

Iran, China Embark on a Promising New Horizon

► Page 3

Report



Yemeni army launches Daesh offensive

Yemen's armed forces have successfully carried out a military operation against Daesh terrorists and mercenaries loyal to the former government in the central southern province of Shabwah.

The official spokesman of the armed forces, Brigadier General Yahya Sare'e has confirmed the joint operation using the country's Air Force comprising of missiles and drone targeted the militants as they attempted to make an advance towards the Yemeni army's positions in the A'ain district. He says the militants tried to advance for hours but failed to do so despite having a superior Air Force; referring to the wider Saudi-led coalition's air power.

Sare'e says the strikes on the enemy targets had been accurate. Two ballistic missiles had been used in the offensive. He pointed out that as a result of the military operation, a large number of militants have been killed and wounded. He also noted the surprise offensive left the militants in a state of shock and confusion with ambulances rushing to the scene to transport the casualties.

The Yemeni army spokesman also says the "Saudi-American" aggression had launched 43 air raids in a matter of hours, the majority of them in the provinces of Shabwah and Ma'arib.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni military has published footage of an enemy reconnaissance plane hovering above Shabwah province before being shot down with a locally made surface-to-air missile.

The footage shows thermal imaging of the spy plane before it was targeted with a direct hit and fell on the outskirts of the Ain District where the Daesh terrorists and militants loyal to the former government were attacked. ► Page 5

Lavrov announces real progress in Iran nuclear deal talks

TEHRAN - Real progress has been achieved at the Iran nuclear deal talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced during a press conference on Russian diplomatic activities in 2021, TASS reported on Friday.

"There has been real progress [...] on the Iranian nuclear program; there is a real desire, between Iran and the U.S., first and foremost, to understand concrete concerns and understand how these concerns could be accounted for in the general package," the minister said.

Lavrov underscored that "it could only be a package solution," just like the nuclear deal itself.

"The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was a package solution," he noted.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was the official name of the 2015 nuclear agreement.

According to Lavrov, the experienced negotiators in Vienna "have already penetrated minute details of this negotiation matter" and "are making good progress." ► Page 2

Raisi visits Hormozgan in 14th provincial trip

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi visited Hormozgan Province in southern Iran on top of a high-ranking delegation on Thursday, as the 14th provincial visit since he took office in August, IRNA reported.

Accompanied by members of his cabinet, including Energy Minister, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister, Agriculture Minister, Culture Minister as well as Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister, Raisi arrived at Bandar Abbas Airport on Thursday morning.

The aim of the president's provincial visits is to get closely in touch with people and to resolve the problems in various provinces.

Speaking to the press upon arrival at the airport, Raisi said Hormozgan is a province that has capacities in all areas including trade, industry, agriculture and tourism, and having these valuable capacities, poverty and unemployment in this region do not make sense.

"The province's capacities in various economic areas including tourism, industry, and mining can be realized so that we do not witness poverty and unemployment in Hormozgan," he stressed.

The official mentioned the establishment of a provincial development fund under the framework of the next fiscal year's national budget bill, saying that this fund can be very

effective for finishing semi-finished projects, job creation, and supporting production in Hormozgan.

After Bandar Abbas, Raisi visited some earthquake- and flood-hit areas in the province and talked with people and authorities in these areas about the government's plans for resolving the issues in such regions.

The president further visited some of the province's trade centers including Shahid Rajaei Port Special Economic Zone during which Reisi visited different parts of the port, including the Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) and Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC). ► Page 4

Interview



Basketball star Kazemi optimistic about Iran's future

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN - Iran national basketball team power forward Arsalan Kazemi is optimistic about the country's future, since there are so many good players in the team.

Kazemi was a member of Iran basketball team in the 2020 Olympic Games, where Iran suffered three defeats against Czech Republic, the U.S. and France in Group A.

The 31-year-old player says that to participate in the Olympic Games is a big achievement regardless of the results.

Kazemi has talked about the past, present and future of Iran basketball in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

Tehran Times: Let us know your opinion about the Iran's future without the stars like Hamed Haddai and Samad Nikkhah. We are facing a change generation in our national team. ► Page 3

Spikogen vaccine approved for third dose injection

TEHRAN - The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday authorized Spikogen coronavirus vaccines as a booster dose of all vaccines, deputy health minister Kamal Heydari has said.

The Iranian-Australian Spikogen vaccine joined the national vaccination process in November 2021.

The vaccine is licensed for the first and second doses in the age group of 18 to 50 years and for the third dose in all people over 18 years of age, Mehr quoted Heydari as saying.

The results of the human test showed that

Bans blocking Iran to pay UN dues to get its vote back: official

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman addressed the suspension of Iran's right to vote in the United Nations.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a founding and active member of the United Nations is committed to full and timely payment of its membership fees in the United Nations and other international organizations and agencies," Saeed Khatibzadeh said late on Wednesday.

"Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, and due to cruel and illegal sanctions of the United States, the payments by our country have hit a roadblock," he added.

According to the spokesman, despite numerous difficulties, the government of Iran has prepared the required resources for the payment of its membership fee in the United Nations and is engaged in necessary consultations to resolve the matter.

At the same time, creation of a safe channel for faster payment of the membership fee is under consideration.

"It would be fitting that the secretary general of the United Nations and the secretariat also consider the special situation of countries that face illegal sanctions and do not spare their assistance to these countries for the payment of their share," the spokesman asserted.

The illegal economic and financial sanctions on Iran, which started during the Trump presidency, has created numerous problems for Iran. The most important problem was blocking Iran from international banking system which prevented Iran from buying essential medicines and medical equipment. That was why the economic war against Iran was renamed as medical terrorism.

From Inside



- Vice president calls for anti-sanctions union **P2**
- Canada's behavior based on double standards: MP **P2**
- Iran, Syria to establish joint free zone, bank **P4**
- LPG exports expected to reach 5.6m metric tons in 2022 **P4**
- Non-oil trade with neighbors up 42% in 9 months yr/yr **P4**
- Americans skeptical of major political parties: professor **P5**
- Ayatollah Khamenei's home undergoes restoration **P6**
- Six properties in Tehran approved as national heritage **P6**
- Hamedan where nature meets culture **P6**
- Environmental education planned for local communities **P7**
- Iran negotiating to exchange driving licenses with 70 countries **P7**
- Works by 13 Iranian artists picked for 2022 Bologna Illustrators Exhibition **P8**
- Doc featuring Ali Rafiei's expertise in building "The House of Bernarda Alba" premieres **P8**

Interview



Moscow concerned about secret deployment of hypersonic missiles to Ukraine: analyst

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - A geopolitical analyst says that Russia is seriously concerned that the U.S. would clandestinely deploy strike weapons, including hypersonic missiles, to Ukraine.

"Russian intelligence is seriously concerned that the U.S. will clandestinely deploy strike weapons, including hypersonic missiles, to the region and in particular to Ukraine under the cover of so-called 'anti-missile systems,'" Andrew Korybko tells the Tehran Times.

Korybko adds, "Right now there's an undeclared U.S.-provoked missile crisis in Europe."

With Russian troops massing along Ukraine's borders, it appears that Moscow and Washington will have a new escalation over Ukraine.

In December, Russia published a proposal for two agreements with the United States and NATO that would roll back Western military activity in Ukraine and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, in essence re-establishing a sphere of Russian influence in what used to be parts of the Soviet Union.

On one hand, U.S. officials say many of the proposals are nonstarters for the Western politicians, who insist that Cold War-style regions of influence are a relic of the past and that countries should be able to choose their own alliances. ► Page 5



Iran marks martyrdom anniversary of nuclear scientist

TEHRAN – The father of martyred nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan is seen in a ceremony held on Wednesday to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary.

Ahmadi Roshan and his driver were assassinated by magnetic bombs attached to the car by two assailants on January 11, 2012.

He was a chemistry expert and a director of the Natanz uranium enrichment plant.

Israel launched assassinations against Iranian scientists in 2010. In 2 years, Mossad assassinated Masoud Alimohammadi, Majid Shahriari, Darioush Rezaeinejad and Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan.

Lavrov announces real progress in Iran nuclear deal talks



From page 1 ► “I am knocking on wood, but we expect the agreement to be achieved,” he added.

In Washington, White House press secretary Jen Psaki blasted Donald Trump's decision to “recklessly” pull out of the deal in 2018 “with no thought as to what might come next.”

As a result, “Iran's nuclear program was no longer in a box, no longer had the most robust inspection regime ever negotiated, no longer had the tight restrictions on nuclear activity,” Psaki said during a press briefing on Wednesday, according to Politico.

The Iran deal lifted many U.S. and international sanctions on Tehran in exchange for severe curbs on the country's nuclear program. After Trump left the agreement, saying it wasn't strong or broad enough, he reimposed the U.S. sanctions and heaped on new ones, hoping to force Iran back to the table for what Trump promised would be a better deal. Iran at first abided by the terms of the deal as European countries, furious with Trump, sought ways to help its economy, but as that help failed to materialize, Iran began breaching parts of the agreement.

Biden took office pledging to revive the nuclear deal, but since then, Iran has had a change in its government. It now has a new leadership.

International talks in Vienna about returning to the Iran nuclear deal have dragged on, with a five-month break thanks to Iran's leadership change, since last spring. The discussions, which have European officials mediating between Iranian delegates and Biden envoys, have yet to bridge some major differences, such as the sequencing of steps back toward a deal, analysts say.

Tehran wants the United States to lift

Any nuclear agreement must be notified to the parliament

TEHRAN — A member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the parliament has said that any agreement reached in Vienna must be notified to the parliament.

Negotiations are underway in Vienna to restore the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

“Any agreement reached must be notified to the Majlis before it is finally signed,” Zohreh Elahian said, IRNA reported on Friday.

Emphasizing the parliament's support for Iran's negotiating team, the MP said, “These negotiations will be pursued within the framework of the establishment, and the current team will pay special attention to the red lines and will submit a report to the Majlis.”

Elahian said last week Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian attended the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee to share views with the MPs sitting on committee.

She added according to the parliamentary strategic law on lifting sanctions, the government, foreign ministry and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) are obliged to present the results and process of negotiations to the parliament.

Elsewhere in her remarks, she Iran needs to follow a balanced foreign policy, which is being pursued by the sitting Ebrahim Raisi administration.

“The Islamic Republic needs to interact with the outside world with all its international capacities through following a balanced foreign policy,” she maintained

The female MP from Tehran added Iran cherished a balanced foreign policy since Raisi took over as president in August last year.

The MP also defended Iran's move to

sanctions first, allowing it to access billions of dollars in frozen funds. Washington is reluctant to lift any sanctions until Iran reverses the advances it has made on its nuclear program, Politico said.

In December, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken slammed Trump for leaving the nuclear deal and failing to keep his promise to come up with a better one, calling Trump's decision “one of the worst decisions made in American foreign policy in the last decade.”

Writing in the New York Times on November 30, opinion columnist Thomas Friedman said, “The judges have voted and the results are in: President Donald Trump's decision to tear up the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 — a decision urged on by his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu — was one of the dumbest, most poorly thought out and counterproductive U.S. national security decisions of the post-Cold War era.”

Psaki touched on Blinken's point while also highlighting U.S. efforts under Biden to rebuild the relationships with Europe and other countries that were damaged by Trump's pullout from the nuclear deal.

“We're eager to see the diplomatic path move forward,” she added.

Experts agree that the original sin that led to the tense situation today was Trump's withdrawal from a deal that international inspectors said Iran was upholding. But there's also a sense that the Biden administration moved too slowly last year to reach out to Iran, and its then more-moderate government, to jump-start talks about restoring the nuclear agreement.

In any case, it's still worth talking, said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association.

“While President Biden and his team should have moved earlier and faster last year to re-engage with Iran on the steps necessary to restore mutual compliance with the JCPOA, it is still possible — and necessary — for the Iranian and U.S. negotiators to reach a win-win arrangement that heads off a major nuclear crisis,” Kimball said.



establish close economic ties with Russia and China as two great countries with abundant capacities, suggesting that using the cementing ties with these two countries are important for Iran.

The remarks by the lawmaker comes as Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian has visited China and President Raisi is also scheduled to visit Russia on January 19.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said Raisi's visit to Moscow is highly important.

“The visit of the foreign minister to China is important in advancing the goals of economic diplomacy,” Elahian remarked.

Elahian added, “According to the 25-year agreement between Iran and China, the capacities of this country can be used in the development of economic and trade ties.”

She noted that China is recognized as the world's leading economy, and economic interactions with this country can neutralize many issues related to the unilateral U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

China is considered the second largest economy in the world. Some experts argue that China's economy is even bigger than the United States'. True or not, it is inevitable that China will supersede the U.S. in terms of economy in the next decade.

Vice president calls for anti-sanctions union

TEHRAN — Mohsen Rezaei, Iran's Vice President for Economic Affairs, has called for formation of a bloc of countries against sanctions, IRNA reported on Friday.

Rezaei made the remarks at a meeting with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega in Managua.

Rezaei went on to say that the Iranian government and people have a special respect for the Nicaraguan government and praise their resistance against the extravagance of the oppressors of the world.

He added in the current situation where the world's hegemony, especially the United States, want to prevent the progress and development of nations and undermine their friendship and cooperation through conspiracy and sanctions, resilient countries must redouble their efforts to expand their relations and friendship.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has always stood by its revolutionary friends and brothers in Nicaragua and is ready to develop, strengthen and consolidate comprehensive relations with this country,” Rezaei emphasized.

He said the countries that are resistant to the extravagance of the world's oppressors must form a union of allied countries against sanctions and stand united against U.S. conspiracies and sanctions.



In the meeting, Ortega praised the presence of the Iranian vice president at his inauguration ceremony, and admired the resilient spirit of the Iranian nation against sanctions and pressure from enemies.

He added, “Friendship between the two governments and nations of Iran and Nicaragua is a sincere, fraternal and deep relationship.”

He added that Iran and Nicaragua have great respect for the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the president of Iran and the martyr of the path of peace and resistance, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The Nicaraguan president stated that Nicaragua dedicates all its love and affection to the great nation of Iran, saying that the two countries must stand together and continue the struggle for peace.

He praised Iran's authority in

negotiating with world powers to realize the right of its people, noting that Nicaragua defends Iran's right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in the world.

We are ready to transfer our achievements to Nicaragua

Later in the day, in a meeting with the President of the Nicaraguan Science and Technology Council, Rezaei called the development of science and technology the cause of the progress of human society and said that science, technology and industry must be combined so that the two countries can use it to generate wealth.

“Iran and Nicaragua have been able to achieve great success and maintain their political independence in the face of American aggression,” he said.

According to the vice president, the two countries can take steps for the progress and welfare of the two

nations by developing cooperation bilaterally and internationally.

The vice president emphasized, “The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to transfer its experiences, capabilities and achievements in various fields of science, technology and academia to Nicaragua.”

For his part, the Chairman of the Nicaraguan Science and Technology Council referred to Iran's progress and capabilities in various fields of science and technology and signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran's Pardis Technology Park.

The development of cooperation in this field sets the stage for further expansion of relations between the two countries in various fields of scientific exchanges, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector, seed and industry production, and academic cooperation and student education, the Iranian vice president for economic affairs stated.

The senior directors of science, academia and technology of Nicaragua who were present at the meeting also expressed their views in various fields related to the development of scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.

Rezaei went to Nicaragua on Monday to attend the inauguration ceremony of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

Ambassador: Iran sees no limit to develop ties with Tajikistan

TEHRAN — Mohammad Taghi Saberi, the Iranian ambassador to Dushanbe, has written a message on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan.

He congratulated the government and people of Tajikistan on the auspicious occasion, saying that the relations between the two countries are based on ancient and inseparable cultural, religious, civilizational, historical and linguistic ties.

Saberi added that Iran was one of the first countries to recognize Tajikistan's independence and was the first country to establish its embassy in Dushanbe, and thus the political relations between the two countries, which share the same language, started.

The Iranian diplomat stated that Iran has always supported peace and stability in the Republic of Tajikistan and has played an active role in achieving this goal by hosting Tajik peace talks.

“No country has as close ties and attachment to the Republic of Tajikistan as the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the reason is the racial, historical, cultural, religious and linguistic affinities of the two nations,” Ambassador Saberi explained.

The ambassador stated that the Republic of Tajikistan has a high status in the Iranian foreign policy, saying that Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, the Iranian president, chose this country as his first foreign trip.

Mr. Emomali Rahmon, Tajikistan's president also used the term “flesh and nails” to describe the ties between Iran and Tajikistan.

Saberi said that the official visits of the leaders and other high-ranking officials of the two countries since 1992 have shown the serious efforts of the two sides to strengthen relations in various fields.

“These meetings have opened wide horizons for better relations between the two brotherly countries,” he added.

According to the diplomat, the presidents of Iran have visited Tajikistan 13 times since the establishment of political relations between the two countries, and the Tajik president has visited Iran 17 times. The speakers of the Iranian parliament have also visited the Republic of Tajikistan three times and the speakers of the



Supreme Councils of Tajikistan have visited Iran five times.

“Meetings between the foreign ministers and other high-ranking officials of the two countries have also taken place for political consultations and the development of relations in various dimensions,” he noted.

The ambassador said that in addition to fruitful meetings and talks between the two countries' officials, important cooperation documents in areas of hydroelectric power plants, transportation and road construction, tunneling, trade, television and radio have been signed.

“The implementation of the construction project of Sangtoodeh-2 hydropower plant can be considered as one of the important areas of cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy and economic relations between the two countries,” he added.

Saberi added Iran took a pioneering step in helping develop infrastructure projects in Tajikistan.

Iranian companies have been active in developing projects such as Esteghlal Tunnel, Dushanbe Water Treatment Plant and other projects, according to the Iranian diplomat.

He noted that over the past 30 years, more than 170 important cooperation documents have been signed between Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan, which define the prospects of relations between the two friendly countries and play a decisive role in creating a legal framework for further development of bilateral relations.

The Iranian envoy in Tajikistan stated that the two countries have a high potential in supplying each other with required items.

Saberi said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan have good cooperation within the framework of regional organizations

such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and support each other's positions in these organizations. Iran was present in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which led to the approval of its application for permanent membership and the start of the membership process in this organization at the 21st meeting of the Shanghai Summit in September 2021 in Dushanbe.”

The diplomat also pointed to scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries as one of the brightest pages of Tajikistan-Iranian relations, because the exchange of experiences between scientists, teachers, students, implementation of cultural and artistic programs and participation of scientists and cultural figures in cultural events are top priorities in these interactions.

Saberi said that the historic visit of Raisi to the Republic of Tajikistan in September 2021 is a turning point and the beginning of a new chapter in comprehensive cooperation between Tehran and Dushanbe.

“During this trip, 8 cooperation documents in various fields were signed between the two countries, and with their implementation, we hope to see good developments in the relations between the two countries,” he added.

The Iranian ambassador to Tajikistan noted that the two leaders exchanged views on strengthening and expanding cooperation in various fields.

“During the consultation between the two presidents, it was suggested that a 'long-term plan for economic and trade cooperation' be drawn up between the two countries to increase the volume of trade between the two countries,” the envoy noted.

According to Saberi, the current situation in the region and the world entails the two countries be more together than before and work with empathy and harmony to develop relations.

Saberi concluded his message by saying, “As the representative of the great nation of Iran and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I declare that the Islamic Republic has no restrictions on developing relations and cooperation with the Republic of Tajikistan.”

Canada's behavior based on double standards: MP

TEHRAN — Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini, spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament, has called for the extradition of Iranian financial criminals living in foreign countries, including Canada.

Meshkini said that Iran has

concluded memorandums of understanding on extradition of criminals with some countries in the world and this procedure is bilateral.

He added, “Meanwhile, countries that are members of the international police (Interpol) also have a duty to return economic and financial criminals

to their countries.”

Referring to Canada's refusal to extradite criminals to Iran, the MP said economic criminals such as Mahmoud Khavari, a former banker, have fled to Canada, and the country is very reluctant to send them home.

Pointing to Canada's inaction despite claims of respect for

democratic values, human rights and fight against corruption, he added, “In other words, the behavior of Canadians in this area is completely political and based on double standards.”

The Ottawa government's refusal to extradite embezzlers has made the Iranians to call Canada the “paradise of thieves”.

Iran, China embark on a promising new horizon

TEHRAN – In his first visit to China since taking over as Iran's top diplomat, Hossein Amir Abdollahian visited China on Thursday that is expected to open new horizons for deepening ties between Tehran and Beijing.

The Iranian foreign minister ushered in such a horizon in an article published in Chinese media ahead of his visit. Amir Abdollahian said the visit “will be a promising new horizon for our promotion and development of cooperation in various domains.”

At the center of this horizon is a strategic comprehensive partnership plan between Iran and China signed last year. On March 27, 2021, then-Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi signed the plan, raising Tehran-Beijing relations in various fields to a new, strategic level.

The plan, officially known as the “Comprehensive Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China,” was extensively hailed by almost all Iranian officials as a “strategic” decision.

The plan, however, is yet to be fully implemented. In his op-ed for Global Times, Amir Abdollahian said the various cultural and political commonalities between Iran and China have paved the way for the two countries to pursue the development of economic and trade cooperation and implementation of the Comprehensive Cooperation Plan.

According to a separate report by Global Times, during his visit, Amir Abdollahian is set to discuss the implementation of a bilateral comprehensive cooperation pact among



other topics of shared interest.

The early negotiations over the comprehensive partnership began in 2016 when Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a successful visit to Iran during which China and Iran announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership, according to Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua. Ever since, Chang told the Tehran Times last year, exchanges and cooperation in various fields between the two countries have become increasingly close.

The year 2016 was crucial for Iran-China relations that also posed some challenges to the path of developing economic and trade ties between the two countries. Iran had just concluded longtime negotiations with the P5+1 group of countries that resulted in the 2015 signing of a nuclear deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Around the same year, the JCPOA was put to implementation. Iran's vast economy was opened to foreign firms, including Chinese ones. European companies also flocked to Iran.

But with the election of Donald Trump

to the U.S. presidency in November 2016, the inflow of foreign investments was heavily impacted. Trump unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, which led to European firms quitting Iran's market altogether. Many Chinese firms, however, chose to stay. And that has played a pivotal role in laying the grounds for a deeper, longer-term partnership between Tehran and Beijing.

The election of a new president in Iran last year gave another boost to the bilateral consultations regarding the comprehensive plan. A few days after his inauguration in August last year, Iran's new president, Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, spoke over the phone with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In the call, Ayatollah Raisi described China's strategic plans, such as the “One Belt-One Road” initiative, in line with Iran's interests and said, “Full implementation of the Iran-China comprehensive cooperation plan should be on the agenda of all agencies of the two countries.”

The Chinese president, for his part, appreciated the development of ties

with Iran, saying, “The relations between the two countries, especially after the agreement on the comprehensive plan for cooperation between Iran and China, have had remarkable results and achievements.”

President Xi said China is ready to strengthen cooperation with Iran in the One Belt-One Road initiative.

During his current visit to China, Amir Abdollahian carried a written message from President Raisi to his Chinese counterpart. In a meeting with Wang, the Iranian foreign minister described the message as “important.”

Upon his arrival at Wuxi Airport in China, Amir Abdollahian said by visiting China, he aims to hold talks with Chinese officials over bilateral political ties and also over ways of implementing agreements between the Islamic Republic and China over economic cooperation, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

He headed to China at the head of a high-ranking political and economic delegation at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart and was scheduled to hold talks with China's top diplomat over the latest state of the 25-year cooperation agreement between Tehran and Beijing.

Amir Abdollahian said the pace of cementing ties with China has increased under President Raisi. The foreign minister said he has held seven phone calls and meetings with Wang in the past four months. “This indicates the importance and development of ties between the two countries. And in the new government, we are witnessing the further acceleration of the [development of] ties,” Amir Abdollahian pointed out.

He added, “After the end of the Sacred Defense, the force and power of the IRGC were used to rebuild the country.”

“Wherever we see an important project and a great deal of work to solve the country's problems, the RGC is working there,” he said.

In honor of the memory of Martyr Soleimani and referring to his field presence in addressing the problems caused by the floods in Khuzestan in 2019, Ayatollah Raisi said, “The efforts and actions of the armed forces and Basij forces in helping people affected by natural disasters are the best help to the government.”

Ayatollah Raisi stated, “The families of people working in the armed forces, whether during the Sacred Defense era or now, which is the period of construction, sometimes do not see their spouses and fathers. This patience of yours is highly rewarded in the sight of God Almighty.”

The president continued, “At the same time, the Supreme Leader of the Revolution advises everyone not to neglect their families while serving. He emphasizes that we must work, but families also have a status and rights. Fortunately, in the armed forces, and especially in the IRGC, good attention is paid to the education and upbringing of children.”

Ayatollah Raisi continued his speech by praising the IRGC forces in the Hormozgan sea region, saying, “The IRGC forces provided brilliant protection of the country's water and air borders, especially against the Americans who came to the region, including the capture of the intruding American forces.”

Emphasizing the need to maintain vigilance, the president said, “We do not have a war zone at the moment, but this awakening and vigilance and monitoring the situation is one of the necessities of this region.”

“Today, thank God, we have peace in the region, but at the same time, we must monitor the situation and be always vigilant,” he said.

Ayatollah Raisi added, “Today, our armed forces, and the Revolutionary Guards in particular, have this vigilance and insight in various issues.”

The president also met with various groups of the people of Hormozgan. In this meeting, Ayatollah Raisi described the province as having diverse resources and said, “Hormozgan has the sea, mines, industries, efficient and educated human resources who are ready to work.”

He said, “There is good cohesion among all ethnic groups in this region. This capital must be maintained and strengthened.”

Referring to the martyrdom of divers and the role of the province in the Imposed War with Iraq, Ayatollah Raisi said, “The armed forces protected the country by protecting the sea and against the American troops and the forces that are present in the region.”

SPORTS

Basketball star Kazemi optimistic about Iran's future

From Page 1 ► **Kazemi:** We have some great players in our team at the moment and I am optimistic over future. Also, I have to say Haddadi and Nikkhah are still great players. I think we are not in the position to tell them when to retire. The other countries let their stars to retire when they want to. So, it means they deserve to play as long as they want until they decide to announce their retirement.

What about our poor results in 2020 Olympic Games?

You can't call it failure. Olympic Games are the biggest sporting event on the planet and every team that come to the Olympic with full power and great preparation. Because of our financial situation we couldn't have the best preparation. Japan, the host country, spent over 10 million dollars and they still weren't able to get a better result than us. So, I think we did a great job to book a place in the Olympics. It was a big deal.

Iran basketball federation changed the coaching staff soon after the Games. Did they make the right decision?

It's not my job to answer. You can talk to basketball experts about the matter.

Iran will meet Kazakhstan and Syria in February in the 2023 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualification Group D. Let us know about the matches.

It's going to be a tough matchup against them for us. Kazakhstan play European style basketball. Syria also added an American center who had 34 points and 14 rebounds in their first window game. So, it's going to be very tough for us. But we play at home and it's an advantage for us.

What about your current team Zob Ahan and generally Iran basketball league?

So far so good. In Iran things really turn when the playoff starts so we will see but overall, I like the league this year since we have some strong sponsors and hopefully, they continue to have a team in years to come.

Iran, U.S. wrestlers named for exhibition meet

TEHRAN – Iran and the U.S. Wrestling Federation have announced their lineup in men's freestyle for the United States-Iran exhibition meet.

The match will be held on Feb. 12 at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas.

David Taylor's absence in the roster has surprised everyone and it means Hassan Yazdani will have to face Zahid Valencia in the 86kg weight class.

The fans expect to see an exciting wrestling between the ‘Greatest’ and the ‘Magic Man’ at Globe Life Park.

- 57 kg – Alireza Sarlak v Thomas Gilman
- 61 kg – Majid Dastan or Mohammad Ramezanpour v Daton Fix
- 65 kg – Rahman Amouzad v Yianni Diakomihalis
- 70 kg – Amir Mohammad Yazdani or Erfan Elahi v James Green
- 74 kg – Younes Emami v Jason Nolf
- 79 kg – Mohammad Nokhodi v Jordan Burroughs
- 86 kg – Hassan Yazdani v Zahid Valencia
- 92 kg – Kamran Ghasempour v J'den Cox
- 97 kg – Mojtaba Goleij v Kyle Snyder
- 125 kg – Amirhossein Zare v TBA

Esteghlal rout Naft Masjed Soleyman to remain leaders

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team defeated Naft Masjed Soleyman 3-0 and remained top of the table at the halfway point of the Iran Professional League season.

Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (two goals) and Kevin Yamga were on target in this match.

In Tehran, Persepolis defeated Fajr Sepasi 1-0 thanks to Mehdi Torabi's second half goal.

Sepahan and Aluminum played out a goalless draw in Arak, Tractor drew 1-1 with Nassaji, Zob Ahan were held to a goalless draw by Gol Gohar, Havadar suffered a home 2-1 loss against Sanat Naft, Mes Rafsanjan and Paykan shared the spoils in a goalless draw and Foolad defeated Padideh 2-0 in Ahvaz.

Esteghlal lead the table with 35 points, three points above Persepolis.

Sepahan sit third with 29 points.

AFC Champions League group stage pots revealed

TEHRAN – Iranian football clubs Foolad and Sepahan are placed in Pot 1 and 2 in the 2022 AFC Champions League.

Asia's top clubs will discover their Group Stage opponents when the draw ceremonies for the Continent's two major club competitions are held in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, January 17.

The AFC Champions League draw will see Asia's top 40 clubs divided among 10 groups, with the 33 contenders who have already secured their places in the Group Stage to be joined by seven Play-off winners.

The teams from each region will be divided into four pots of five teams, with defending champions Al Hilal SFC among the contenders placed in Pot 1 in the West Region.

Club Pots for AFC Champions League 2022 Group Stage draw

West Zone:

Pot 1 – Al Sadd SC (QAT), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Foolad Khouzeestan FC (IRN), Al Jazira (UAE), Al Duhail SC (QAT)

Pot 2 – Al Faisaly FC (KSA), Sepahan FC (IRN), Shabab Al Ahli Dubai (UAE), Al Rayyan SC (QAT), Al Shabab (KSA)

Pot 3 – Pakhtakor (UZB), Al Wehdah (JOR), Mumbai City (IND), FC Istiklol (TJK), Ahal FC (TKM)

Pot 4 – Air Force Club (IRQ), Play-off winner 1 (KSA/SYR), Play-off winner 2 (UAE/UZB), Play off winner 4 (UAE/IRQ), Al Gharafa (QAT)

Iran volleyball setter Karimi to undergo foot surgery

TEHRAN – Iran national volleyball team setter Javad Karimi will have to undergo a foot surgery.

He has sustained a Lisfranc injury.

Karimi will be sidelined for at least five months.

The Greenyard Maaseik setter has traveled to Tehran and will undergo surgery in the coming days.

Iran to play Australia at 2022 Asian Handball Championship opener

TEHRAN – Iran will start the 20th edition of the Asian Men's Handball Championship with a match against Australia on January 18.

Iran are scheduled to face India in Group B on January 19.

Iran will meet host Saudi Arabia on Jan. 20 in their last group stage match.

South Korea are in Group A along with Kuwait, Jordan and Singapore.

Defending champions Qatar are drawn with the UAE, Iraq and Oman in Group C.

Group D consists of Bahrain, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The competition was supposed to be held with 18 teams but Thailand and Japan withdrew from the event.

The 2022 Men's Handball Championship will be held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia from January 18 to 31.

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

President: History of Hormozgan has recorded resistance, courage, and bravery

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has paid a visit to the southern province of Hormozgan in continuation of his provincial trips.

Ayatollah Raisi arrived at Bandar Abbas Airport on Thursday morning and was welcomed by the representative of the Supreme Leader in the province, the governor-general and local officials. Visiting the projects of the province, meeting with different groups of the people, elites, veterans and families of martyrs, participating in the meeting of the Administrative Council and a press conference were on his agenda.

Ayatollah Raisi was accompanied on this trip by his chief of staff, the Vice-President for Executive Affairs, the Head of the Plan and Budget Organization, and the Ministers of Interior, Health and Medical Education, and Sports and Youth Affairs.

Speaking on the tarmac of the airport upon his arrival, Ayatollah Raisi talked about the goals and plans of the trip, saying, “The history of Hormozgan has recorded the resistance, courage, and bravery of the people of the province against aggressors.”

The president pointed out that before the trip, delegations were sent to the province and with the help of the representative of the Supreme Leader, the governor-general and economic, political and social actors to identify the needs of Hormozgan, adding, “Agriculture, tourism and the maritime economy have very good fields and capacities for development, and despite these capacities, we should not see some shortcomings, poverty and unemployment in the province.”

Stating that there is a high level of security in the province, which has led to good security in the Persian Gulf, he said, “I feel obliged to thank the armed forces of the province for providing good security in the sea and sky of Hormozgan and the Persian Gulf with their conscious and insightful presence.”

Ayatollah Raisi stated, “In light of the existing security in Hormozgan, any kind of investment in the province can be guaranteed and by relying on these investments, efforts can be made to develop Hormozgan.”

“The 13th government has made good plans for the development of Hormozgan in various fields so that it can take effective steps in this regard and make people and economic actors feel that effective steps are being taken in this direction,” he said, according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

Ayatollah Raisi travelled to the flood-stricken area of Hashtbandi in Minab County and said among the people of the area, “With the efforts of the government and the patience and perseverance of the people, the damages of the floods to this area and its agriculture will be compensated.”



During his visit to the southern province, the president appeared among the flood victims of Hashtbandi region of Minab County and expressed his happiness for being present among the hard-working people who are active in the field of agriculture and production, saying, “We and all members of the government are proud to serve the people.”

Referring to the demands of the people for the construction of roads, the president added, “I thank you for your patience, effort and revolutionary spirit, and I assure you that the 13th government will make every effort to pursue your demands.”

Ayatollah Raisi also visited the earthquake-stricken region of West Gishan and talked with the people of the region. He described serving the people valuable with God and emphasized on solving the problems of the people in the earthquake-stricken and flood-hit areas of Hormozgan province.

Ayatollah Raisi thanked the efforts of the Governor-General of Hormozgan and the Housing Foundation in addressing the problems of the people affected by the earthquake in West Gishan region, and referred to the construction measures taken and said, “More budget is needed to solve problems in this region, about which a decision will be made at the Administrative Council of the province.”

He stated, “Serving these dear people is the duty of the government and we will not refrain from any action in this regard.”

In a visit that took place on Thursday during the visit to Hormozgan province, Ayatollah Raisi visited the Traffic Control Centre and the Marine Search and Rescue Complex of Shahid Rajai Port Complex and the management and monitoring room of the complex.

Visiting development projects, customs infrastructure and confiscated properties were other plans of the president during the visit to the complex.

Ayatollah Raisi was also informed about the process of unloading and loading basic goods in this port complex.

The president appeared among the worshippers at Imam Ali (AS) Mosque and said, “During the Sacred Defense era, the Revolutionary Corps, along with the other armed and revolutionary forces of the country, really excelled on the southern and western fronts, as well as in the sea areas.”

Raisi visits Hormozgan in 14th provincial trip

From page 1 ► During this visit, the president stressed the need for upgrading advanced facilities in the field of search, maritime rescue, and safety services.

Inauguration of Pasrgad Refinery in Qeshm

In another part of his visit to Hormozgan province, Raisi traveled to Qeshm Island to officially inaugurate Pasargad crude oil refinery.

Having a processing capacity of 35,000 barrels per day (bpd), Pasargad Refinery has created direct job opportunities for



400 people, while providing indirect employment for over 1,000 locals.

Iran's LPG exports expected to reach 5.6m metric tons in 2022



TEHRAN - Iran's 2022 liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) exports are projected to reach 5.6 million metric tons (mt) in 2022 from 5.5 million mt in the previous year, Platts reported, citing trade sources.

Analysts, however, believe that Iran is expected to boost exports by 1.9 million mt this year, the report said.

Between 2018 and 2020, Iran added 3.2 million mt of LPG production capacity mainly from the South Pars gas field and by September 2021 it was projected to add another 2.2 million mt.

The Islamic Republic, whose energy sector has been subjected to U.S. sanctions since 2018 when former President Donald Trump's administration withdrew from a nuclear pact, also aims to bring online 130 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) of additional gas

production capacity in 2022.

This includes gas from the delayed phase 11 of the offshore South Pars field and emergency onshore operations as domestic consumption surpasses production, according to Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr, managing director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

China has been the biggest buyer of Iranian LPG, importing 4.94 million mt in 2019, 3.85 million mt in 2020, and 1.965 million mt over January-May 2021, industry data showed.

Some trade sources said Iranian cargoes have been attractive to Chinese buyers, with more discounts compared to Saudi Contract Prices.

The previous round of Western sanctions in 2012 saw Chinese buyers buying Iranian LPG at discounts of \$40-\$50/mt, sources said.

Based on Platts report, LPG exports from major West Asian producers in 2022 are expected to increase 6.6 percent from 2021 as competition for the growing Asian markets intensifies amid expanding supply from other producers, led by the U.S.

As reported, total exports from Iran, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait are estimated to rise to 38.9 million mt in 2022, from 36.5 million last year.

Non-oil trade with neighbors up 42% in 9 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's non-oil trade with its neighbors stood at \$36.8 billion during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021) to register a 42 percent increase year on year, head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Alireza Moghadasi put the weight of non-oil trade with the neighboring countries at 75 million tons in the said time span, stating that trade with the neighbors also increased by 18 percent in terms of weight, IRIB reported.

According to the official, the neighboring countries accounted for 51 percent of value and 61 percent of the weight of

the country's total non-oil trade in the first nine months of the current fiscal year.

Moghadasi put the nine-month non-oil exports at 57,335 million tons valued at \$18.766 billion, with a 24-percent rise in value and nine-percent growth in weight.

He noted that the exports to the neighbors accounted for 53 percent of the total value of the exports in the said time span.

He said major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan, and Pakistan followed by Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.



The official further announced that the Islamic Republic imported 17.682 million tons of non-oil commodities worth over \$18 billion in the first nine months of the present year, with a 68-percent growth in value and a 62-percent rise in weight year on year.

The United Arab Emirates was the top exporter to Iran in the said period, followed by Turkey, Russia, Iraq, and Oman, he stated.

Moghadasi had earlier said the value of Iran's total non-oil trade rose 38 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

According to the official, Iran

traded over 122.5 million tons of non-oil products worth \$72.1 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

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

The IRICA head further announced that the Islamic Republic imported 30.1 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$37 billion in the first nine months of the present year, with a 37-percent growth in value and a 20-percent rise in weight year on year.

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

Iran, Syria to establish joint free zone, bank

TEHRAN - Iran and Syria have reached primary agreements for the establishment of a joint free zone and a joint bank, Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi announced.

The decisions for the establishment of the mentioned entities have been made during a three-day visit of the Iranian minister to Syria, the Transport Ministry's news portal reported.

Qasemi, who headed a high-ranking delegation in the visit to Syria, met with senior officials from the Arab country including President Bashar al-Assad, Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, and Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Mohammad Samer al-Khalil.

Referring to his meeting with Assad in Damascus on Wednesday, Qasemi said, "During the meeting with the Syrian president, the economic issues of this country, as well as the current obstacles and problems in the economic relations between Iran and Syria were discussed.



Iranian Transport Minister Rostam Qasemi (L) and President of Syria Bashar al-Assad

A joint committee is set to be formed between Iran and Syria [to resolve such problems]."

He stated that good decisions have been made in the meetings with Syrian officials, adding: "It was decided to form a joint committee between us and Syria to follow up on the reached agreements; We have many agreements with Syria, but some of them have not been implemented,

so it was decided to review these issues in a joint committee and then implement them."

Ghasemi also pointed to his meeting with Mekdad on diplomatic issues between the two countries, saying, "We reached good agreements; A joint bank is scheduled to be established in Syria; In this regard, Iranian and Syrian banks should have branches in both countries."

The Minister of Transport and Urban Development also referred to the meeting with his Syrian counterpart and said: "Transportation in various sectors is one of the important requirements for our country's economic development; In this regard, it was decided that the head of the country's Civil Aviation Organization would pursue executive issues in this area with the Syrian side."

Decisions were made on various issues during the visit with Samer al-Khalil, especially the establishment of a joint free zone between the two countries, he added.

TSE's main index drops 29,000 points in a week

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 29,000 (2.1 percent) to 1.334 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company, Iran Khodro Company, 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.

He further pointed to the reduction of taxes on manufacturing companies and added: "The important action of the government in reducing the tax on production units from 25 percent to 20 percent will largely offset the increase in energy costs."

30% of agricultural lands equipped with modern irrigation systems



TEHRAN- As announced by the project manager of the Agriculture Ministry's smart irrigation systems development program, 30 percent of the agricultural lands are equipped with the modern irrigation system.

Fariborz Abbasi lamented that the budget allocated for this section (modern irrigation) is not enough and even the budget approved for this important issue in the parliament will not be allocated to this section.

According to the official, about 5.5 million hectares of land in the country have the potential to be equipped with modern irrigation systems.

As Abbasi has stated 95 percent of the equipment used in such systems is manufactured inside the country.

The ministry has comprehensive plans for indigenizing the knowledge for the production of the other five percent as well, he has said.

The official pointed to the filters and drippers in

modern irrigation systems as the equipment whose indigenization is on the agenda and predicted: "In a two- or three-year plan, part of the imported equipment and supplies will be produced by domestic manufacturers."

Abbasi mentioned the quality improvement of modern irrigation systems as one of the main strategies of the Agriculture Ministry and said: "We believe that along with the quantitative development of new irrigation systems, quality improvement should also take place to improve productivity and ensure food security by increasing water efficiency in the best possible way."

He further underlined educating farmers, officials, and managers of companies active in the field of production and implementation of new irrigation systems as one of the programs that his ministry is pursuing in order to improve the quality and optimal use of these systems.

Referring to the activity of 2,400 private companies in the development of new irrigation systems in the agricultural sector, Abbasi said: "The private sector in this field includes 350 consulting companies,

1,600 contractors, 400 manufacturers and suppliers of equipment, and a number of monitoring firms."

"It is necessary to provide the necessary training to these companies for design, consulting, contracting, execution, and production of parts and equipment in this field," he added.

Back in August, 2021, Abbasi had announced that the ministry plans to equip 5,000 hectares of farmlands with smart irrigation systems in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20).

Considering the importance of water consumption management in the agricultural sector, the Iranian Agriculture Ministry has been implementing a plan for installing modern irrigation systems in the country's farmlands over the past few years and the new program for smartening these systems will increase their efficiency to a great extent.

Over the past three years, each year, an average of 150,000 hectares of farmlands have been equipped with modern irrigation systems, according to the ministry data.

95% of modern irrigation systems equipment built domestically

Moscow concerned about secret deployment of hypersonic missiles to Ukraine: analyst

From page 1 ► On the other hand, Russian officials regard it as a plot to undercut Russia's nuclear capabilities to force it to make more concessions.

“The U.S. is plotting to do this in order to undercut Russia's nuclear second-strike capabilities so as to place the Eurasian Great Power in a position of nuclear blackmail that can consequently result in coercing it into making unilateral concessions towards the West,” Korybko argues.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you see Western media hype over the Russia-Ukraine dispute?

It's less of a Russian-Ukrainian dispute like the U.S.-led Western mainstream media deliberately misportray it as and more of a Russian-American one. Right now there's an undeclared U.S.-provoked missile crisis in Europe. Russian intelligence is seriously concerned that the U.S. will clandestinely deploy strike weapons, including hypersonic missiles, to the region and in particular to Ukraine under the cover of so-called “anti-missile systems”.

The U.S. is plotting to do this in order to undercut Russia's nuclear second-strike capabilities so as to place the Eurasian Great Power in a position of nuclear blackmail that can consequently result in coercing it into making unilateral concessions towards the West.

Are there any differences between the U.S. and the Europeans over Ukraine?

Officially speaking, both sides have reaffirmed that Ukraine has the sovereign



right to join NATO if it wishes, but there's speculation that the U.S. might be willing to moderate that stance behind the scenes in order to comply with one of Russia's red lines demanding that it not be admitted to the alliance. The other one relates to the deployment of strike weapons, including hypersonic ones, near its borders. The U.S. exercises hegemony over the EU through NATO and therefore is the only real decision maker that matters in this respect. If it tacitly reaches a “gentlemen's agreement” with Russia on those issues in pursuit of the greater good of strategic stability, then the Europeans would be powerless to stop it.

What has been the impact of the Biden presidency on collaboration between NATO members?

The Biden administration pledged that it'll reverse

the Trump administration's unilateralism towards the U.S. NATO allies and reverts back to a multilateral policy, but this might not really be the case in practice. The incumbent president's national security team, influenced as they are by their anti-Chinese “deep state” faction (a term collectively referring to the country's permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies), seems to regard China as a greater long-term strategic threat to American interests than Russia. Their subversive anti-Russian “deep state” rivals are trying to sabotage the success of these de-escalation talks since they want to maintain the U.S. “strategy of tension” towards Russia.

What will be the fallouts of any possible confrontation between NATO and Russia? Do you predict China to be engaged in such a clash?

“All that Russia wants is to return to the status quo before the bloc (NATO) incorporated former members of the Warsaw Pact in 1999.”

the Trump administration's unilateralism towards the U.S. NATO allies and reverts back to a multilateral policy, but this might not really be the case in practice. The incumbent president's national security team, influenced as they are by their anti-Chinese “deep state” faction (a term collectively referring to the country's permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies), seems to regard China as a greater long-term strategic threat to American interests than Russia. Their subversive anti-Russian “deep state” rivals are trying to sabotage the success of these de-escalation talks since they want to maintain the U.S. “strategy of tension” towards Russia.

What will be the fallouts of any possible confrontation between NATO and Russia? Do you predict China to be engaged in such a clash?

Nobody can accurately predict how any possible hot conflict between NATO and Russia would play out, nor exactly how likely one is to occur, but it would likely be very difficult to contain due to the nuclear factor. That's why it's imperative to avert this scenario at all costs, hence the ongoing talks to that end. The Biden administration's prevailing anti-Chinese “deep state” faction, which is one of Trump's most enduring legacies, wants to de-escalate tensions with Russia in Europe in order for the Pentagon to be able to redeploy some of their forces from there to the Asia-Pacific so that they can more aggressively “contain” China. Their subversive anti-Russian “deep state” rivals are desperately trying to stop this.

Why is Russia so sensitive about NATO expansion to its sphere of influence?

Russia has credible and legitimate concerns that the U.S. plot to deploy strike weapons, including hypersonic ones, close to its borders could undercut its nuclear second-strike capabilities and thus place the country in a position of nuclear blackmail vis-à-vis the West. NATO's continual expansion eastward provides the pretext for doing so in those member states. All that Russia wants is to return to the status quo before the bloc incorporated former members of the Warsaw Pact in 1999. That's a reasonable demand that would greatly enhance strategic security between these nuclear superpowers. Anything less will dangerously retain the risk of war, including by miscalculation.

Americans skeptical of major political parties: professor

By Zahra Samimi

TEHRAN – A professor emeritus at Northwestern University says that the American public is cynical about the performance of the two major parties when it comes to elections and democracy.

“I think the public has a basic trust in democracy but is skeptical about how it is being practiced by both of the major political parties,” David H. Zarefsky tells the Tehran Times.

About the upcoming midterm congressional elections in the U.S., Zarefsky predicts that “it promises to be a highly consequential midterm election; that is, the outcome will make a big difference.”

Last week, former U.S. President Donald Trump released a blistering statement to mark the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol in response to President Joe Biden's recent address, calling his successor's remarks “political theater” and an attempt to distract from how Biden has “failed”.

“Biden, who is destroying our Nation with insane policies of open Borders, corrupt Elections, disastrous energy policies, unconstitutional mandates, and devastating school closures, used my name today to try to further divide America,” Trump claimed.

Trump further attacked the Biden administration's handling of Afghanistan, the economy and the coronavirus pandemic and similarly lashed out at what he termed the “Unselect Committee” in Congress investigating the attacks for not considering the results of the 2020 election to be false, dragging in the “complicit media” as well.

Some political observers believe that the dispute over the 2020 presidential election in the U.S. is not over yet, and this indicates that a considerable percentage of the American public don't trust election integrity.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you see the future of democracy in the U.S. in light of efforts by Republicans to undermine it?

The essence of democracy is majority rule. Republicans are threatening it by putting into place procedures in several states that would make it easier for the state to certify the election of a candidate who did not receive a majority of the votes in that state. Of course, Republicans would deny that they are undermining democracy; they would



claim to be protecting election integrity.

What were the main consequences of Trump's presidency on U.S. democracy and international reputation?

Last part first: By withdrawing from international agreements and violating generally accepted international norms, he has called the credibility of American commitments into question. In the first part, he has actively encouraged the behavior I described above.

Some critics say there is no difference between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to political corruption. What is your opinion? Is there a third way?

Anyone who would think that has not been paying attention. Of course, to some degree corruption is in the eye of the beholder. Both parties are guilty of corruption, I think, but not equally so.

Some pundits say America is based on values like liberty, democracy and family while others say the country represents capitalism, selfishness and international hegemony. Which of them mirrors the U.S.?

This tension (I prefer that to contradiction) has been baked into the American political system from the beginning. In my opinion, the country tends to oscillate between these competing ideals. Sometimes one is dominant, sometimes the other.

How do you see the upcoming election in the U.S.? Do you think the public trusts the U.S. democracy?

It promises to be a highly consequential midterm election; that is, the outcome will make a big difference. I think the public has a basic trust in democracy but is skeptical about how it is being practiced by both of the major political parties.

Yemeni army launches Daesh offensive



From page 1 ► The scenes also show scattered remnants of the wreckage of the enemy plane where it fell after it was almost completely burnt.

Sare'e announced the downing of the spy drone saying it was armed and carrying out “hostile action” before being brought down.

The war on Yemen which was waged by Saudi Arabia and a coalition of some regional allies with U.S. backing is inching closer to its seventh year.

The Saudi goal of restoring the former government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi has failed; but hundreds of thousands of Yemenis have been killed and millions more either displaced or living in extreme poverty.

While Saudi Arabia and militants loyal to the Kingdom are fending off the Yemeni army's advances in the energy rich strategic

northern city of Ma'arib. It is the last major Saudi stronghold in Northern Yemen. This is while analysts say the United Arab Emirates has backed separatists forces in the South.

Meanwhile, the country's Foreign Minister has welcomed an “Iranian initiative” for “intra-Yemeni dialogue” to end the war that began in March 2015.

Hisham Sharaf says “the Iranian initiative offers a solution, deals with the war and blockade in Yemen, and provides a mechanism for inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue as well as ways to de-escalate the status quo”.

Last week, the country's Iranian counterpart reiterated the proposal in Oman. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the current problems should be settled through diplomatic channels in cooperation with all Yemenis.

According to the United Nations, more than 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million are suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

As Yemen increases the pace of its military operations to liberate its own land, Saudi Arabia has sharply increased its deadly airstrikes across

The country. The Yemeni capital international airport has recently been repeatedly hit as well as residential areas in the capital Sana'a and a hospital.

The latest air raids have been condemned by the international organizations.

UK MPs slam Bahrain human rights violations



British members of parliament have discussed the plight of political prisoners in Bahrain and the Kingdom's human rights violations calling on the government to pressure Manama to release all dissidents being held behind bars.

Representatives from various political parties participated in a press conference, held in front of Bahrain's embassy in London to brief reporters on the discussions held over the “grave violations of human rights in Bahrain” during a House of Commons debate earlier in Parliament.

In the Commons former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said “we're here to speak for justice and human rights around the world, and today our focus is on Bahrain. I hope they're listening...”

Corbyn also spoke at the Press Conference outside the Bahraini embassy.

It comes ten years after the 2011 revolution for democracy in Bahrain was met with a heavy handed crackdown.

One of the major issues raised at the press conference was that of political prisoner Hassan Mushaima and academic Abdul Jalil Al-Singace who has been on hunger strike for more than 190 days.

Other MPs highlighted the different

aspects of human rights violations in Bahrain, including the suffering of political prisoners and opposition leaders, torture methods, unfair trials and death sentences.

Scottish National Party MP, Brendan O'Hara, says “while the United Kingdom sends more and more taxpayers cash to Bahrain, the oppression and detention of prisoners in Bahrain continues.”

Liberal Democrat MP Alistair Carmichael called on the government to slap sanctions on the Bahraini Minister of Interior, Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al-Khalifa “for his role in overseeing appalling human rights violations and a culture of impunity”.

Human Rights Groups have repeatedly called for the release of dissidents detained in Bahrain. On the occasion of Bahrain's National Day, Human Rights Watch asked “did you know that Bahrain has one of the highest prison rates per capita in West Asia?”

The main opposition Labour Party MP Bambos Charalambous, who is also the shadow minister for West Asia says “this is clearly not a partisan, party political matter. It's clear that standing up for human rights for political prisoners in Bahrain and beyond transcends party

politics”

The lawmaker added “It's not a matter of right or left, but a matter of right or wrong. If we, as members of parliament, are not prepared to stand up for what is right on the eve of a free trade deal with Bahrain, then when will we be?”

According to a detailed joint communique in late December last year, Britain and some Persian Gulf Kingdoms, including Bahrain, have agreed to an “ambitious strategic partnership”

Meanwhile, protesters in Bahrain have staged demonstrations for the third day in a row to rally against a Saudi Arabian court's ruling to uphold the death sentence against two Bahraini teenagers.

The protesters have poured their anger on the streets of several villages inside the Persian Gulf Kingdom, holding up posters of the pair, who have been identified as Ja'afar al-Sultan and Sadiq al-Thamer.

In 2015, the victims were jailed by Saudi authorities and sentenced to death for allegedly planting explosives at a border crossing between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Both of the boys appealed the sentence pleading not guilty, but a Saudi court upheld the ruling recently. The verdict has been denounced as politically-motivated.

Rights groups says Saudi Arabia, which sent its military to Bahrain in 2011 to help crush the revolution, uses torture and other methods to extract false confessions. The trials of political dissidents have been branded as a sham where no family members and lawyers are allowed to attend or participate; making it easy for Riyadh to fabricate the verdict.

Bahrain has cracked down on any form of dissent including the jailing of dissidents including minors, revoking nationalities, and dissolving opposition parties while attacking protesters; measures that have triggered global outrage.

Ayatollah Khamenei's home undergoes restoration



TEHRAN – The home of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, when he was living in exile in Iranshahr, southeast Iran, has undergone some rehabilitation works, Iranshahr's tourism chief has announced.

Situated in Sistan-Baluchestan province, the modest house was the residence of Ayatollah Khamenei from 1977 to 1978 before the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The project involves strengthening the structure using cob materials as well as insulating the exterior walls to prevent moisture penetration, Rahman Rigi said on Thursday.

The house, which is now in use as a Quran

museum, is made of clay and mud. Traditional and indigenous architecture of the region can be seen in the house. It has four rooms around a courtyard, a very beautiful pool, which stands out in the middle of it, and a bakery inside the house.

The monument was inscribed on the national heritage list in 2007.

The collective province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

Hotel occupancy rate in West Azarbaijan up 41%

TEHRAN – The bed occupancy rate of hotels and accommodation centers across northwestern West Azarbaijan province rose 41 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021) compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Over 94,000 domestic tourists have stayed in the province during the mentioned time, Jalil Jabari said on Thursday.

In nine months, over 16,000 foreign travelers stayed in the province's accommodation centers and it is estimated that 5,500 foreign tourists will stay in these units in the fourth quarter of the year, the official added.

The accommodation centers have generated over 40 job opportunities during the mentioned time as well, he noted.

Back in December, Jamshid Hamzehzadeh the head of the Iranian Hoteliers Association announced that following the planned measures, the occupancy rate of the country's hotels, which had fallen below five percent because of the outbreak of the coronavirus, has reached 45 percent over the past three months.

Multiple problems, notably the pandemic, caused a severe impact on the tourism industry, the official explained.

Even before the coronavirus outbreak and in 2019, travel was reduced due to heavy rains and flooding across the country, and the hotel industry had to recoup nearly 100 percent of the costs paid for canceled hotel reservations, he added.

The Iranian hoteliers have lost 220 trillion rials (about \$740 million) over the past two years, he noted.

However, some problems have been resolved and the hotels' condition has improved, he mentioned.

Back in October, the official announced that Iranian hotels are ready to receive foreign tourists as the issuance of tourist visas and the flow of foreign tourists from land and air borders would be resumed.

Ninety percent of the hotel staff have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, so the hotels are ready to welcome foreign tourists, observing strict health protocols, he said.

The main destinations of foreign tourists in Iran are specifically cities such as Mashhad, Qom, Tabriz, Shiraz, Yazd, and Isfahan, and to return to the figure of over eight million incoming tourists before the outbreak of the coronavirus, serious planning is required, the official added.

Iraqi tourists will flood the country once the borders open, but attracting tourists from Europe will require some time, he noted.

However, he noted that two-thirds of the



hotel staff have lost their jobs, he added.

Back in September, Hamzehzadeh announced that all employees of accommodation centers across Iran are scheduled to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

"To vaccinate staffs of all accommodation centers, including eco-lodges, apartment hotels, and guest houses, as well as hotels, more coordination with the Ministry of Health is needed," he added.

Back in July, ISNA reported that the tourism industry of the country has suffered a loss of some 320 trillion rials (\$1.1 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic has also ruined more than 44,000 jobs in a once budding travel sector of the country, the report added.

Experts believe accommodation centers suffered the most as a result of the outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran and its subsequent unemployment and financial losses.

Months of steep recession has taken its toll. Many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators have faced big dilemmas such as bankruptcy, unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level.

Panels of travel experts have mapped out new marketing strategies hoping Iran's tourism would get back on its feet once again. For instance, the Head of the Iranian Tour Operators Association has said the international tourist flow to Iran will return to normal until 2022.

West Azarbaijan embraces a variety of lush natural sceneries, cultural heritage sites, and museums including the UNESCO sites of Takht-e Soleyman and Qareh Klise (St. Thaddeus Monastery), Tepe Hasanlu, and the ruined Bastam Citadel.

The region was home to several ancient civilizations. According to Britannica, it was conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC and was named Atropatene after one of Alexander's generals, Atropates, who established a small kingdom there. Ultimately, the area returned to the Persian (Iranian) rule under the Sasanians in the 3rd century CE.

Female Iranian crafter wins top prize at Intl. Craft Awards

From page 1 ► ICA is organized by Craft Village, a social organization, based out of New Delhi, India, working towards training and promotion of handicrafts.

ICA sets a new benchmark in the world with the highest level of skill and design excellence. The awards provide an open platform for makers working in a wide variety of materials and media to have their work assessed by a professional jury and international craft experts.

These awards promote, inspire and encourage talent of the highest standards, making International Craft Awards an annual global feature.

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 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.

Hamedan where nature meets culture

TEHRAN – Hamedan never falls short of offering exciting ideas to its visitors. Astonishing archaeological sites, scenic nature, tranquil gardens, vaulted domed bazaars, and more importantly its hospitable people are amongst the highlights of the Iranian city.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was once one of the world's greatest cities of ancient times. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations, and there's a scattering of historical curiosities.

Sprawling on a high plain, mountainous Hamedan is graciously cool in August but snow prone and freezing from December to March. In summer the air is often hazy, but on a rare, clear spring day there are impressive glimpses of snow-capped Alvand Kuh (3580m), sitting aloof above the ragged neocolonial cupolas of Imam Khomeini Sq.

The archaeological site of Tepe Hegmataneh, which corresponds with the ancient city of Ecbatana, has a circumference of 1.4 kilometers with an area of about 40 hectares. Ecbatana was, in fact, a city on the site of which stands the modern city of Hamedan. The view of distant mountains from the archaeological hill is pleasantly rewarding, especially in the late afternoon, however, what lies below is an ancient Median and Achaemenid city. Small sections have been excavated over the last century, most extensively in the 1990s. There's a smart museum nearby, as well as two Armenian churches, now part of Hamadan University.

Ecbatana was first excavated in 1913 by the French Assyriologist Charles Fossey. Excavations have been limited due to the modern town covering most of the ancient sites. In 2006, excavations in a limited area of Hagmataneh Hill failed to discover anything older than the Parthian period (247 BC – 224 CE), but this does not rule out older archaeological layers existing elsewhere within the vast site.

For history buffs and culture lovers, Ganjnameh is a can't-miss destination while in Hamedan. Meaning "Treasure Epistle", Ganjnameh features sets of cuneiform inscriptions written in three languages of ancient Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian. Dating back to the age of Achaemenid Kings Darius I (521-485 BC) and Xerxes I (485-65 BC), the inscriptions



were first studied in detail by the French painter and archaeologist Eugene Flandin, who was accompanied by Pascal Coste.

The right inscription, belonging to Xerxes I, reads: "The Great God [is] Ahuramazda, greatest of all the gods, who created the earth and the sky and the people; who made Xerxes king, and outstanding king as an outstanding ruler among innumerable rulers; I [am] the great king Xerxes, king of kings, king of lands with numerous inhabitants, king of this vast kingdom with far-away territories, son of the Achaemenid monarch Darius."

An adjacent 9-meter-high waterfall becomes a popular ice-climbing spot in wintertime. In contrast, the Alvand summit can be reached as a day trip in summer. The relaxed ambience of the site, which is located just a short drive from the city, also opens up an opportunity for hiking on the side of Mount Alvand.

The 12th-century Gonbad-e Alavian ("Alavian Dome") is a prime example of the Persian-Islamic architecture of the time. Its brick tower remains famous for the swirling floral stucco added in the Ilkhanid Mongol era; this ornamentation is described by British travel writer Robert Byron in his travelogue "The Road to Oxiana".

In its small cellar, there are tombs of two elders of the Alavian family. The interior area is formed of six rooms with arches. Cube-shaped graves covered with turquoise bricks are in the center. A rectangular plaque with stucco honeycomb patterns and flower motifs is hung above the entrance of the structure. The outer frame of this plaque bears stucco reliefs of Quranic inscriptions in the Kufic calligraphy hand.

Masjed-e Jameh (The Friday Mosque of Hamedan) is one of the oldest in Hamedan. The mosque is rectangular, and formerly had four porches of which three have

remained. This structure comprises two areas for nocturnal prayers, a brick dome, and a large and pleasant courtyard with a huge pool in the center. The disused south iwan (entrance) leads into a hall over which there's an impressively large brick dome. The north iwan is lavished with patterned blue tile work that continues on four of the mosque's six minarets. Some areas are restricted to men only. The monument is located near Imam Khomeini Sq. and to the west of Ekbatan Avenue. A vaulted passage of a historical bazaar leads into the courtyard of the large Qajar-era mosque.

The iconic Bu-Ali Sina (Avicenna) Mausoleum dominates his namesake square and resembles a concrete crayon pointing to the heavens. It was loosely modeled on Qabus' 1000-year-old tower in Gonbad-e Kavus, which is a UNESCO World Heritage. There is a single-room museum of Avicenna memorabilia, his tombstone, a small library, and a display of medicinal herbs. Avicenna (born 980, near Bukhara, Iran [now in Uzbekistan]—died 1037, Hamadan, Iran), was a Muslim physician, the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of the medieval Islamic world. He was particularly noted for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. He composed the Kitab al-Shifa (Book of the Cure), a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (The Canon of Medicine), which is among the most famous books in the history of medicine.

Some 70 km northwest of Hamedan, is situated the entrance to the amazing Ali Sadr Cave, a gigantic water-filled cavern widely believed to date from the Jurassic era. The cave embraces a huge matrix of sunless channels, ponds, grottoes, and water passages which are stretched along with imposing rock formations and stalactite-covered tops in a span of several kilometers. Sightseeing there is connected with traversing in well-lit labyrinths of waterways via paddle boats, walking on subterranean islets, as well as observing rock carvings of hunting scenes, artifacts, paintings, and vessels that are associated with prehistorical troglodytes.

Traversing darkened Jurassic caverns by boat and walking across subterranean islands may be an unmatched visit to nature.

Six properties in Tehran approved as national heritage

TEHRAN – A total of six historical buildings and aging structures, scattered across Iranian capital, have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

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



Jeiranpur and Vasmaqi mansions and Alikhani and Alamolhoda villas were among the properties added to the

prestigious list.

The first time Tehran is mentioned in historical accounts is in an 11th-century chronicle in which it is described as a small village north of Ray.

Ray, in which signs of settlement dates from 6000 BC, is often considered to be Tehran's predecessor. It became the capital city of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th century but later declined with factional

strife between different neighborhoods and the Mongol invasion of 1220.

Tehran has many to offer its visitors including Golestan Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and Carpet Museum of Iran, to name a few.

Environmental education planned for local communities

TEHRAN – Various programs are being prepared to educate local communities in order to strengthen environmental protection, Hassan Akbari, caretaker of natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment (DOE), said.

As most of the discoveries and assistance in protecting the environment are made by local communities and nature lovers, we are planning to hold training courses for local communities on environmental awareness and biodiversity, he explained.

Most of the country's biodiversity is severely eroding, and over the past decade, a significant number of birds of prey such as saker falcon, peregrine falcon, as well as bustards have been discovered and confiscated from wildlife smugglers by the local communities, he highlighted.

More than 10,000 environmental violators are arrested on average annually, 70 percent of whom are reported by the cooperation of local people, who are present in protected areas and help in protecting the country's biodiversity, IRNA reported on Friday.

Wildlife species in danger of extinction

There are 1,300 species of animals in the country, 130 of which are endangered and threatened, Akbari said in December 2021.

Asiatic cheetahs, great bustards, Siberian cranes, Persian onagers, and some reptiles and



amphibians are among the endangered and threatened species, he said.

Significant smuggling and habitat destruction are the main threats to the species, and promoting a culture of kindness to the environment and strengthening social participation is one of the most important and effective strategies in protecting the environment, he explained.

The availability of large quantities of weapons and ammunition to the poachers is another risk factor for wildlife populations, Akbari added.

To preserve the existing biodiversity over the wide geographic expanse of Iran, four types of areas have been designated for preservation and protection, including, national parks, wildlife refuges, protected areas, and natural national monuments. In 1997, the DOE held supervision over 7,563,983 hectares of such areas.

Currently, the supervised areas reached about 18.5 million hectares, including, 30 national parks, 170 protected areas, 45 wildlife refuges, and 37 national natural monuments.

Iran has a high diversity of

species due to geographical conditions, climatic diversity, huge water resources of the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf, and the Sea of Oman in the south.

According to the latest studies, about 1,300 species of vertebrates, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and aquatic fish, about 30,000 species of invertebrates, and 8,000 species of plants have been identified in the country.

Unfortunately, over the past two decades, human activities have led to alarming degradation of ecosystems, deletion of genes, species, and biological capabilities; Human threats to biodiversity have accelerated the most over the past 50 years over the entire history of human life.

Iran negotiating to exchange driving licenses with 70 countries



TEHRAN – Negotiations are underway with 70 countries to exchange driving licenses, Traffic Police chief Seyed Kamal Hadianfar has announced.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, drivers will be able to exchange their driving licenses for a license issued in the country of residency, he said, YJC reported.

“Currently, 70 countries are on the police's agenda, he said, expressing hope to start the

plan with Spain.

We have considered an exchange system for the authenticity of Spanish certificates in Iran and Iranian ones in Spain,” Hadianfar explained.

We can issue one-year certificates to Afghan nationals who reside in our country and have legal residence, but there are some foreign businessmen who have the conditions to invest in the country, who received a 3-year certificate, he stated.

Muslims in Russia value brotherly ties with Iran: cleric

TEHRAN – Muslim communities in Russia give importance to brotherly relations with Iran, Sheikh Ravi Ainuddin, Russian Muftis Shura Council Chairman, and President of the Religious Administration of Muslims in Russia, has said.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali, noting that officials of the two countries have consolidated trustable ties in years before.

“Russian Muftis Shura Council and the Religious Administration of Muslims in Russia expanded

amicable ties with Iranian religious communities in line with a good relationship between the two nations,” he noted.

Pointing to cultural commonalities between Russian and Iranian Muslims, he argued that Russia's Tatars are keen to maintain and expand cultural and religious ties especially due to their interest in Persian culture and language.

He also urged the Iranian ambassador to convey warm greetings from Russian Muslims to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei



and President Ebrahim Raisi.

Jalali, for his part, said that the Iranian diplomatic mission in Moscow will do its best to maintain good cooperation with Russians in particular in the religious arena.

He further referred to the fact

that Sheikh Rawi Ainuddin enjoys a special position in religious circles in Iran because of his efforts to enhance constructive dialogue.

At the end of the meeting which was accompanied by some Russian and Iranian religious representatives, both sides stressed the need for more cooperation in religious, cultural, and educational fields.

It is worth mentioning that around 30 million people out of 146 million population of Russia are Muslims.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Existing vaccines are effective against mutated coronavirus: Iranian expert

The COVID-19 vaccines, which have been so far produced in the world are also effective on the mutated virus, so people who receive the vaccines will be protected against the new virus strain, Massoud Mardani, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, has said.

What raised concerns about the newly-produced vaccine was the ineffectiveness against the mutated virus, which fortunately studies show, the mutation of the virus and the chromosomal alteration are not enough to change its general nature, he explained.

According to Mardani, it is possible to detect the new coronavirus in Iran. All British and European passengers are tested at the airport for a quick and PCR test, while so far no case has been confirmed in the country, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

واکسن کرونا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند

مسعود مردانی عضو ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا می گوید واکسن تولید و تایید شده در دنیا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند و افرادی که واکسن تایید شده را بزنند علیه این ویروس هم مصونیت پیدا می کنند. مردانی روز سه شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: آنچه نگران آن هستیم این است که واکسن تولید شده برای کووید ۱۹ در دنیا نسبت به ویروس جهش یافته بی اثر باشد که خوشبختانه بررسی ها نشان می دهد، جهش ویروس و تغییر کروموزومی ویروس به قدری نیست که ماهیت کلی آن تغییر کند.

به گفته او، امکان تشخیص ویروس کرونا جهش یافته در ایران وجود دارد. از همه مسافران انگلیس و اروپا در فرودگاه تست سریع و از موارد مشکوک تست دقیق تر «پی سی آر» گرفته و بررسی می شود و تاکنون موردی از این ویروس در ایران تایید نشده است.

SOCIETY

JANUARY 15, 2022

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

7

Spikogen vaccine approved for third dose injection

From page 1 ► According to the latest statistics, so far, 60,269,896 people have received the first dose, 53,018,325 people the second dose, and 11,000,974 people are inoculated with the third dose.

Health Minister Bahram Einollahi has said five coronavirus vaccines have been so far produced domestically.

Iran is one of the few countries that has all vaccine production platforms, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, former head of the Food and Drug Administration, said in June 2021.

Meanwhile, World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran Jaffar Hussain said in September 2021 that the Organization was collecting the necessary information for



the registration and certification of Iranian-made coronavirus vaccines.

Iran has also produced vaccines jointly with two countries of Cuba and Russia.

Nearly quarter of world's population had record hot year in 2021, data shows

Nearly a quarter of the world's population experienced a record hot year in 2021, as the climate crisis continues to unleash escalating temperatures around the globe, according to new data from leading US climate scientists.

Last year was the sixth hottest ever recorded, with the global temperature 1.1C above the pre-industrial average, a new annual analysis from Nasa and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) found, the Guardian reported.

“Science leaves no room for doubt: climate change is the existential threat of our time,” said Bill Nelson, administrator of Nasa. Nelson said that eight out of the top 10 hottest years have occurred in the past decade, which “underscores the need for bold action to safeguard the future of our country – and all of humanity”.

There were record-high temperatures in parts of northern Africa, south Asia and parts of South America last year, Arctic sea ice continued its decline and the oceans recorded yet another record year for heat content. “The oceans are storing a heck of a lot of heat,” said Russell Vose, a senior climate scientist at Noaa. “If it weren't for the large heat storage capacity of the oceans, the atmosphere would've warmed a lot more rapidly.”

Gavin Schmidt, director of Nasa's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, said the changes under way in the Arctic, which is warming at about three times the rate of the global average, are “extremely dramatic” and will affect the rest of the world through, among other things, sea-level rise from melting glaciers. “What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic,” he said.

While 2021 did not top the record heat set in 2020, which was only fractionally hotter than 2016, scientists said last year was yet another demonstration of the long-term global heating that is being caused by human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation. The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is now at levels not seen on Earth in the past 4m years.

“It doesn't matter how you do the analysis, it shows you the Earth has warmed quite dramatically,” said Vose. Noaa and Nasa undertake their own temperature analyses in slightly different ways, using data from weather stations, ships and ocean buoys.

“It's clear that each of the past four decades has been warmer than the one preceding it,” he added. “It's certainly warmer now than at any time in the past 2,000 years, and probably longer.”

Earlier this week, the European climate agency Copernicus said 2021 was the fifth hottest year on record, with the last seven years the hottest ever documented. A slight edge was taken off last year's temperatures by a La Niña, a periodic climatic event that cools the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Despite not being the hottest individual year on record, 2021 did contain a number of extraordinary signs of climate breakdown. July last year was the world's hottest month ever recorded, with Death Valley in California recording what may be the hottest temperature ever reliably measured during this month, at 54.4C (130F).

A total of 1.8 billion people, approaching a quarter of the world's population, live in countries that did experience the hottest year on record, according to a separate analysis released on Thursday by Berkeley Earth. A total of 25 countries, including China, Nigeria and Iran, recorded a record warm annual average in 2021.

“No one lives at the global average temperature,” said Robert Rohde, lead scientist at Berkeley Earth. “Most land areas will experience more warming than the global average, and countries must plan their responses to this.”

Last year also saw a cascade of disasters that scientists have determined were worsened by the world's excess heat. Floods devastated parts of Germany and China, while the Pacific north-west of North America saw an unprecedented, and deadly, heatwave that scientists said would have been “virtually impossible” without climate change.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 14

New cases	2,539
New deaths	24
Total cases	6,217,320
Total deaths	132,026
New hospitalized patients	285
Patients in critical condition	1,409
Total recovered patients	6,060,680
Diagnostic tests conducted	43,245,362
Doses of vaccine injected	125,262,221

