in the Act on the said persons on a reciprocal basis.”

It further said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines that the heinous terrorist act will not in any manner diminish the resolute determination and resolve of the Islamic Republic of Iran in following the path of the revered General Soleimani in fighting terrorism and terrorist groups, in particular, the US-backed terrorist groups.”

Sullivan issued a statement that included a warning to Iran about targeting the sanctioned individuals. “Make no mistake: the United States of America will protect and defend its citizens. This includes those serving the United States now and those who formerly served. As Americans, we have our disagreements on politics. We have our disagreements on Iran policy. But we are united in our resolve against threats and provocations,” he said in the statement.

He added, “We are united in the defense of our people. We will work with our allies and partners to deter and respond to any attacks carried out by Iran. Should Iran attack any of our nationals, including any of the 51 people named yesterday, it will face severe consequences.”

Ayatollah Raisi sends congratulatory message to Tajikistan

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has sent a message to his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon, congratulating him on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Iran-Tajikistan diplomatic ties.

“I cordially congratulate you and the people of your country on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan,” Raisi told Rahmon in his message.

“Fortunately, over the past three decades, the two countries have been able to achieve a very high level of bilateral, regional and international relations by taking advantage of deep historical, cultural, civilizational and linguistic commonalities, which given the huge potentials in the two countries, it is possible to improve the level of cooperation, especially in the economic sector,” he added, according

to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

Ayatollah Raisi noted, “In this regard, based on the results of my first official visit to the beautiful country of Tajikistan, the two sides agreed that the necessary grounds for enhancing economic cooperation should be at the top of the agenda of the relevant officials and a new chapter of comprehensive relations would form based on political trust.”

The Iranian president concluded his message by saying, “I hope that, given the existing political will and in the shadow of a joint effort, we will see the comprehensive development of relations in order to ensure the mutual interests of the two Iranian and Tajik nations. I wish Your Excellency and your honorable family health and success, and the dear and honorable people of the Republic of Tajikistan prosperity and felicity.”

Oil, gas condensate output expected to rise 144,000 bpd in next Iranian year

From page 1 ► “Based on our plans, we need \$90 billion of investment in the oil sector, while \$70 billion is also needed to develop gas fields,” Khojasteh-Mehr said in a press conference on November 28, 2021.

Khojasteh-Mehr further stated that considering the increase in the oil and gas production and the country's refining capacity, NIOC is also planning to boost the oil and gas industry's export capacity to reach 1.5 times more than the pre-sanction levels over the next 10 years.

“The manpower working in the Iranian oil industry's upstream sector is among the world's most qualified, and the geography of the oil industry has enabled us to have energy security,” he stressed.

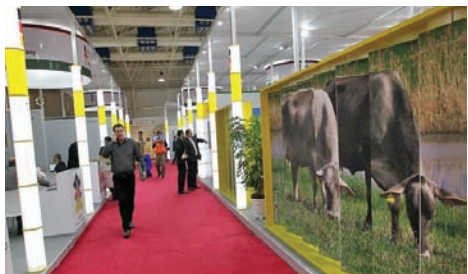
Elsewhere in his remarks, the NIOC head mentioned the country's current crude



oil and gas condensate exports, saying: “Exports of crude oil and gas condensate have increased and we are using all our capacities to maximize exports because the sustainability of crude oil exports is our policy.”

According to him, NIOC is looking for new and safe markets for exports to continue selling oil.

Intl. Feed Expo kicks off in Tehran



TEHRAN - The sixth edition of Iran's International Exhibition of Poultry, Livestock, Aquaculture, Feedstuff and

Related Industries (Iran Feed Expo) kicked off in Tehran on Tuesday.

As IRIB reported, 70 renowned Iranian and foreign companies from various countries including Russia, China, Germany, Italy and Spain are showcasing their latest products and services in this three-day exhibition.

Iran Feed Expo is one of the major events in the feedstuff industry in the region.

The motto of this year's exhibition is “Safe Feed, Safe Food”.

PGPICC's new managing director appointed

TEHRAN - The chairman of the board of directors of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industry Commercial Company (PGPICC) has appointed Abdulali Ali-Asgari as the new managing director of the company, Shana reported.

Ali-Asgari who has replaced Jafar Rabiei, was the former director-general of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

PGPICC is an Iranian public holding company. It is mainly active in investment and administrating natural-gas processing plants, chemical factories, oil and polymer.



61 idle industrial units revived in Mazandaran since last March

TEHRAN- As announced by a provincial official, 61 idle industrial units returned to the production cycle in Mazandaran province, in the north of Iran, since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021).

Jahangir Baei, the deputy head of the province's Industry, Mining and Trade Department for planning and investment affairs, said that the mentioned units returning to the production cycle created jobs for 713 people.

He also announced that 40 more idle units are planned to be revived by the yearend.

The official further said that 406 industrial projects with over 60 percent progress were completed in the province in the present year.

As announced by the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), in the last Iranian calendar year, 1,557 stagnant and semi-active units returned to the production cycle in the industrial parks with a financing of 35 trillion rials (over \$120.6 million), providing employment for 27,000 people.

With the aim of reactivating stagnant units or units that are

operating below capacity, 900 consultants from the private sector and knowledge-based companies were selected in the form of industry clinics across the country to recognize the weaknesses of these units, Ali Rasoulman said previously.

“Despite the two major challenges of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic, which imposed severe restrictions on the country, we tried to activate domestic capacities by turning to localizing the technology of manufacturing parts and equipment”, he added.

Sanctions have caused problems for financial exchanges and the export of goods to other countries, he said, adding, “The negative effects of coronavirus pandemic on various parts of the country, including industry, are not hidden from anyone, and the economic growth of some countries has reached below zero during this period.”

Iran is proud that despite these restrictions and pressure from these two important challenges, its industry has grown by more than seven percent, according to the statistics and reports



from various sectors, the official further highlighted.

Also, as announced by Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, over 6,500 new industrial units were established across the country during the past year which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry's plans for the realization of the motto of the current year which is named the year of “Production: support and the elimination of obstacles” by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the official has said: “In the year that has been dedicated to the production sector by the Leader of the revolution, the orientation of all government

Iron ore pellet production rises 23% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN – Production of iron ore pellet in Iran increased by 23 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced.

IMIDRO said that more than 28.649 million tons of iron ore pellets were produced in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year, while the figure was 23.285 million in the same time span of the previous year.

Also, the iron ore pellet production rose 17 percent to 3.026 million tons in the ninth month of this year, from that of the previous year, which was 2.597 million tons.

As reported, Golgozar was the largest producer of pellets during the nine-month period with 9.346 million tons of production, followed by MIDHCO

with 4.434 million tons, and Sangan with 3.268 million tons.

The data released by IMIDRO indicate that iron ore pellet production by major Iranian mining companies exceeded 46 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021), registering a 10 percent growth year on year.

The mentioned companies had managed to produce 41.7 million tons of pellets in the preceding year.

According to the data, Golgozar was the largest producer of pellets in the said year with 12.2 million tons of production, followed by Mobarakeh Steel Company with 7.3 million tons, MIDHCO with 6.2 million tons, and Khouzestan Steel Company with 5.5 million tons.

Iran's iron ore pellet production capacity exceeded 66 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year.



IMIDRO's report on under-construction iron ore pellet production units in Iran indicates that a total of 25.92 million tons are expected to be added to Iran's iron ore pellet production capacity by the time these units are completed in the fiscal year 1402 (2023-24).

Production of iron ore concentrate also reached 49.714 million tons during the previous calendar year to register a five-percent rise year on year.

According to the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry data, of the mentioned figure 3.533 million tons were produced in the last month of the previous year (February 19-March 20).

As reported, the country's major iron ore concentrate producers had managed to produce about 47,306 million tons of the mentioned product in the Iranian calendar year

1398.

Last year, major mining companies also produced 902,454 tons of granulated iron ore, to register a decrease of 54 percent compared to the preceding year (1,965,733 tons).

In its outlook plan for the Iranian calendar year 1404 (2025-2026) Iran has envisaged production of 55 million tons of steel per annum, and to achieve this target the country requires to extract 160 million tons of iron ore.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value-added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since September 2019.

The duty is aimed at encouraging the production of more processed minerals such as pellets and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

INTA to start collecting vacancy taxes as of Jan. 21

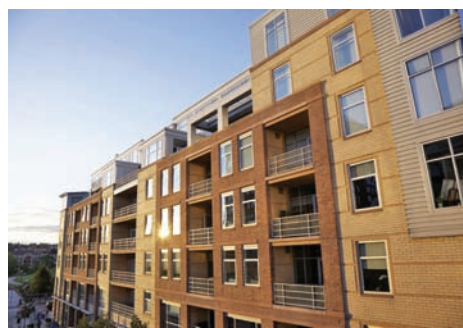
TEHRAN- Iran National Tax Administration (INTA) is going to start collecting taxes on vacant houses as of the next Iranian calendar month (begins on January 21), Tasnim reported on Monday, quoting an official with Transport and Urban Development Ministry.

“The information regarding vacant houses is being sent to Iran National Tax Administration using Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) protocol or manually,” Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Housing and Construction Affairs Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh told Tasnim.

According to the official, so far, the information related to 1,174,000 vacant houses has been communicated with INTA.

“We are going to also send the data regarding the units owned by legal entities to INTA within one or two days,” Mahmoudzadeh said.

Mahmoudzadeh had previously said that in



the first stage of the implementation of the program for collecting tax from the country's vacant housing units, only units belonging to natural persons are targeted.

The vacancy tax law, as part of Direct Tax Reform Law, was put on the agenda in the Iranian calendar year ending March 2016 and was enforceable from the year ending March 2017, but there was little data on the number of vacant units then, according to Mahmoud

Alizadeh, a senior official with the INTA.

The mentioned plan is mainly aimed at lowering the housing rental rate in the country.

In mid-July 2020, the Iranian parliament (Majlis) approved the double-urgency bill of the vacancy tax law and it was decided that the mentioned law would be implemented in July 2021, however, the implementation of the new law was postponed due to technical issues.

Expressing his agreement over the approval of the mentioned plan, Hossein Hosseini-Zadeh Bahraini, a member of the Majlis Economic Committee, said, “Our problem in the housing sector is not the demand higher than the supply, while the number of residential units is more than required.”

This plan is vital, as many families are struggling for renting the homes, while there are many empty units, the MP further reiterated.

TEDPIX gains 1,900 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 1,927 points to 1.334 million on Tuesday.

As reported, over 5.073 billion securities worth 23.788 trillion rials (about \$82.027 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 2,924 points, while the second market's index dropped 823 points.

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

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

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

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

support the capital market.

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

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

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

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

As stated by Market Analyst Peyman Hadadi, the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year indicates that the government has a more positive view of the market for the upcoming year.

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

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

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

He also mentioned the elimination of subsidized foreign currency allocations and noted that this would create huge changes in the market and will be the starting point for some positive progress in some industries active in the market.

The elimination of subsidies on foreign currency is not only beneficial for the country's macro-economy but also has a positive effect on the capital market transactions, the analyst said.

By Dost Muhammad Barrech1

Moscow has started supplying New Delhi with S-400 air defense missile systems said Dmitry Shugayev, the head of the Russian military cooperation agency. S-400 air defense missile systems deal between Russian and India worth around U.S.\$5.5 billion was signed in 2018 for five long-range surface-to-air missile systems, that New Delhi believes are crucial to counter China. The deal attracts a great deal of attention of the experts to the U.S. legislation called Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). CAATSA is the U.S. Federal Law signed on August 2, 2017, that requires the U.S. President to sanction Russian, North Korean and Iranian, sectors, punishing direct or indirect support of them. The three sections of CAASTA are aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program, reducing Russian growing influence in Europe and Eurasia and curbing North Korean weapons of mass destruction.

The U.S. applied CAASTA on Turkey in January 2021 after buying S-400 systems from Moscow. But sanctioning India under CAATSA appears to be a herculean task for Washington nor does New Delhi worry about CAATSA as it considers it the U.S. law, and not one by the United Nations. In March 2021 Lloyd Austin, visiting the U.S. Secretary of Defense raised concerns over India's planned procurement of the S-400 air defense missile. He had accentuated that the U.S. allies and partners ought to shun "any kind of acquisitions that will trigger sanctions". Austin soon after clarified that the question of sanctioning India was not under consideration as New Delhi had not taken delivery of the system; sanctions would be applied only when deliveries took place, Austin added. Interestingly, India at the current juncture has purchased S-400 air defence missile systems from Russia. A few queries remain unanswered. Will the U.S. impose sanctions against India under CAATSA? If sanctioned are applied what would be the

Sanctioning India under CAATSA



Indian reaction?

India, arguably, is a robust bulwark of the U.S. against the containment of China sanctioning would loss a strategic ally in the Indo-Pacific region. Meanwhile, India and Russia have a long history of military relations since the era of the Soviet Union. Currently in the military services of India nearly 86 per cent of the weapons, equipment, and platforms are of Russian origin. The U.S. started selling weapons and equipment to India in 2001 after easing its relations with New Delhi. Russian air defence system is extensively used in the Indian military; the latter is unlikely to compromise on the former's sophisticated weapons. Sanctioning India will reduce Indian military buttress vis-à-vis China and will swing New Delhi to Moscow that the U.S. never wants to happen. The US is fully cognizant of the fact that if sanctions are imposed will alienate India resulting in losing Indian arms market damaging the U.S. military-industrial complex. The fact of matter is that instead of sanctioning and alienating India, the U.S. presumably will occupy the Indian arms market by competing with Russian weapons and equipment in

terms of performance and price.

On the other hand, there is a great deal of likelihood that CAATSA will bypass India, under the Act's "modified waiver authority" for "certain sanctionable transactions" granted by the U.S. president Joe Biden. India has already been lobbying in Washington for CAATSA waiver over the S-400 air defense missile systems. Indian diplomats and security officials reassured the U.S. that both India and the U.S. had a comprehensive global strategic partnership and both were having a threat from China and S-400 air defense missile systems were attributed to countering China. New Delhi had also guaranteed the protection of the U.S. materiel and the U.S. "technical and operational secrecy".

India predominantly reassured Washington that the former was willing to reduce its dependency on the Russian defense equipment in the foreseeable future. India, as a result, was backed by three Republican senators presented an amendment in Congress to the National Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 with the aim of making obstacles for the U.S. in the imposition of CAATSA on India. The U.S.

latest legislation, called the Circumspectly Reducing Unintended Consequences Impairing Alliances and Leadership (CRUCIAL) Act, 2021 maintains that CAATSA will only weaken the U.S. security in the Indo-Pacific region. Ted Cruz a Republican senator argues that "Now would be exactly the wrong time for President Biden to undo all of that progress (in partnering India) through the imposition of these sanctions".

S-400 obviously ushers a path to a diplomatic crisis for the Biden administration. Applying CAATSA on India will dilute the strategic coherence of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue QUAD in the Indo-Pacific undermining U.S. diplomatic ties with India in the containment of China. Moscow also looks forward to taking advantage of the sanctions reclaiming its role as an Indian bona fide military partner. Applying of sanctions would remain a geostrategic victory of Russia damaging the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy overwhelmingly.

Beijing remains as a prime adversary of the U.S. and India that forces both countries to be strategic allies in the region. However, the S-400 air defense missile somewhat caused a rift in the diplomatic ties of the U.S. and India. It can be argued that the U.S. irresponsible withdrawal from Afghanistan and the non-inclusion of India in the AUKUS compelled India to move towards Moscow in a bid to pressurize the U.S. The U.S. certainly hangs in the balance as far as CAATSA is concerned. On one hand, sanctioning India will bring New Delhi and Moscow further closer, weakening the U.S. containment policy of China and the credibility of the Quad. On the other, non-imposition of CAATSA would tarnish the U.S. image globally, showcasing its selective approach in punishment of the countries.

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Now pendulum has swung back to the left in Latin America: professor

"If a leftist government defies U.S. hegemony, it is subject to intervention"

From page 1 ► **Why do Latin American states generally have tendency toward leftists that are at odds with American liberal democracy?**

Well, that's not always true. What we've seen in the last 20 years has been a pendulum swing back and forth between the left and right. Now the pendulum has swung back to the left, but the right remains very strong, and this is an illiberal populist right that resembles many of the features of Trumpism in the U.S.

Over recent decades the U.S. has confronted leftist democracies all around the world while supporting Arab monarchies. Why doesn't Washington recognize other democracies that differ from liberal democracy?

Clearly the explanation is rooted in both geopolitical and global economic forces. In the case of the Arab monarchies, it is not just oil that drives U.S. policy. It is also the financial power



Christian evangelicals, and evangelical churches have made significant gains among both American Latinos and in Latin America itself, including among Latina immigrants. Many blacks are frustrated with the failure of the Democrats to adequately address violent crime and lack of economic opportunity. Many seem open to the populist right.

"The U.S. has always regarded Latin America as its 'backyard.' It doesn't matter whether the government is an autocracy or a democracy."

How do you see impact of immigrants and minorities (i.e. blacks, Spanish and Muslims) on U.S. democracy and its future? Do you agree that Trump made any effort to suppress them?

Trump has clearly used the immigration issues to appeal to racist sentiments in the U.S. population, but in the last election he actually made gains among Latinos and African-Americans - but not among Muslims.

Remember, Trump's base includes

Given the Republicans' measures against U.S. democracy and failure of Democrats to solve U.S. basic problems, don't you predict an emerging third party to get rid of partisan politics and corruption?

I see possibilities of new parties emerging across the political spectrum. The most likely one for the next presidential election in 2024 would be a centrist party attempting to draw Republicans who are alienated from Trump and the populist right. Eventually a new party could form on the left, but I think a centrist break-away is more likely. In any case, I do not think we will see any party, new or old, end partisan politics and corruption.

Email puts 'disgraceful' UK PM under mounting pressure to resign

From page 1 ► There are many reports that indicate among those who attended included the Prime Minister and his wife.

Scotland Yard has announced that the Metropolitan Police is considering investigating the event.

Senior police officers are meeting to discuss the situation.

The Metropolitan police says it was "aware of widespread reporting relating to alleged breaches of the Health Protection Regulations at Downing Street on 20 May 2020" adding it had made contact with the Cabinet Office.

The party was first brought to public attention by the Prime Minister's former advisor Dominic Cummings.

The email also follows accusations about staff gathering in the garden on May 15, when a photograph emerged of Johnson and his wife sitting with government staff including Reynolds on the terrace eating and drinking.

Downing Street has previously insisted that the photograph showed a work meeting.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly denied accusations he broke the law; which the British public was forced to adhere to or face a financial punishment.

However, the email about the party on May 20 makes it clear that this party was a social gathering, which is far harder to explain away as social mixing was banned during

that period, except with one other person from another household in a public place.

Even more ironically, on that day, less than one hour before the party in question, the then Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, had delivered a press conference reminding the rest of the country that only two people are allowed to meet outdoors.

The latest revelations will have huge impacts on the future of the Prime Minister, there are fresh calls for Johnson to step down.

The main opposition Labour party's leader Kheir Starmer has told

the PM on social media "Boris Johnson, your deflections and distractions are absurd. Not only did you know about the parties in Downing Street, you attended them. Stop lying to the British public. It's time to finally come clean".

Deputy Labour Leader Angela Rayner says "It's terrible and I think many people that see the evidence now will not, only think that Boris Johnson's lies are catching up with him, but will see it as absolutely despicable that when they were told to follow the rules, Boris Johnson and Number 10 were breaking the rules.

Rayner adds "It's disgraceful and he should be ashamed. At the time this party took place, key workers on the frontline were working round the clock to keep us all safe, people



suffered loneliness and loss in unimaginably tough circumstances."

The Liberal Democrat Party Leader Ed Davey says: "Yet again it's one rule for Boris Johnson and another rule for the rest of us. This time a massive garden party at his place while people were dying alone."

Ian Blackford, the Scottish National Party's Westminster leader, said the email was "utterly outrageous"

"Boris Johnson must come clean and admit whether he attended, or was aware of, this Covid rule-breaking party in his own back garden"

He also says "If the prime minister had a shred of integrity or an ounce of shame, he would have resigned many months ago. He has no moral authority left, and as he won't go -

his Tory MPs have a duty to remove him from power."

According to British media reports, some government employees expressed concern over the invitation. One anonymous person invited reportedly said "Um. Why is Martin encouraging a mass gathering in the garden?". Another asked: "Is this for real?"

Conservative Party Members of Parliament are said to be furious about the leaked email. One frontbencher said: "I think this is the worst exposed the prime minister has ever been by these leaks. There's no explanation, there's no way to distance himself. His only savior is if the public has given up caring."

A senior Tory insider says "the rules were not just tweaked but snapped in half. This is now incredibly close to the PM. It's very

tricky to sack someone [Reynolds] for a party he [Johnson] attended."

Another has told British media fresh report is "indefensible" and the situation is "as bad as it gets".

Johnson's spokesperson has declined to comment amid an ongoing inquiry into other potential breaches of the lockdown by the government itself.

There have been reports of at least five other alleged gatherings in Downing Street and Whitehall in winter 2020, including a Christmas party, a party for a government staff who was quitting, one involving a quiz event, a party at number 11 Downing Street and another social gathering at the Department for Education.

Family members of those who died from Covid have reacted with anger to the leaked email. A spokesperson for the 'Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice' group said: "My dad died just four days before this email was sent out, he was only 55 and was a fit and healthy key worker ... to think that whilst it was happening, Boris Johnson was making the 'most of the weather' and throwing a party for 100 people is truly beyond belief.

The spokesperson for the group adds "At the time, everyone would have known that going to a party was wrong, so how can those running the country have thought it was OK? Could there be a more disgraceful example of 'one rule for them, and another rule for the rest

of us'?

"To make matters worse, in September last year I sat in that same garden, looked the prime minister in the eyes and told him how my dad had died. He told me he had 'done everything he could' to protect my dad, knowing that he had partied in that same spot the very day that my father's death certificate was signed. It makes me feel sick to think about it."

Following the leak of the email, other bereaved relatives have also made their anger clear.

The government has offered different explanations for each new scandal, but this time, the prime minister has been left personally exposed.

Johnson can take the position of avoiding to making any comment (and save time) as an investigation by a senior civil servant is already taking place. But the pressure is piling on Johnson leaving the Premier with no shield for protection over his continuous breaking of the rules.

At the day of the reported event, 363 people were announced dead after testing positive for COVID-19. Britons had only just been allowed to meet with one person from another household outside (as long as they remained two metres apart), while mixing with another household, even another family household indoors was prohibited.

A party spokesman says he can understand the public anger.

The U.S. needs to return all Achaemenid tablets to Iran: envoy



TEHRAN – Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said that the United States must return all Achaemenid clay tablets without any exceptions and excuses.

Iranian officials must get their hands on all Achaemenid tablets quickly and without argument from the United States, IRNA quoted Takht-Ravanchi as saying on Tuesday.

About 90 years ago, Achaemenid tablets were loaned to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago for a three-year period, and have not been fully returned since then, the official added.

Despite the fact that these tablets are part of the culture and history of Iran and belong to its people, the U.S. continually delays returning them, he noted.

The Iranian request is clear, he said, adding that they want their tablets promptly, safely, and in a timely manner returned.

In 2019, hundreds of Achaemenid clay tablets and related fragments, which were on loan from Iran to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago since 1935, were returned home. However, the Institute still has some of these tablets.

In February 2018, and following years of ups and downs, the fate of those ancient Persian artifacts, was left in the hands of a U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of Iran.

Archaeologists affiliated with the University of Chicago discovered the tablets in the 1930s while excavating in Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire. However, the institute has resumed work in collaboration with colleagues in Iran, and the return of the tablets is part of a broadening of contacts between scholars in the two countries, said Gil Stein, director of the

Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

The tablets reveal the economic, social, and religious history of the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) and the larger Near Eastern region in the fifth century BC.

The Achaemenid [Persian] Empire was the largest and most durable empire of its time. The empire stretched from Ethiopia, through Egypt, to Greece, to Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia, and to India.

The royal city of Persepolis ranks among the archaeological sites which have no equivalent, considering its unique architecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art. Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy) is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars province.

The city was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier. The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall ("Hundred-Column Hall").

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites. Persepolis was the seat of the government of the Achaemenid Empire, though it was designed primarily to be a showplace and spectacular center for the receptions and festivals of the kings and their empire.

Seleucid, Parthian relics unearthed in UNESCO-tagged Bisotun

From page 1 ► The Seleucid Empire was a Hellenistic state ruled by the Seleucid dynasty which existed from 312 BC to 63 BC; Seleucus I Nicator founded it following the division of the Macedonian Empire vastly expanded by Alexander the Great. Seleucus received Babylonia (321 BC) and from there expanded his dominions to include much of Alexander's near-eastern territories. At the height of its power, the Empire included central Anatolia, Persia, the Levant, Mesopotamia, and what is now Kuwait, Afghanistan, and parts of Pakistan and Turkmenistan.

Establishing a primary residence at Ctesiphon, on the Tigris River in southern Mesopotamia, Parthian kings ruled for nearly half a millennium and influenced politics from Asia Minor to northern India, until they were overthrown by Sasanian armies from southwest Iran in the early third century CE.

Parthian wealth obtained through lucrative trade networks resulted in substantial patronage of the arts, in particular, relief sculpture, statuary (large and

small scale), architectural sculpture, metalwork, jewelry, and ceramics; coins with images of Parthian rulers form another important category of objects.

Bisotun is a patchwork of immense yet impressive life-size carvings depicting the king Darius I and several other figures.

The area was on the ancient trade route linking the Iranian high plateau with Mesopotamia and contains remains from prehistoric times to the Median and Achaemenid eras.

The principal monument of this archaeological site is the bas-relief and cuneiform inscription ordered by Darius the Great shortly after he ascended to the throne of the Persian Empire in 521 BC.

The bas-relief portrays Darius holding a bow, as a sign of sovereignty and treading on the chest of a figure who lies on his back before him. According to legend, the figure represents Gaumata, the Median Magus, and pretender to the throne whose assassination led to Darius's rise to power. This symbolic



representation of the Achaemenid king in relation to his enemy reflects traditions in monumental bas-reliefs that date from ancient Egypt and the Middle East, and which were subsequently further developed during the Achaemenid and later empires.

Below and around the bas-reliefs, there are about 1,200 lines of inscriptions telling the story of the battles Darius waged in 521–520 BC against the governors who attempted to take apart the empire founded by Cyrus.

The inscription is written in three languages. The oldest is an Elamite text referring to legends describing the king and the rebellions. This is followed by a Babylonian version of similar legends. The last phase of the inscription is particularly important, as it is here that Darius introduced for the first time the Old Persian version of his res gestae (things done).

This is the only known monumental text of the Achaemenids to document the re-establishment of the empire

by Darius I. It also bears witness to the interchange of influences in the development of monumental art and writing in the region of the Persian Empire. There are also remains from the Median period (8th to 7th centuries BC) as well as from the Achaemenid (6th to 4th centuries BC) and post-Achaemenid periods.

UNESCO has it that Bisotun bears outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing, reflecting ancient traditions in monumental bas-reliefs.

Once deciphered in the 19th century, it opened the door to previously unknown aspects of ancient civilizations. In that sense, the inscription at Bisotun has had a value for Assyriology comparable to that of the Rosetta Stone for Egyptology.

The massive site of Bisotun also features vestiges of Old Persian history, art and architecture, amongst them is the Statue of Hercules that was discovered around 1957.

Iranian province to boost rural tourism

TEHRAN – Local authorities plan to boost rural tourism in the northeastern North Khorasan province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Taking into account the pristine nature of the villages in the region, the province has great potential to become a tourist hotspot, Ali Mostofian said on Tuesday.

Investing in tourist villages can provide a substantial amount of employment to the region, the official added.

When it comes to rural tourism Iran, which has many pristine yet diverse natural settings, has many to offer to nature lovers. Rural tourism as well as agritourism and farm-stays can be regarded as a win-win both for local communities, and post-modern travelers who are tracing unique experiences.

Sightseers may stay with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It



also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

Rural tourism, most of all, sets the ground for economic development in rural areas by creating additional income and employment. It can also improve the social wellbeing in rural areas, for instance by stimulating improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, and electricity networks.

The World Tourism Organization sees rural

tourism as a type of activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle, culture, angling, and sightseeing. Such tourism also possesses characteristics such as low population density, a landscape dominated by agriculture and forestry, as well as traditional social structure and lifestyle.

Experts believe though the northeastern province may not be the first choice of travelers, its tourism industry is getting momentum.

According to Lonely Planet, most foreign tourists pass straight through North Khorasan in transit between Mashhad and Gorgan, but if you have time to explore, it's worth diverting south from the capital, Bojnurd, towards Esfarayen, famed for its wrestling tournaments, the remarkable citadel of Belqays and the partly preserved stepped village of Roeyn some 20km north.

Discover clock museum in northern Tehran

TEHRAN – Zaman (Time) Museum in northern Tehran is where you may roam through for hours. It is home to water clocks and oil clocks, sun clocks, and ones operated with the help of candles or sand grains, to name a few.

The museum features a gradual evolution of time-measuring instruments from initial clocks to modern mechanical ones. Situated in the Zaferanieh neighborhood, the two-story museum exhibits clocks and watches once belonging to famous people such as Nasserddin Shah Qajar, and Professor Mahmoud Hessabi who was a nuclear physicist and senator.

Furthermore, visitors may find the ship clock, two-stroke watches, guard watches, ancient Iranian calendars, time-measuring dishes among hundreds of watches made in France, Switzerland, England, and Germany. The interesting oil clock has a graduated tank in which special oil is poured. When the wick is turned on within an hour, the oil in the tank is used as fuel, and the time was measured by the oil levels of the tank according to the amount of oil remaining.

The museum enjoys a kind of atmospheric architecture and decorations. The main museum building has two floors, each of which includes sights. On the first floor, you can tour clocks from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Many clocks such as pendulum, wall, and stand clocks are decorated in an artistic way that shows the importance of the clocks in the past.

The replicas of the various clocks, all of

which combine art and craftsmanship, are very interesting in this section. Some of these clocks are gifts from political figures from their travels to other countries and some from people's personal property.

Another interesting piece of art in this section is a bronze clock, covered with a thin layer of gold, made in France, which is decorated in the style of Louis XVI and shows the body of Homer, the epic Greek poet. In this part of the building, there is a niche wall clock with an engraved image of the first Pahlavi in Tehran's Ghorhaneh, which dates back to 1934.

A room named after Isfahan fascinates visitors with its unpretentious designs by prominent masters. The ceiling of this room is decorated with Isfahan carpet design, 99% of which is made of copper and 1% of which is made of gold.

The second floor is dedicated to the display of Houshang Foroutan's works. The reason for displaying his works in this museum is his collages, made by unused pieces of old clocks. On this floor, there is a circular display with clock repair tools.

Other interesting sights of this floor are the clocks displayed from the Qajar period, such as the sun clock of Nasser al-Din Shah. In this part of the floor, there is an old astrolabe, which has been an astronomical device and a permanent calendar. Elsewhere, there is a celestial sphere that was used to measure time. Facilities include a restaurant-café and a time gallery (to purchase works by artists). Photography is also free inside and outside the museum.

Over 800 people trained as crafters in Ardabil

TEHRAN –Over 800 people have been trained as crafters in the northwestern Ardabil province during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), a local tourism official has announced.

"A total of 850 people attended short-term handicraft training courses in Ardabil during the first nine months of the year," Tohid Delavar Qavam said on Tuesday.

Increasing educational programs and training courses are important measures to improve the quality and quantity of handicraft products, the official added.

Back in December the official announced that the handicrafts sector has generated a total of 670 job opportunities across the province during the first nine months of the year.

Recently, 18 high-quality works by artisans in the province were awarded the National Seal of Excellence, which illustrates the expertise and power of the province's artisans in this sector, the official added.

Back in July, local officials announced that some 835 jobs



are expected to be created in Ardabil by several investments in tourism-related projects, which are estimated to get off the ground by the end of the current Iranian year 1400 (ends in March 2022).

Back in January, the provincial tourism chief, Nader Fallahi, announced that more than 150 tourism-related projects are underway across Ardebil province. The mentioned projects will prepare the province's tourism sector for the post-coronavirus era when the number of tourists and travelers is expected to rise magnificently, the official added.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Wide-ranging handicrafts

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.

Shiraz was named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a "world city of filigree". And Qassemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer garment for women, was, however, the main

subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

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.

Fifth Iranian innovation center to be launched in Turkey

TEHRAN – Iran will soon inaugurate its fifth innovation center in Turkey aiming to find new markets for domestically-made high-tech products.

The inauguration will be concurrent with the second meeting of Iran and Turkey on commerce and technology which will be held in the city of Istanbul from February 27-March 2, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Iran has already established innovation centers in Russia, Syria, China, and Kenya.

In December 2021, Marzieh Shaverdi, the manager of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund, said Iran will launch production lines of knowledge-based products in seven countries, namely Turkey, Armenia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria, Iraq, and Kenya.

The export support package for knowledge-based companies includes empowering, networking, and financing, IRNA quoted Shaverdi as saying.

Export empowerment includes training and consulting, providing export standards and licenses, and intellectual property, she explained.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology will provide special support to facilitate export for knowledge-based companies with quality products over the next 6 months.

Due to the necessity of Iran's



presence in the global technology markets and the high capability of knowledge-based and creative companies, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology stepped into the field to pave the way for the presence in the global market, Mehdi Ghalehnoei, an official with the Vice Presidency, said in October 2021.

To this end, it has developed and implemented programs, policies, and support packages related to the development of export, planning to attract foreign investment, eliciting the participation of Iranians abroad, and connecting domestic capabilities to the global market

are among the actions taken in this regard.

Exporting technological products of Iranian knowledge-based companies is one of the important and key programs of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, and in this regard, three houses of innovation and technology were inaugurated in Kenya, China and Syria.

And countries like Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are set to host innovation houses in the near future.

Ghalehnoei said in February 2021 that, knowledge-based companies gained about \$800 million in revenue from export

in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), and this year it seems to reach up to \$2 billion.

"Africa, neighboring countries, Southeast Asia and Eurasia are our export target priorities, and we hope to create Iranian innovation and technology in all these areas," he added.

The Innovation and Prosperity Fund affiliated with the Vice Presidency of Science and Technology has earmarked a sum of 170 trillion rials (nearly \$700 million) to support knowledge-based companies over the past 4 years.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has paved the way for research and production of technological products by supporting 7,000 projects over the past 8 years.

There are currently 6,263 knowledge-based companies operating in the country, offering advanced products and services in various fields of technology to domestic and foreign markets, and some of them have entered international markets, Siavash Maleki, deputy head of the Fund stated.

The fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, oil, and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in, leading to import reduction.

Iran has already established innovation centers in Russia, Syria, China, and Kenya.

Over 80% of schools safe, retrofitted



TEHRAN – More than 80 percent of schools across the country are currently safe and retrofitted, an official with the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment of Schools, said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

There are around one hundred thousand schools nationwide with a total of five hundred thousand classrooms, Mohammad-Ali Ghoorchebeigi said, adding that 80.5 percent of the schools are retrofitted compared to 70 percent six years ago.

The national budget bill for the next [Iranian calendar] year (starting on March 21, 2022) has proposed a 17-percent rise for the renovation of schools.

A total of 28 trillion rials (nearly \$102 million) was proposed for school renovation in the budget bill, which is 17 percent higher than that of the current year, Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipment of

Schools, said in December 2021.

Since 2017, the government has contributed more than 60 trillion rials (nearly \$218 million) to school-building donors, he added.

Last year (ended March 2021), school building benefactors allocated a sum of 33 trillion rials (around \$120 million) to construct educational spaces across the country, IRNA reported.

"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 (nearly \$130 million) 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.

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.

The Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools started operating in the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), which received a budget of 8.5 trillion rials (about \$200 million).

The national budget bill for the next year (starting on March 21, 2022) has proposed a 17-percent rise for the renovation of schools.

Iran lifts travel restrictions for some countries

TEHRAN – Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi has said travel restrictions for some countries have been lifted.

A series of restrictions have been in place for two weeks, the minister said, adding that traveling to the neighboring countries is now allowed so that people from those countries can enter Iran holding a negative PCR test certificate provided that they have injected two doses of a vaccine.

For certain African countries, as well, the travel restrictions have been lifted, ILNA quoted Vahidi as saying. But for some European countries, including France and England, the restrictions are still in place, he noted.

The secretary of the National Scientific Committee of Coronavirus has warned that the Omicron-fueled surge in COVID-19 cases is likely to peak in the country in the coming weeks.

"Considering the outbreak of Omicron in the world, especially in our neighboring countries, including Bahrain and Kuwait, it seems that a peak of the variant could be seen in the coming weeks," ISNA quoted Hamidreza Jama'ati as saying on Sunday.

Recent reports say around 500 persons have been identified with Omicron across the country, he said, adding that some 27 percent of the total tests conducted over the past week have been related to Omicron.

The rapid outbreak of the Omicron strain requires restrictions and preventive measures, or the country will face another peak in the next three to four weeks, Jama'ati stressed.

The first case of the Omicron COVID-19 variant was identified in Iran on December 19, 2021.

"Given that more than 89 countries around the world have confirmed Omicron cases and the World Health Organization has also announced this issue, we must also consider two points, the first one being the observance of health protocols and the other one imposing restrictions and quarantines.

Another important point is the issue of vaccina-



tion. Given that we have no other weapon against the virus, and even the children aged 7-11 must be inoculated," he also said.

Therefore, quarantines are carried out on schools, universities, concerts, stadiums, restaurants, and clubs with more than 10 people, and other restrictions must be enforced, he suggested.

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control on November 27 banned arrivals from the African countries of Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Eswatini reacting to the new variant.

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

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

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

From the beginning of the prevalence of coronavirus in Iran (March 2020), the country has so far experienced fifth waves of the pandemic. The fifth wave began at the beginning of July.

Past 7 years have been the hottest on record "by a clear margin"

The past seven years have been the hottest ever recorded globally "by a clear margin," according to findings released Monday by scientists with the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. Though 2021 was not quite as warm as other recent years, scientists warned that global greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to rise.

Last year, the researchers said 2020 was "effectively tied" for the warmest year on record — just behind 2016, which took first place. Now 2021 ranks fifth, slightly ahead of 2015 and 2018.

But while 2021 may have been slightly cooler than 2020, that doesn't mean the effects of climate change are lessening. Carbon dioxide levels reached a global record for the year, fueled in part by megatons of carbon that were released by wildfires, according to a press release summarizing the findings. Methane concentrations also reached record levels.

"Carbon dioxide and methane concentrations are continuing to increase year on year and without signs of slowing down," Vincent-Henri Peuch, director of the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, said in the release. "Only with determined efforts backed up by observational evidence can we make a real difference in our fight against the climate catastrophe."

The heat was especially repressive in Europe last summer. The continent experienced its warmest summer on record, and Sicily broke the European record for hottest recorded temperature when it reached 119.8 degrees Fahrenheit (though the findings have not yet been confirmed by the World Meteorological Organization).

The hot, dry weather preceded "intense and prolonged" wildfires in Turkey, Greece, Italy and other countries, the Copernicus researchers said.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 11

New cases	1,619
New deaths	25
Total cases	6,210,298
Total deaths	131,940
New hospitalized patients	292
Patients in critical condition	1,619
Total recovered patients	6,054,670
Diagnostic tests conducted	42,988,265
Doses of vaccine injected	124,042,534

ENGLISH IN USE

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Over 950 earthquakes rattle Iran in a month

TEHRAN– Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran, recorded more than 950 earthquakes across the country over the past calendar month Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21).

Two earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country by the National Seismological Center, the largest of which occurred on May 17, with a magnitude of 5.5 near Sankhast in northeastern North Khorasan province, which left 25 injured.

Statistically, 883 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, and 64 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4, also, 8 quakes with magnitudes 4-5 have occurred.

Also, 3 earthquakes with magnitudes 5-6 shook the country.

ثبت بیش از ۹۵۰ زمین لرزه در اردیبهشت ماه

شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری وابسته به موسسه ژئوفیزیک دانشگاه تهران در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۹۵۸ زمین‌لرزه را ثبت کردند. این زمین‌لرزه‌ها در نواحی مختلف ایران و نواحی مرزی رخ داده و توسط شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری ثبت و تعیین محل شده‌اند. در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۱۱ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بیش از ۴.۰ در داخل کشور توسط مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری به ثبت رسیده است که بزرگ‌ترین آن‌ها در تاریخ ۱۴۰۰/۰۲/۲۷ با بزرگی ۵/۵ حوالی سنخواست واقع در استان خراسان شمالی، رخ داده‌است.

از لحاظ آماری ۸۸۳ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی کوچکتر از ۳، تعداد ۶۴ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۳ و ۴، تعداد ۸ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۴ و ۵ و تعداد ۳ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۵ و ۶ بوده‌است.

