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Iran, Russia: Closer Than Ever

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Report

Americans say U.S. democracy is in danger; there never was one

Donald Trump has jumped on the opportunity of President Joe Biden's popularity evaporating into thin air after one year in office to blast his former democratic contender and repeat his argument that the last election was rigged and stolen. Well it appears that Americans are now feeling the same way about the election and democracy in the United States.

The polarization and division among Americans has never been bigger and the fear of America slipping down the slippery slope of civil unrest or even a civil war is being talked about more than ever in U.S. media.

It's safe to say America is living through dangerous times; and that's not a pun.

A majority of Americans now believe democracy in the United States is in danger of disappearing, according to what will (or should be) a deeply concerning new poll for the political establishment and the deep state.

According to fresh data from Schoen Cooperman Research, just 26% of those surveyed say they felt U.S. democracy would be secured for future generations, while 51% agreed with the statement, "U.S. democracy is at risk of extinction." An additional 23% said they were unsure.

The fear of extinction fell evenly along partisan lines with 49% of Democrats and 49% of Republicans agreeing the "republic" was in danger. 54% of independents echoed those views.

The research displayed widespread pessimism and distrust has risen over the past year. Just 54% of Americans say they believed Joe Biden was the legitimate winner of the presidential election. That figure was 64% when the same pollsters asked the question in April. ► Page 5

Interview

American basketballer Buycks enjoys to play in Iran

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Dwight Buycks, American professional basketball player of Chemidor Qom Basketball Club, has talked about playing in the Iranian Super League.

The 32-year-old point guard, in an interview with Tehran Times, has explained about his life in Iran in his first year in the country.

Considering the vast difference between the U.S. and Iran basketball, why did you decide to come to Iran and play in the Super League?

Well, I knew some guys who had been playing out here. I thought it'd be nice to come here and be able to play with them as well. I heard about Iran through a few people, agents, and staff like that. They said, it's an excellent league, and it's getting better each year. So, I felt like it was a good thing to come out here.

This is your first year playing in Iran, and we know that you are not familiar with all the Iranian clubs in detail. But, after this short time, what is your general opinion about the Iranian clubs?

I have only played a few games so far. I could see that it's a competitive league which is exciting. You want it to be competitive because you want to compete. ► Page 3

UAE receives 'punitive message' from Yemen



TEHRAN - In its first reaction to the United Arab Emirates' involvement in the fighting in the Shabwa governorate of Yemen, the Sanaa-based forces announced that they have launched a "qualitative military operation" in the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi.

Spokesman for Yemen's armed forces General Yahya Saree announced that the Yemeni forces launched a "qualitative military operation deep inside the UAE."

The UAE has confirmed that an attack

might have happened in Abu Dhabi on Monday morning. According to the Emirati news agency, WAM, Abu Dhabi Police confirmed that a fire broke out this morning, which led to the explosion of three petroleum tankers in ICAD 3, Mussafah, ► Page 3

WB sees Iranian economy expanding 2.4% in 2022

TEHRAN - Iranian economy is projected to grow by 2.4 percent in 2022 as oil production and industrial activity rebound in the country, according to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report released earlier this month.

"In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the pandemic's impact on the services sector was limited and oil production and industrial ac-

tivity rebounded, minimizing the slowdown in economic growth," the report stated.

The bank has increased its forecast of Iran's economic growth by 0.2 percent compared to its previous report published in June 2021.

"Growth in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2022 has been revised marginally higher with tapering COVID-19 mobility restrictions ben-

efiting the services sector and a gradual recovery in the oil sector," the report said.

It stated that the Iranian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is going to register a growth of 2.2 percent in 2023.

In January 2021, the bank had predicted a 1.5 percent GDP growth for Iran in 2021 and a 1.7 percent growth for 2022. ► Page 4

Dead-ends are resolvable in Vienna talks: spokesman

TEHRAN— Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday that dead-ends in Vienna are not unsolvable.

Speaking at his weekly press briefing, Khatibzadeh said that senior negotiators from Iran and three European countries had returned to the capitals for further consultations and during this time the expert meetings were ongoing.

He went on to say that the focus of the meetings was on "four main texts on various issues".

The four steps includes sanctions removal, verification of steps that each side must take, technical issues and guarantees.

He added, "Many tables have been prepared and the columns of these tables are also ready and some of the parentheses have been cleared and agreements have been reached and agreements on ideas have been done to a great extent and are being converted into sentences and words." ► Page 2



50 nanotechnology products unveiled

TEHRAN - An exhibition of nanotechnology achievements, unveiling over 50 new products, kicked off on Monday at Tehran Permanent International Fairground.

Around 450 knowledge-based companies are currently working to use nanotechnology for manufacturing more than 800 products. ► Page 7

Off the beaten path: Iran to classify touristic villages

TEHRAN - Iran considers identifying and ranking its touristic villages to boost sustainable rural tourism across the ancient country.

Spearheaded by Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister, the project is also aimed to help reinforce educational workshops, entrepreneurship, employment of the locals, and tourism infrastructure, ILNA reported on Monday.

Experts believe that the growth of the local economy is the ultimate goal of the rise and development of the rural tourism industry, but in the long run, to enable the long-term development of the rural tourism industry, the healthy maintenance and growth of environmental capacity is very important.

Currently, an increasing number of travelers are

looking for something different such as spending a day in tranquil countryside, picking fresh fruits, watching rice grow, fishing by the seaside, eating traditional dishes, or even staying with locals. To put it in other words, many urban residents tend to choose rural tourism to enjoy a slow-paced lifestyle that resembles something like 'the Internet + countryside'. ► Page 6

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Interview

U.S. not following any diplomatic ethics: Pakistani analyst

By M. A. Saki

TEHRAN - A member of an Islamabad-based think tank says that Washington is not committed to any diplomatic ethics or obligation.

"The U.S. does not follow any diplomatic ethics or obligation they undertake in any agreement," Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, a senior research associate at Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), tells the Tehran Times.

Citing an example, Yousafzai says, "We have the first Iran nuclear deal from which the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew in May 2018."

The European Union said on Friday that despite a painful start weeks ago, international talks to save the Iran nuclear deal have entered the New Year with positive signals emerging. The EU also said restoration of the 2015 nuclear deal is possible.

There has been a marked shift in tone since the current round of talks began in Vienna in late November, even if the Western powers complain the pace of talks is slow while Iran is accelerating its nuclear work.

However, Iran is seeking a guarantee that the U.S. won't abandon the nuclear agreement again if it is revived.

"As far as guarantee for the future nuclear agreement between Iran and the U.S. is concerned, no one can guarantee that the U.S. will not abandon it," the Pakistani expert believes.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you see the trajectory of the Vienna talks?

Negotiations to salvage the nuclear deal resumed in late November after ► Page 5

Book on Leader's views on jihad of clarification published

TEHRAN - A book giving deep insights into the views of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, on the jihad of clarification of the country's significant issues has been published.

"Jihad of Clarification" was introduced in a special meeting at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization on Sunday evening.

The views have been compiled by Hojjatolislam Saeid Solhmirzai and the book has been published by the Islamic Revolution Publications, which is affiliated with the Institute for Preserving and Publishing the Works of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Speaking at the meeting, Solhmirzai said, "The Supreme Leader has always emphasized the need for the jihad of the clarification of the country's issues as a significant topic." ► Page 8

Iran sends three diplomats to Jeddah after six years



TEHRAN – After six years three Iranian diplomats have started their work in Iran's office in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian announced on December 23 last year that Saudi Arabia has issued visa for three Iranian diplomats to be deployed at the OIC. Amir Abdollahian broke the story in a joint press conference with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, whose country has been acting as an intermediary between Iran and Iraq.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran after a number of angry protestors attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran in early January 2016 in protest to the Saudi execution of prominent cleric Nimr al-Nimr. A number of protestors also attacked the Saudi consulate in Mashhad at the time.

Also, in a recent interview with Al Jazeera, Amir Abdollahian said the issuance of visa for the diplomats by the Saudi Kingdom is a and “good” sign.

“Soon our diplomats will be stationed at the office of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah. I think our diplomats will be deployed soon, which is a good sign,” the foreign minister said.

Jeddah is the permanent venue of the 57-member organization.

The last Iranian permanent representative to the OIC was Mahdi Hamze'ei, along with other Iranian diplomats.

According to ISNA, the OIC foreign ministers held an emergency meeting in Jeddah over the attacks on the Saudi diplomatic premises in Tehran. The participants issued a statement in which they condemned attacks on the Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran and said attacks run contrary to the Geneva and Vienna conventions in protecting foreign diplomatic missions.

In their statement the foreign ministers also said the attacks on diplomatic centers go against the OIC and UN charters which are established to foster friendly relations, mutual respect and cooperation between member states.

Seyyed Abbas Araqchi, a senior Iranian diplomat, who had participated at the emergency

meeting said Iran has condemned the attacks and launched an investigation to bring those involved in the attacks to the book.

At the time senior Iranian officials including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution censured attack on the Saudi diplomatic premises.

A member of the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee announced on Saturday that relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are being revived and the groundwork is being prepared for Iran and Saudi Arabia to reopen their embassies in Riyadh and Tehran.

“Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are being revived and embassies are preparing to reopen, which has important implications for reducing regional tensions and increasing global cohesion,” Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi wrote on his Twitter page.

Jahanabadi added “security institutions and the media must watch out for the evils of the Zionists and the stupidity of the extremists” as Iran and the Saudi Arabia are taking steps to normalize ties.

According to Amir Abdollahian, Iranian negotiators have held four rounds of “positive and constructive” talks with the relevant Saudi officials in Iraq.

“Due to the holding of parliamentary elections in Iraq and the fact that the Iraqi governing body and the heads of the three branches are all involved in forming a new government in the future, the role played by Iraqis was naturally affected by the electoral atmosphere. What we have stated as our official position is that whenever the Saudi side wants the relations between the two countries to return to normal, we are ready and welcome the reopening of our embassies and consulates,” Amir Abdollahian told Al Jazeera.

He added, “We are also planning to send our pilgrims for Hajj, if the coronavirus conditions allow, and again, if the conditions allow, even for the Umrah pilgrimage. The Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran also has its own instructions for this issue. I personally think that the Saudi side still needs more time to be able to reach a conclusion and a decision. We have announced our readiness for a new round of talks in Baghdad.”

Iran and Saudi Arabia started direct talks through Iraq's mediation to restore ties during Hassan Rouhani's the presidency. However, efforts to revive the ties have intensified during the rule of President Ebrahim Raisi who has declared cementing ties with neighbors and regional countries as a foreign policy priority.

From page 1 ► Khatibzadeh noted that what remains are important issues that specifically require tough political decisions, and Washington in particular must announce its decisions on the sanctions-removal and the remaining issues, some of which are serious.

He said, “If these things happen when the delegations return to Vienna, we can say that we are reaching a stable and reliable agreement with good speed.”

Regarding the request of 110 U.S. lawmakers to the Biden administration to leave the Vienna talks, he said that the United States domestic policy is their own and Iran will not comment on it.

“We do not recognize any other government in the United States, and that is the definitive responsibility of the United States in fulfilling its obligations under the 2015 nuclear pact and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, and to this day the United States has stubbornly waived its obligations under this resolution,” the diplomat noted.

According to the spokesman, significant differences remain in Vienna, and the most important difference is the inadequate speed of the other parties, especially the United States, in presenting initiatives.

He continued, “Iran in various issues has the authority and the ability to help resolve issues, and has done so with good speed. Significant progress has been made in technical issues, but regarding the lifting of sanctions, talks are subject to political decisions that has unfortunately been delayed by the other side. The initiatives that were necessary were still not presented by the other side and most of them were listeners and sometimes the progress that was achieved was due to the actions of Iran.”

Regarding the meetings of the working groups on sequencing of steps according to the need that arises, Khatibzadeh said discussions are held on various topics, and in all

Dead-ends are resolvable in Vienna talks: spokesman



four texts, meetings and discussions are needed.

He then went on to advise U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to do what helps to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

“I advise the secretary of state to make every effort, and if he has the initiative, to bring this plan A to bear and fruit. Plan B is not to the liking of the U.S., and Blinken knows better than anyone that every country has a plan B for itself, and maybe Iran's plan B is not very attractive for them,” he remarked.

The diplomat also said that the current U.S. president and his foreign policy team and negotiators in Vienna know that if the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is still alive, it is because of Iran, not because of the United States, which has left the deal.

“They tried to destroy the JCPOA immediately (after their withdrawal

in 2018), so if they have forgotten, the global community will not forget this.”

According to Khatibzadeh, the U.S. continues to follow the same wrong path, and as long as Iran does not see a change in the behavior of the U.S., it cannot say that the two sides have reached a point where a stable and reliable agreement is available.

Khatibzadeh continued, “The communication between Iran and the United States is through the written texts exchanged informally via Enrique Mora.”

Enrique Mora from the European Union is coordinator of the talks in Vienna.

“We gave (our suggestions) and received the points we wanted and we will continue this route and this route will continue as long as it is needed. The course of the dialogue is now very clear,” he reiterated.

He then went on to criticize the E3 countries (France, UK, and Germany), saying that sometimes the European troika forgets that they are members of the JCPOA and are not representing the U.S. in Vienna.

“The P4+1 and Iran are in talks to make sure that the United States, which did its best to eliminate the JCPOA and put all its maximum pressure on it, will reach a point where it will fulfill its obligations, and also take a disciplinary approach to the Europeans countries that want to have normal relations with Iran,” he said.

The diplomat added that France can take a constructive approach if it distances itself from blame games.

“France knows that the talks take place in the negotiation room and the issues are quite clear... One of these issues is the inaction and cooperation of the three European countries with the United States in imposing sanctions. Unfortunately, both France and the other two European countries have been on Washington's side to date in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.”

Khatibzadeh also stated that Iran will strongly stick to its red lines in reaching an agreement.

“The agreement that Iran is seeking has two characteristics: to be reliable and stable, and these two have been said to the other side in the negotiation rooms. The three guarantees Iran is seeking is that the United States will not mock the international system again, and that no government in the United States will use the JCPOA mechanisms against the deal, and the assurances that will guarantee Iran's benefit. In any agreement, these must be these assurances,” he noted.

He continued by saying that at the negotiation table, Iran has clearly stated its demands.

Khatibzadeh concluded his press briefing by saying that the talks are on the right track and there is no unresolved impasse, and political decisions must be made.

U.S. diplomat: We stay in Syria to cut off Iran-Syria ties

TEHRAN — The former U.S. envoy to Syria, James Jeffrey, has stated that U.S. forces will remain in Syria to cut off Tehran-Damascus connection.

“The aim of the United States' presence abroad is to strengthen the security interests of the United States and its allies, as well as to promote foreign policy by being present on [other countries'] soil,” Jeffrey told North Press.

“The United States' mission in Syria is a fight to defeat ISIS, which has been carried out with the agreement of Congress,” he added, claiming that U.S. soldiers in Syria have the

same mission.

“In their presence, American forces hinder other forces from being there, and they do the same in Syria,” he said, referring to the presence of U.S. forces in several nations that do not even have an army.

“We're in al-Tanf [Syria] to cut off the primary route between Damascus and Tehran in the south,” Jeffrey said. “There were efforts to put pressure on Bashar al-dictatorship Assad during the Trump administration.”

In this regard, the American newspaper Daily

Beast released new data and attacked the plan in December 2019, after the U.S. administration announced its desire to keep a military presence in northern Syria, labelling it a military presence for what it described as “oil looting.”

Former U.S. President Donald Trump had stated that the U.S. will maintain a small number of troops in northern Syria.

According to a U.S. official, U.S. forces will be stationed near the Deir ez-Zor oil field. Another facility that the U.S. will keep in Syria is al-Tanf, which is far from the country's oil riches and front lines.

Iran, Russia: Closer than ever

TEHRAN — According to the Russian state TV, President Vladimir Putin will receive his Iranian counterpart Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi in the coming week.

The visit is undoubtedly a turning point in relations between the two countries, as Russia and Iran are actively trying to expand economic relations.

A country that has always supported Iran in the face of brutal and unilateral sanctions on Iran, Russia has great potential to be Iran's close ally in economic field.

Political relations between the two countries are at a high level, but economic and trade cooperation in areas such as advanced technologies and aerospace industries are not commensurate with the high capacities of the two countries and this needs to be enhanced. This can be discussed by the two presidents.

Plans to expand economic ties have not progressed as was expected. Given the good political relations between the two countries, this issue will be analyzed during the meeting of the two presidents.

The volume of trade between Iran and Russia is the same as Russia's trade with some small countries, while Iran has a very large capacity. Through careful planning, this index can be increased considerably.

Iran and Russia are neighbors

through the Caspian Sea, but what has made Iran-Russia relations very strong is the solidarity that Tehran and Moscow enjoy. The coherence of relations between the two countries, which is above all due to the common understanding of common threats, must be deepened by investing on common interests and common opportunities. The scope of relations can be assessed positively, but the two sides need to deepen ties based on common interests in various fields, especially economy and trade.

Ali Bahadori Jahromi, the Iranian government spokesman, recently commented on the president's planned visit to Russia, saying that bilateral issues and trade and economic cooperation between Tehran and Moscow will be discussed during the visit.

Russia was the first country to warmly welcome the election of Raisi as president of Iran and the inauguration of a new government in Iran. Russian officials have predicted stronger Tehran-Moscow relations during the Raisi presidency.

“The Iranian president's visit to Moscow is a very important event,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in a news conference with dozens of journalists on Friday. Political contacts between Tehran and Moscow must be resumed, according to Russia's

chief diplomat.

It is important to remember that Putin and Raisi have had several phone calls, but as Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday, the two presidents need to discuss some issues extensively.

President Raisi will be leading a high-ranking delegation, mostly consisted of economy-related ministers. It is not unexpected that various economic and industrial agreements would be signed during the trip.

Also, Russia's full support for Iran during the Vienna talks regarding the brutal, extraterritorial sanctions has strengthened the relations between the two countries.

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times on January 11, Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, said, “In our national capacity, Russian national capacity, I can tell you that we are fully on the side of Iran. We don't recognize extraterritorial sanctions. We believe that they are absolutely illegitimate and extremely counter-productive. But the reality is that we need to find a solution acceptable for everybody.”

Iran and Russia can upgrade their relations to new highs by capitalizing on their political solidarity. The steps should be taken in the same style and strategy that the parties have taken so far.

He is back: Trump says he will “take back” White House

TEHRAN— One year after losing the race to reenter the White House, Donald Trump has set the course for a tumultuous midterm election season, attending a campaign event in Arizona where he invigorated his following, resurrected baseless allegations about electoral fraud, and hinted at a 2020 presidential bid.

Trump slammed his critics and used the gathering to support loyalists and election deniers running for state and federal office this year in a speech aimed to restore his influence within the Republican Party.

“This November, we have an opportunity to accomplish something very spectacular,” Trump told the adoring audience that had waited for hours in the Arizona desert town of Florence.

“This is possibly the most critical election we've ever had, but I believe 2024 will be even more crucial. This is the year when we take back the White House.”

The rally was the former president's first campaign event of the year, arriving only days after the one-year anniversary of the January 6, 2001, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Thousands of Trump supporters descended on the U.S. Capitol on that day after he vowed to “fight like hell” to prevent Congress from certifying Joe Biden's election victory.

Trump had planned to host a press conference at his Mar-a-Lago club to commemorate the occasion, but cancelled due to worries from several Republicans that it would not be a good look.

The Arizona event, on the other hand,

provided Trump with sufficient opportunity to air his frustrations.

He took the stage just after 7 p.m. local time and unleashed a 90-minute rant against President Joe Biden and the “radical left,” criticizing his successor on issues ranging from the coronavirus and the economy to immigration and the failed departure of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

At a time when Biden is struggling to get voting rights reforms passed in the Senate, his predecessor chimed in, calling for same-day voting (the Democrats want early voting to be expanded); paper ballots (rather than the electronic one commonly used in the U.S.); and an end to ballot harvesting (the process in which third parties are allowed to collect and deliver ballots in some states).

And within minutes of starting his speech, he once again repeated his false claim that the election was “rigged,” insisting without evidence that “the proof is all over the place - the media just refuse to talk about it.”

The gathering was a stark reminder of Trump's continued clout in the party, as well as his signature brand of reward-and-retribution politics.

Loyalists such as state politician Mark Finchem, who was with demonstrators outside the Capitol on January 6, and congressman Paul Gosar, who was recently censured for an animation video depicting him killing a Democratic representative, attended the event.

Former television host Kari Lake, Trump's choice to replace Arizona's current Republican Governor, Doug Ducey, also went

on stage with him.

While Trump remains popular among his supporters, some Republicans are concerned that some of the candidates he has sponsored may be unpopular with the general public.

Limitations to his authority were also revealed this week, when Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said he would fight for re-election as the chamber's top Republican leader, and no one appeared to be opposing him — despite Trump's persistent push to remove him.

Meanwhile, as reported by the Associated Press, prominent Republicans in Washington are working behind the scenes to persuade Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, one of Trump's most enthusiastic opponents in the party, to run for a Senate seat. And, on Saturday, Glenn Youngkin was sworn in as the first Republican governor of Virginia since 2010, despite conducting a campaign that distanced himself from Trump.

Nonetheless, Trump will remain ever-present as America prepares for the midterm elections, in which Democrats are largely projected to lose their majority, making it much more difficult for Biden to deliver on his ambitious first-term plan.

All 435 House seats, as well as 34 of the 100 Senate seats, will be contested.

Trump has stated that he will make a decision on whether to run for president again after the midterm elections, but he and his associates have been working for months to bring proponents of the “stolen election” myth to office.

UAE receives ‘punitive message’ from Yemen

Frome Page **1** ▶ near ADNOC's storage tanks. A minor fire also broke out in the new construction area of Abu Dhabi International Airport, WAM reported, adding that preliminary investigations suggest that the cause of the fires are small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones, that fell in the two areas.

Abu Dhabi Police also said that the explosions resulted in the death of three people – one from Pakistan and two from India.

As of Monday evening, Abu Dhabi authorities have not offered further details on the nature of the explosions. But regional media said it was an attack. Al-Mayadeen reported that the Yemeni forces have targeted “sensitive targets” in Abu Dhabi with drones and ballistic missiles. On the other hand, Yemeni sources in the military operations in the heart of the main emirate of Abu Dhabi, which is a continuous loss, and it is clear that the fires are burning.

Informed sources revealed to Al-Mayadeen that an Emirati military plane was attacked on Monday morning at Ataq Airport in Shabwa, southeast of Yemen. Al-Mayadeen sources said that “the leadership of the UAE forces is dissatisfied with the targeting of a plane, describing the governor



of Shabwa as failing, and asking him to hand over the security and military checkpoints to it.”

Al-Mayadeen reported that the Yemeni army and popular committees attacked the UAE with 20 drones and 10 ballistic missiles.

The Yemeni attack came after the UAE played a pivotal role in deploying southern Yemeni forces to the Shabwa governorate. It also stepped up its military activities in support of Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, something that enraged the Sanaa forces who recently announced that they had seized UAE-flagged military ship off the coast of Hudaydah port in western Yemen. The seized ship, named RWABEE, was carrying military equipment, according to footage of

the ship provided by Sanaa.

The UAE has sought to distance itself from the war in Yemen. But Yemenis see a direct Emirati role in the developments in Shabwa and elsewhere in Yemen.

Mohammad Abdulsalam, the official spokesman of Ansarallah and head of the Sanaa delegation for peace negotiations, hinted that the UAE's hand will be cut off if it continued to interfere in Yemen.

“A small state in the region desperate to serve America and Israel had claimed that it distanced itself from Yemen, but it has recently been exposed, contrary to what it claimed,” Abdulsalam said in his channel on Telegram messaging app.

He said if the UAE refuses to

stop tampering in Yemen, its hands will be cut off.

Yemeni officials have signaled that Monday's military attack against the UAE was a punitive message to it.

“The punitive message that was supposed to reach the Emirates and its dwarves has reached,” Dhaif Allah Alshami, the information minister of Yemen, said on Twitter.

The message seems to have been sent after the UAE paid no attention to diplomatic moves in the past few weeks. Abdulsalam met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian during his recent visit to Oman. After that meeting, Iran once again presented a peace initiative that was presented years ago, according to Al-Mayadeen.

Citing well-informed sources, the news television said, “The initiative stipulated implementing a ceasefire and a complete lifting of the blockade on Yemen, in addition to opening all land, sea, and air crossings.”

The initiative also stipulated initiating political negotiations to reach an agreement on the transitional period following the war and the lifting of the blockade, as well as forming a comprehensive consensus government to manage affairs while providing Yemen with economic support.

Iran ready to reopen embassy in Saudi Arabia: Foreign Ministry

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has expressed Iran's readiness to reopen Tehran's embassy in Riyadh, underlining that reopening embassies depends on a Saudi will.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Khatibzadeh said Iran is now focused on resumption of its diplomatic activities in the Jeddah-based Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

“The focus is on starting the Islamic Republic of Iran's mission to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah, and our diplomats obtained visas to conduct this feasibility study.”

The Iranian Students' News Agency, ISNA, reported earlier that the three Iranian diplomats had arrived in the Saudi city of Jeddah in recent days to represent Iran in the OIC.

It indicated in a report that the three Iranian diplomats left for Jeddah in recent days and are scheduled to resume their activities after 6 years of stopping Iran's representation to the 57—member organization.

The activities of the Iranian representative office in Jeddah stopped in early 2016, following the severing of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, after demonstrators attacked Saudi Arabia's embassy in Tehran and its consulate in the city of Mashhad in northeastern Iran.

In December, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian announced that Saudi Arabia has agreed to issue visas to three of Iran's diplomats who work as diplomats residing at the headquarters of the OIC.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said that Saudi Arabia issued visas to three Iranian diplomats, while the Kingdom confirmed the issuance of visas as part of the normal procedure for representatives of member states of the organization residing in Jeddah.

Khatibzadeh said that Iran stands ready to resume diplomatic relations with Saudi Arab in line with the foreign policy agenda of President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi.

“As Mr. Raisi noted in an early election press conference, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to reopen its embassy in Saudi Arabia, depending on what practical steps Saudi Arabia takes,” he said. “We have already announced this readiness, and God willing, we will consider all the preparations in this direction so that this path will be implemented.”

The spokesman also addressed a range of regional issues. Responding to a question about the visit of the foreign ministers of the Persian Gulf countries to China and some analyses about the concern of these countries about China's influence and Iran-China relations, he said, “Iran-China relations are completely normal. East-East relations are based on the natural requirements of developments in the international system and bilateral relations. The presence of different countries in the region as independent countries is neither a threat nor a cause for concern. China already has relations with various countries in the region, including the countries of the Persian Gulf, and we welcomed balanced and independent relations between the countries.”

Khatibzadeh continued, “What is worrisome is the

presence of some Western trans-regional countries in the Persian Gulf region, which try to change the geopolitics of the region by selling weapons and establishing a military base in the Persian Gulf region and changing governments and regimes and manipulating the results of political developments in these countries. A system of inclusive regional arrangements can help implement these stable relationships in the region.”

Responding to a question about Amir Abdollahian's visit to Oman and Qatar and Iran's readiness for regional arrangements, the spokesman said, “Good neighborliness and the issue of neighborhood as a definite policy in the past few months has been pursued in various forms and consultations have been held in the Persian Gulf. Announced and unannounced trips between the capitals and the visit of some Persian Gulf officials to Iran and the visit of the Iraqi foreign minister to Iran are all measures to establish comprehensive arrangements in the region in a multilateral manner.”

He pointed out, “Of course, these comprehensive arrangements in the Persian Gulf are the first step and targeting of eight countries in the Persian Gulf and is a serious issue.”

He added, “Friends in Iraq had suggestions, and we supported any endogenous arrangements by the countries of the region. The principles of these regional arrangements have been discussed in the meetings, including respect for the sovereignty of countries and the prevention of processes that lead to interference, non-aggression and recognition of red lines, etc. But for these to become organizational arrangements, we must create distance among them.”

Khatibzadeh also pointed to relationship between Iran and Syria, describing it as strategic and multi-layered.

Regarding the Israeli aggression on Syria and some claims that it targets resistance bases, and the statements of U.S. officials about their presence on Syrian soil, Khatibzadeh said, “Iran-Syria relations are multi-layered and multi-dimensional and with their own strategic depth, and it is better for countries to think about ending their wrong policies that led to the killing of innocent Syrians and the occupation of Syrian territory and the cowardly siege and inhumane acts.”

He continued, “The Islamic Republic of Iran knows its own interests well and also knows how to defend its own lives and interests. To date, no party has allowed some parties to strike in areas where Iran has acted as an advisor and where Iran has helped the national sovereignty of countries, and they know full well that the Islamic Republic of Iran will respond on the spot.”

Khatibzadeh referred to Amir Abdollahian's visit to Oman and Qatar and said, “In Oman, he had a meeting with Mohammad Abdul Salam about the latest situation in Yemen, and in Qatar, in addition to meeting with the Emir and Foreign Minister of Qatar, he also met with Ismail Haniyeh.”

During the meeting with Qatar's Emir Sheikh

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

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

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

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

The Qatari emir, for his part, outlined his views regarding these matters.

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

Amir Abdollahian also met with a high-profile delegation from Hamas, headed by its political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh.

The Hamas delegation addressed the developments related to the Palestinian cause, particularly with regard to the situation in Occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank, Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, and the 15-year Israeli siege on Gaza, according to the Palestinian Information Center.

The delegation hailed the Islamic republic's position in support of the Palestinian cause and resistance.

The Iranian minister, meanwhile, discussed the developments concerning a number of matters, including regional alliances and the Vienna talks, reiterating his country's stance in support of the Palestinian people and resistance.

The Hamas delegation welcomed the endeavors being made to achieve unity among Arab and Muslim nations, especially the efforts being exerted by Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Besides the Hamas chief, the meeting was attended by members of Hamas political bureau Khalil al-Hayya and Mousa Abu Marzouq, in addition to Majdi Abu Amsheh, head of Haniyeh's office.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that during the meeting, Amir Abdollahian outlined the Islamic republic's principled policy toward the issue of Palestine as a plight in the heart of the Islamic ummah created by the child-killing Zionist regime which enjoys support from the West.

He also condemned the brutal crimes of the Zionist occupiers against al-Quds, al-Aqsa Mosque, Gaza and occupied Palestinian territories as well as the regime's aggression and atrocities against the Palestinian people and sanctities.

IRAN IN FOCUS

JANUARY 18, 2022

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

American basketballer Buycks enjoys to play in Iran

Frome Page **1** ▶ That's just what makes us special at the end. We try to win the championship. As I said, I've right now played three or four games. The competitive teams compete for the title, they are tough opponents for us, but we want such teams as well to challenge ourselves. It's going to be fun!

Your favorite team in NBA?

I'm a LeBron's fan. So, you know, I'm a fan of LeBron James with the Los Angeles Lakers. But I'm from Milwaukee. We did win a championship with the team over there. So, I should return to my root, and I'm a fan of Milwaukee Bucks as well, but generally, I'm a fan of LeBron, so I choose LA Lakers.

Are you adjusting to a new life in Iran?

I think it's nice but it's too early to talk about it. I'm comfortable here at the moment. I eat food I'm used to, and I know new people. I'm comfortable, and that's the main thing when you are this far away from your home. I'm enjoying what's going on.

Former Iran volleyball federation president Yazdani Khorram laid to rest

TEHRAN – Former Iranian federations of volleyball and wrestling Mohammadreza Yazdani Khorram was laid to rest in Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery on Monday.

The sports officials, players and the fans attended the funeral ceremony.

He passed away early Sunday at the age of 75 due to a heart attack.

Yazdani Khorram served as head of Iran volleyball federation from 1989 to 2006 and made fundamental changes to the sport.

He also was president of the wrestling federation from 2006 to 2011.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to the Yazdani Khorram family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Hazfi Cup: Persepolis into quarters, Sepahan and Foolad knocked out

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated Zob Ahan 3-0 on Monday and booked their place in Iran's Hazfi Cup quarterfinals.



Vahid Amiri opened the scoring for the visiting team in Isfahan in the 35th minute and Mehdi Abdi netted a brace in the 62nd and 76th minutes.

In Arak, Sepahan lost to Aluminum in

penalty shootout. The match ended in a 1-1 draw and Aluminum won the match 4-3 on penalties.

In Kerman, Mes defeated defending champions Foolad 5-4 on penalties after the match finished in a 1-1 draw.

Azadegan League side Kheybar also defeated Sanat Naft 5-1 in Khoramabad.

Esteghlal will play Paykan on Tuesday in Tehran.

Mes will host Padideh in Rafsanjan, Naft Masjed Soleyman meet Khalij Fars Mahshahr and Nassaji face Gol Gohar.

The Iran's Hazfi Cup was founded in 1975 and Esteghlal are the most decorated club with seven titles, followed by Persepolis who have won six titles.

Iranian teams Sepahan, Foolad learn fate at 2022 ACL

TEHRAN –Foolad and Sepahan football teams learned their rivals in the Group Stage of the 2022 AFC Champions League.

The draw ceremony was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Foolad are in Group B along with 2015 finalists Shabab Al Ahli Dubai as well as Qatar's Al Gharafa and Ahal FC of Turkmenistan.

Sepahan, who reached the final of the 2007 edition, will take on Al Dhail from Qatar as well as two-time semi-finalists Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan and the winners of the playoff between Al Taawon from Saudi Arabia and Syrians Al Jaish in Group D.

The two-legged final of this year's 40-team tournament has been moved to 2023 to allow the region's national sides to prepare for the Qatar FIFA World Cup, which is being played in winter months.

The west zone knockout-stage matches will also take place in February 2023, while those for the east zone will wrap up in August this year.

Group A: Al Hilal (KSA), Istiklol (TJK), Al Rayyan (QAT), play-off winner

Group B: Al Jazira (UAE), Al Shabab (KSA), Mumbai City (IND), Air Force Club (IRQ)

Group C: Foolad Khouzeestan (IRN), Shabab Al Ahli (UAE), Ahal FC (TKM), Al Gharafa (QAT)

Group D: Al Dhail (QAT), Sepahan FC (IRN), Pakhtakor (UZB), play-off winner

Group E: Al Sadd (QAT), Al Faisaly (KSA), Al Wehdah (JOR), play-off winner

Group F: Shandong Taishan (CHN), Urawa Red Diamonds (JPN), Lion City Sailors (SIN), play-off winner

Group G: BG Pathum (THA), Jeonnam Dragons (KOR), United City (PHI), Melbourne City (AUS)

Group H: Jeonbuk Motors (KOR), Yokohama F. Marinos (JPN), Hoang Anh Gia Lai (VIE), play-off winner

Group I: Kawasaki Frontale (JPN), Guangzhou FC (CHN), Johor Darul Ta'zim (MAS), play-off winner

Group J: Shanghai Port (CHN), Chiangrai United (THA), Kitchee (HKG), play-off winner

Nasiri undergoes successful heart surgery

TEHRAN – Iranian legendary weightlifter Mohammad Nasiri underwent a successful heart surgery on Monday.

Nasiri, who was hospitalized in a hospital in Tehran, capital of Iran since last week, underwent a mitral valve replacement.

He is in stable condition.

Nasiri competed at the 1964, 1968, 1972 and 1976 Olympics and won a gold, a silver and a bronze medal. He also won gold medals at the Asian Games in 1966, 1970 and 1974.

WB sees Iranian economy expanding 2.4% in 2022



From page 1 ► World Bank also sees the global economy grow by 4.1 percent in the current year, expecting it to further slow in 2023.

"The global economy is set to experience its sharpest slowdown after an initial rebound from a global recession since at

least the 1970s. Global growth is projected to decelerate from 5.5 percent in 2021 to 4.1 percent in 2022, reflecting continued COVID-19 flare-ups, diminished policy support, and lingering supply disruptions. Growth is envisioned to slow further in 2023, to 3.2 percent, as pent-up demand is depleted and supportive macroeconomic policies continue to be unwound," the report read.

According to the World Bank, growth in advanced economies is forecast to decelerate from five percent in 2021 to 3.8 percent in 2022 as the unwinding of pent-up demand only partly cushions a pronounced withdrawal of fiscal policy support. Growth is projected to moderate further in 2023 to 2.3 percent as pent-up demand is exhausted.

Belgian companies eager to take part in Iran's housing projects

TEHRAN – A member of the Iran-Belgium Chamber of Commerce has said Belgian companies are interested in participation in Iran's housing construction projects including the government's newly started National Housing Movement.

According to Vahik Shahinian, the negotiations between Iran and Belgium on cooperation in the housing and construction sector go back to the Iranian calendar year 1386 (ended in March 2008) when a joint seminar was held between the companies of the two countries on exploring the capacities of the Iranian construction market.

"Belgian companies have shown in practice that they are willing to cooperate in Iran's construction projects with advanced technologies and investment, but at that time there was not enough follow-up by Iran," Shahinian told IRNA on Monday.

The official noted that most of the mentioned Belgian companies are active in the field of modern construction materials and they can establish



factories in Iran for manufacturing basic building parts with new materials.

"The production of main building parts using new technologies will eliminate human errors; these manufactured parts are ready for transfer to projects and will be assembled into larger sections at the site," he added.

The official noted that the Belgian side is also ready to consider other proposals from Iran for partnership in housing construction projects.

"Iran needs real and direct cooperation with large manufacturing companies and successful mass construction builders all around the world, to be able to better

Iran-Russia trade up 41% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN- The value of trade between Iran and Russia rose 41 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi put Iran-Russia trade at 3,558 million tons valued at over \$1,656 billion in the mentioned nine-month period, of which 838,602 tons worth \$432.877 million were Iran's export to Russia and 2,729 million tons worth \$1,224 billion were Iran's imports from that country.

The official said that Iran's export to Russia rose 29 percent in value and 15 percent in weight, and its imports from that country increased 45 percent in value and 11 percent in weight in the first nine months of this year from that of the previous year.

Establishing export consortia between Iran and Russia a necessity

Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman Pak has stressed the need for establishing export consortia between Iran and Russia for accelerating mutual trade under the framework of the agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Peyman Pak made the remarks in a meeting with the Russian Ambassador to Tehran Levan



Dzhagaryan Back in November 2021.

In this meeting, major Russian companies were introduced to the Iranian side to cooperate in various sectors including production, trade, and export, while the issue of extraterrestrial cultivation and establishing joint plants for food

processing were also discussed.

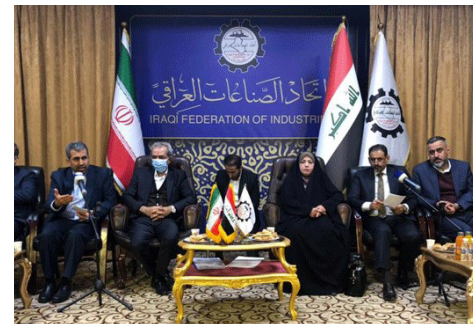
The need for cooperation between the two countries to facilitate the transit of goods and the removal of customs barriers by the Russian side as well as facilitating the issuance of visas to traders and drivers were also among the issues discussed in the meeting.

Tehran, Baghdad discuss obstacles in way of expanding trade

TEHRAN – An Iranian trade delegation visited Najaf in central Iraq on Monday to attend a meeting with the representatives of the Iraqi Federation of Industries in order to discuss ways of removing obstacles in the way of expanding mutual trade.

The gathering was attended by senior officials from both sides including President of Iraqi Federation of Industries Adel Akab, Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, Head of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce Yahya Al-e-Eshaq, Head of the Iranian Parliament's Economic Committee Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi, and a handful of Iraqi traders and entrepreneurs.

Speaking in this meeting, Shafeie, who headed the Iranian delegation, called for the development of economic relations between the two countries and said: "Iraq is more than a trade



partner for us and the ties between the two countries are so deep that we need to make more progress in the economic sectors."

Further in the meeting, Akab welcomed the Iranian delegation and expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of trade between the two countries.

"We must admit that real economic cooperation has not yet taken place between the two countries," he said.

Over 8.8m tons of basic goods transported in nearly 10 months



TEHRAN- More than 8.853 million tons of basic commodities were transported to the designated destinations throughout the country since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021), Siavash Hosseinpour, the director-general of coordination department of Government Trading Corporation of Iran, announced.

As reported, the import of basic goods is

anticipated to reach 10 million tons in the current year.

Last month, the head of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced that unloading of basic goods at the port of country has risen 25 percent in the current Iranian calendar year, as compared to the previous year.

The highest amount of import of basic goods was related to Imam Khomeini port (in southwestern Khuzestan province), Ali-Akbar Safaei noted.

"Currently, 17 ships are unloading and loading goods at the same time," he said, adding, "We need 75,000 trucks to distribute basic goods."

"We unload the basic goods in the shortest time and we do not have to worry about the supply of the basic goods", the official added.

Industry ministry to pay special attention to guilds

TEHRAN – Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin has said his ministry is going to pay special attention to guilds during his tenure, the ministry's news portal Shata reported.

Fatemi-Amin made the remarks in a meeting of the Iran Chamber of Guilds board of directors in Tehran on Sunday.

Guilds have played an irreplaceable and valuable role in the country's economy both before the Islamic Revolution and after it, and also during the imposed war, and the sanctions, the minister stressed.

Referring to the reform of the structure of the Industry Ministry, he said: "[in the new structure] we were looking for real integration of the trade, industry and



mining industries. In this approach, we especially emphasized various issues regarding guilds and they have been considered in all operational steps of the way."

Iran to pilot national cryptocurrency soon

TEHRAN – The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) plans to launch the national cryptocurrency in a pilot phase in the near future, an official with the bank announced without providing further details.

CBI Vice Governor for IT Affairs Mehran Moharamian said the bank sees



cryptocurrencies as a solution for resolving inconsistencies

and decentralizing resources, something that many countries have started to benefit from recently.

In 2018, Informatics Services Corporation, the executive arm of the Central Bank of Iran in charge of operating the country's banking automation and payment services network,

was tasked with developing a national cryptocurrency. The company's officials later said the Iranian cryptocurrency has been designed using the Hyperledger Fabric platform.

It is a blockchain framework implementation and one of the Hyperledger Company's projects hosted by Linux Foundation.

TEDPIX down 4,000 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 4,271 points to 1.306 million on Monday.

As reported, 4,576 billion securities worth 32,747 trillion rials (about \$112.92 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index lost 4,155 points, and the second market's index dropped 5,411 points.

TEDPIX 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.

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"

Americans say U.S. democracy is in danger; there never was one

From page 1 ► The December poll also showed that 47% of American believed “there were real cases of fraud in the 2020 election that changed the results.”

The results were even more striking for those aged 18-29, with just 21% agreeing that U.S. democracy was safe.

Pollster Carly Cooperman says “we found that Americans are losing faith in their democracy, arguably worse than ever before. They’re losing faith in elections, institutions, and the ability of democracy to survive. Everything is negative”.

The survey was comprised of 800 likely 2022 midterm election voters and both parties were quick to blame the other side for the loss of faith.

The number of Americans who believe that the last election was rigged with voter fraud or their democracy is at risk of extinction is astonishingly surprising because of the fact they have only just reached that conclusion now.

It took an insurrection for the American public to question the validity of American elections and democracy.

Many outsiders would ask what democracy? In modern times

the popular views and problems of the public would be democratically translated into public policy through the election of a representative or administration that would enforce that while preserving national interests and security.

That’s the theory anyway.

But that’s just simply not the case in America. Education for example should be a right for all students not a choice based on financial status. Yet University tuition fees means not everyone gets the right to a free education despite widespread calls from students, their parents, guardians and advocacy groups for fair education for all.

Healthcare should at least be affordable if not free of charge. Yet not every American household can afford healthcare costs.

A majority of Americans want to see stronger firearm regulations, yet there are a record number of guns being purchased over the past year or two with ever increasing shooting incidents.

A police force that murders indiscriminately against black



people and gets away with it, instead of enforcing the law is not something democratic.

These are not problems of patients, students or victims of gun violence and cop killers, these are issues that should have been tackled a long time ago by the “elected” representative.

Elections should be free and fair; that’s not the case in the United States, there are only two parties vying for Congress and the Presidency every four years. What happened to the third parties, their existence appears on paper, but receive a tiny fraction of the \$14.4 billion mostly from lobby groups and wealthy individuals that end up in Democratic or Republican pockets.

Both parties have been complicit in marginalizing any other party’s participation.

There is a strong argument that democracy in America is not functioning at all for the people. Democracy is serving the deep state, the super wealthy oligarchy that are doing very well while billionaires are increasing. Even after four controversial years of President Trump in office; one year since Biden took charge, nothing has changed at all.

As it happens for the ordinary Americans, data shows the wealth divide has worsened for them, inequality has increased. Biden’s promise to increase taxes on the rich and hand out some of that tax money to the poor has simply not happened; it’s just now becoming a familiar sounding campaign slogan.

There are many including almost half the nation that believe

the current President got into the job via illegitimate means.

In essence, that’s why America lacks a democracy.

Then comes the ‘all so many’ U.S. based social media platforms where Americans can like a post or a comment to express their views. It gives the younger generation, where social media is now part of daily life, the chance to express their views democratically in comparison to the sluggish, unresponsive and outdated administrations who critics say have their priorities outside the United States in the form of military adventurism.

With the rise of social media across the states, the younger generation have a sense of what democracy really feels like.

In historical terms, there never was a democracy to start with. America was founded on white colonial settlers.

The “system” began with only white people who owned property being legally allowed to vote. And it took a very long time for women to exercise their natural right to vote, black Americans’ right to vote was only protected following legislation passed in 1965. Fast forward to January 2021 and there is an aggressive voter suppression campaign being waged by members of Congress targeting minority groups.

This is while the former President of the United States had this to say: “why aren’t they investigating November 3rd, a rigged and stolen election without getting to the bottom of which we will never have a fair and free democracy? Why aren’t

they looking at that?”

The former President didn’t hold back: “the American people deserve answers. The January 6th rally was a protest against a crooked election carried out by unhinged Democrats Big Tech and working with the fake news media”.

Thousands of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021, in the worst assault on Congress since the War of 1812.

Angry with the November 2020 election defeat for Trump, which nearly half of American voters and many analysts say was the result of fraud, the rioters tried to stop Congress from certifying Biden’s victory.

One police officer who responded to the scene died the day after the attack, while others who guarded the Capitol died later by suicide. About 140 police officers were injured during the hours-long attack. Four people also died.

If he survives in politics, Biden has three years left in office. Then All 435 members of the House are up for reelection in 2022, and one-third of the U.S. Senate.

It’s dangerous times for a country whose citizens believe democracy is “at risk of extinction”, despite America never being a democracy. The voters could boycott the election or the election could lead to violence again; there is plenty of ammunition. But whether it’s democrats or republicans who emerge victorious, the problem lies with the system which has never seen a democratic day in it’s life.

Russia is raising the stakes by suggesting that it might deploy military hardware to Venezuela and Cuba if the escalation talks fail.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov who led Russia’s delegation in a meeting with the U.S. on Monday, says the move depends on the actions of the Americans.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan dismissed the warning as “bluster”, adding that the path forward is either diplomacy or confrontation.

I think there’s a chance of a compromise but I think the chances are extremely small. I know some observers have taken some indications of, maybe privately, the Americans are willing to make concessions to Moscow security demands but I don’t think that’s going to happen.

I think the Russians feel they’re getting one last chance for the Western countries, particularly United States to see reason and give them security guarantees.

I don’t think that’s going to happen.

James Jatras, Global Security Analyst

Moscow and the West have had strained relations since the 2014 repatriation of Crimea from Ukraine to Russia following a referendum in which more than 90% voted in favor of the move.

The West nonetheless described it as illegal.

The European Union and some other Western countries joined Washington in introducing several rounds of sanctions against Russia

The recent tensions are definitely cause for concern for people around the world, since, if a second Cold War gets out of control, it could prove costlier than the first for all sides involved.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. not following any diplomatic ethics: Pakistani analyst

From page 1 ► they were suspended in June as Iran elected a new conservative government. The 2015 deal – agreed by Iran, the U.S., China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany – offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But then-U.S. president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. in 2018 and reimposed biting sanctions, prompting Tehran to begin rolling back on its commitments. Iran seems satisfied from talks where Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters: there has been good progress on all four issues of removing sanctions, nuclear issues, verification and obtaining guarantees during the latest round of talks. However, the pace of the talks seems quite slow.

A guarantee that the U.S. governments won’t abandon any nuclear pact again is one of stumbling blocks. How can this be solved?

A: As far as guarantee for the future nuclear agreement between Iran and the U.S. is concerned, no one can guarantee that the U.S. will not abandon it. The U.S. does not follow any diplomatic ethics or obligation they undertake in any agreement. We have the first Iran nuclear deal from which the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew in May 2018. We also have another example where the U.S. following the Doha deal with the Taliban did not care of it. The U.S. had agreed to leave Afghanistan before May 1st, 2021 yet they stayed there beyond that. Also, the U.S. had agreed not to attack the Taliban as the latter had agreed to do so yet the U.S. forces had breached this provision as well. Hence, there is no guarantee that the U.S. will keep its promises made in any agreement.

Noam Chomsky, in a recent interview, has suggested the idea of nuclear weapons free zone in West Asia. Why does nobody like to address Israel’s nuclear arsenal while Iran is tending to accept a nuclear free West Asia?



Chomsky, the renowned linguist, philosopher and outspoken critic of American foreign policy, spoke to Democracy in Exile amid another round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the U.S. in Vienna, which have so far failed to make progress on salvaging the nuclear deal. He argued that the threat of Iran is inflated, and that there is a better solution to prevent a nuclear arms race in the Middle East (West Asia)—establishing a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the entire region—if only the U.S. would support it.

Israeli officials openly say they won’t honor any possible nuclear deal with Iran. What are the implications of such remarks?

Israel was not happy over the Iran nuclear deal made by the Obama administration. Trump being near to Israel unilaterally withdrew from the deal. Now at the moment when the Vienna talks are going on, Israel is concerned about any resumption of the previous deal or any new deal between Washington and Tehran. Tehran is more interested in solving the issue as its economy is harmed by the Western sanctions. However, Israel would be a serious threat to any deal in the future as well.

New documents show census officials concerned about political interference from Trump’s Commerce Department

Newly released documents appear to show top career officials at the Census Bureau had drafted a memo of concerns during the Trump administration’s attempts to exert political pressure on the bureau during the 2020 population count.

Other records show career officials alarmed by pressure from political appointees to alter processes for tallying undocumented immigrants and citizenship data that would likely result in GOP gains in the U.S. House of Representatives. The records are among hundreds of documents that the liberal-leaning Brennan Center for Justice at New York University’s law school obtained in a lawsuit filed in September 2020, CNN reported.

The New York Times was the first to report on the Census Bureau records.

An email among senior officials at the Census Bureau from September 2020 discusses the Commerce Department, which oversees the bureau, and what the officials considered to be an “unusually high degree of engagement in technical matters, which is unprecedented.”

The email and other documents came out as a result of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit between the Brennan Center and the Department of Commerce, as well as eight other federal agencies. The email shows that the officials drafted a memo and planned to discuss with then-Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross his apparent interest in areas the Census Bureau officials perceived to be under the bureau’s independent jurisdiction, separate from its parent agency. The issues involved technical aspects of the population count including the privacy of census participants, the use of estimates to fill in missing population data, pressure to take shortcuts to produce population totals and political pressure for a last-minute push to identify and count undocumented immigrants.

In an email to CNN, Ross said he had no recognition of seeing the memo at any meeting in which the set of topics was discussed with him. The Census Bureau did not return CNN’s multiple requests for comment.

The Census Bureau’s population estimates are used for reapportionment, the process of reallocating House districts

U.S. and Russia exchange accusations over Ukraine

Moscow is growing weary of the West threatening its borders and the false accusations against Russia, from invading Ukraine to planning a false flag to do so, as diplomacy falters the prospect of an armed conflict is becoming very real.

Tensions between Russia and the West are spiraling out of control. The West is accusing Moscow of planning to invade its western neighbor, Ukraine, citing increased Russian military activities along the border.

Russia rejects the allegation and says its military buildup is to ensure security in the face of NATO’s eastward expansion.

Earlier in December, Russia proposed two draft treaties to Washington and NATO which demanded assurances that Western troops won’t be deployed near Russian borders.

Patience has a limit

Last week American and Russian officials held talks over the tensions with representatives from NATO in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. The talks ended without any significant breakthrough.

Russia now says it has run out of patience with the West, as tensions escalate over Ukraine and expects the U.S. and NATO to provide a detailed written response to security demands by the Kremlin by next week.

We are waiting for the written reaction. We have reasons to believe that our partners have understood the necessity to react quickly, precisely and on paper.

And they have understood that we’re not going to wait forever. But of course, there are plans to drag it on and on.



Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov

Sergey Lavrov says Moscow needs legally binding guarantees and that meeting this demand will be essential for a diplomatic solution.

According to Lavrov, his country has various options should the West reject the Russian security proposals.

I think the most likely thing is that they would announce that they’re putting ships off the American coast with hypersonic weapons on them that could reach American cities within five or seven minutes similar to the threat they say they’re facing in Eastern Europe.

I think there are things they could do in Ukraine, for example, hitting the Asov battalion or some of the bases the Ukrainians have put on Sea of Azov, they could deploy weapons to Kaliningrad Oblast, they could be announcing the targeting of European capitals.

I think there are many things they could do to increase the pain level in Europe.

James Jatras, Global Security Analyst

Russia has long warned against Ukraine’s possible membership in NATO, describing it as Moscow’s red line.

Off the beaten path: Iran to classify touristic villages

From page 1 ► Having numerous pristine yet diverse natural gifts, Iran has many to offer to nature lovers. For instance, the villages of Kharanaq, Barandaq, and Lark have been nominated for the 'Best Tourism Villages' label, which the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is projected to grant to a selection of rural destinations across the globe.

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

The UN body aims to turn the spotlight on the "uniqueness" of each village to make tourism a means for further development in rural areas.



"We want to recognize the uniqueness of each village and showcase the best initiatives to make tourism a means for a better future in rural areas. As we restart tourism, we work to ensure that we leave no one - and no village-behind," according to UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

Similar to agritourism, rural tourism is seen as a win-win situation both for local communities, and post-modern travelers who are in search of unique experiences.

Landscaping, cleaning project completed on Bushehr Gregorian Church



TEHRAN – The old structure, courtyard, and other premises of Bushehr Gregorian Church have recently been rearranged and cleaned as local authorities plan to reopen the historical place to sightseers in near future.

"The Gregorian Church of Bushehr is one of the most important and significant historical monuments of the southwestern Iranian port city. It is now fully cleaned in preparation for reopening to sightseers," a local tourism official said on Monday.

In addition to the main building, the courtyard and other premises of the church have been landscaped, the official said.

Furthermore, tombstones of the church were treated to become documented in near future, the official explained.

Iran is home to many historical churches, chapels, and cathedrals. The Iranian churches St. Thaddeus, St. Stephanus, and Dzordzor (Zorzor) in East Azerbaijan Province and West Azarbaijan province were registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2008.

The UNESCO website described the

monuments as "examples of the outstanding universal value of the Armenian architectural and decorative traditions," and adding, "They bear testimony to very important interchanges with the other regional cultures, in particular the Byzantine, Orthodox, and Persian."

The St. Thaddeus Church, also known as the Black Church (Qara Kelissa), is probably Iran's most interesting and notable Christian monument, located near the Chaldoran region in Maku, West Azarbaijan. Christians from all over the world annually gather at the church on July 1 for their annual commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Thaddeus, one of the 12 disciples, also known as St. Jude, (not to be confused with Judas Iscariot), who was martyred while spreading the Gospel.

Located near Marand in East Azarbaijan, the St. Stephanus Church was renovated during the reign of the Safavid king Shah Abbas (1588-1629). According to Hayk Ajmian, an Armenian scholar and historian, the church was originally built in the ninth century CE, but repeated earthquakes in the region severely damaged the original structure.

The Dzordzor Church, located in the village of Barone in Zangar Valley of the Chaldoran region in the northern part of West Azarbaijan Province, was built in 1315 CE.

The term Gregorian Church is an exonym not preferred by the church itself, as it views the apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus as its founders. St. Gregory the Illuminator was merely the first official primate of the church. It is also known simply as the Armenian Church.

19th-century mansion turns into traditional guesthouse

TEHRAN – A 19th-century mansion in Shiraz has turned into a traditional guesthouse following a thorough restoration, a local tourism official has announced.

Covering an area of 280 square meters, the mansion has been fully restored and is ready to be used as an accommodation center, Morteza Keshavarz said on Monday.

Currently, the Qajar-era (1789-1925) place comprises a coffee shop, eight residential spaces, and a range of required facilities, he noted.

The monument, which is decorated with plasterwork and traditional blacksmithing, was inscribed on the national heritage list in 2006, the

official added.

Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture for over 2000 years, the southern Iranian city of Shiraz in Fars province has become synonymous with education, nightingales, poetry, and crafts skills passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world and was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

Shiraz is home to some of the country's most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial



capital.

Eram Garden, Afif-Abad Garden, Tomb of Hafez, Tomb of Sadi, Jameh Mosque of Atigh, and Persepolis are among the historical, cultural, and ancient sites of Shiraz that are of interest to domestic and foreign tourists.

The UNESCO-registered Persepolis,

commander in charge of protecting cultural heritage said on Sunday.

The relics were found in the historical highlands of Tarom county, the official said without giving further detail.

Iron Age objects were first excavated in western Iran at Sialk, and later in northwestern Iran around the west, east, and south shores of Lake Urmia, close to the Zagros mountains bordering Mesopotamia and Anatolia. These sites remain to date the best-documented full-range Iron Age sites in western Iran.

Newly restored Quran manuscript unveiled

TEHRAN – A newly restored Holy Quran manuscript has been unveiled in the western province of Kordestan, a local tourism official said on Monday.

Being kept in the village of Mulanabad, the 300-year-old script is one of the most exquisite Quranic manuscripts in the country, Salah Nasrollahi said on Monday.

Because of the extent of the damage and the historical and cultural importance of this copy of the Quran, experienced restorers came together to restore and revive it distinctly, the official added.

Following a four-month restoration process, the Quran has been displayed for the public after regaining its former glory,



he noted.

That copy of the Holy Quran, which is made of paper and covered in leather, has been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The name Kordestan refers to the region's principal inhabitants. After the Turkish invasion of Iran in the 11th century CE (Seljuk period), the name Kurdistan

was applied to the region comprising the northwestern Zagros Mountains. It was during the reign of Abbas I the Great of Iran's Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) that the Kurds rose to prominence, having been enlisted by Abbas I to help stem the attacks of the marauding Uzbeks from the east in the early 17th century.

COVID causes \$26.8m damage to Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari tourism

TEHRAN – The tourism industry of the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province has taken some 7.5 trillion rials (\$26.8 million) hit from the coronavirus outbreak so far, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

Damage of this magnitude has been inflicted on hotels, apartment hotels, guesthouses, eco-lodges, travel agencies, tour guides, hospitality, and tourism complexes, and tourism institutes in the province, Farjam Samiei said on Monday.

Furthermore, a total of 521 travel insiders have lost their jobs as well, the official added.

Last July, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced Iran's tourism industry had suffered a loss of some 320 trillion rials (\$1.1 billion) since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic has also ruined more than 44,000 jobs in the once budding travel sector of the country," the ministry said in a press release.

"As a result of the outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran and the subsequent unemployment



and financial losses, accommodation centers suffered the most. These statistics cover the period between February 2020 and the spring of 2021."

Over the mentioned time, Iran's accommodation centers took some 280 trillion rials (\$993 million) hit from the virus, while over 21,000 workers in these centers lost their jobs. Moreover, tourism agencies suffered over 10 trillion rials (\$35.4 million) of damage with 6,000 people getting unemployed people since the outbreak.

In terms of employment and financial

losses, tourism complexes, eco-lodges, and tour guides are also among the most affected groups in the tourism industry, according to data provided by the ministry of tourism.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari lies in the southwestern part of the country. Its capital is Shahrekord. The province has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the 'tribal' lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

The province is also a hub for making wool felt products, majority of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.

Currently, about 40 tons of felt are yearly being made in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari through traditional and modern manners, which could be increased to 50 tons, according to official data. Experts believe that Shahr-e Kord has the potential to be a world city for felt products.

31 tourism projects inaugurated in northern Iran

TEHRAN – A total of 31 tourism-related projects, worth 209 billion rials (\$741,000) have been implemented across the northern Golestan province during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), the provincial tourism chief has announced.

"The projects have supported tourism development," CHTN quoted Rahman Farmani as saying on Monday.

Golestan offers very valuable capabilities and attractions for tourism, cultural heritage and handicrafts, and has always attracted tourists due to its diverse climate and proximity to Mashhad, the official added.



The expansion of the infrastructure of areas with tourism potential in the province will lead to more travelers staying in these areas in the coming years, he noted.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with

UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous. Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond.

The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

According to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, over 2,400 tourism-related projects were underway across the country with a total estimated cost of 1,370 trillion rials (around \$32 billion).

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

12 places in northern Iran added to national heritage list

TEHRAN – A selection of 12 places including a school, a public bathhouse, and two movie theaters all located in East Azarbaijan province has been inscribed in the national list for cultural heritage.

On Sunday, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami announced the inscriptions as he sent official statements to the governor-general of the northwestern province, CHTN reported.

A former school, an old business house, a clayware workshop, and five houses with historical significance were added to the prestigious list as well.

Capital of East Azarbaijan province, Tabriz, which is well-soaked in history and culture for millennia, embraces several historical and religious sites, including the Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and the Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen



made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548 when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

Tabriz was named a world craft city of carpet weaving by the World Craft in 2016. It also bore the title of 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital.

Prehistorical earthenware recovered in Zanjan

TEHRAN – Iranian police forces have discovered nine prehistorical clay vessels on patrol near an archaeological site in Zanjan province.

"The objects, which date from the first millennium BC, include two jugs with handles, two glasses with handles, a plate and four other pottery vessels in black and beige color," a police

Bishkek to host permanent exhibition of Iranian knowledge-based products

TEHRAN – A permanent exhibition of Iranian knowledge-based products will be held in the city of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, aiming to pave the way for increased cooperation between the two countries.

Organized by the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology and the Innovation Fund, the exhibition has been held in several countries, including China, Kenya, Syria, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Oman, and will soon be held in Kyrgyzstan.

Our knowledge-based companies have the potential to increase the level of trade between Kyrgyzstan and Iran to move towards joint production, as the same happened in neighboring countries such as the Balkans and Eurasia, Siavash Maleki, deputy head of the Innovation Fund stated.

Today, about 6,500 knowledge-based companies operate in various fields of communications, advanced materials, chemicals, construction, and mining in the country, he stated, highlighting the readiness of these firms for international cooperation and bilateral interactions.

Saeed Kharazi, Iran's ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, said that during the first nine months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21, 2021), Iran and Kyrgyzstan's trade worth of \$63 million, an in-



crease of over 180 percent compared to the same period last year, however, economic cooperation must increase.

Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Iran Turdakun Sydykov said that Kyrgyzstan's economy is dynamic and developing so that foreign and Iranian investors are widely present in our country.

He further expressed readiness to develop cooperation between the two countries, adding that Iranian knowledge-based companies can benefit from the capacities of power plants, water, railways, roads, agriculture, healthcare, and tourism.

“We support any foreign investment and there is no obstacle to the development of cooperation between Iran and Kyrgyzstan. In

2022, we enacted a new law for factories and companies based on knowledge and technology, according to which they are exempt from paying taxes if their annual income is less than \$120,000,” he stated.

There are currently 55 approved technology and innovation projects in various fields in Kyrgyzstan. The hydropower project is among Kyrgyzstan's most important technological projects.

Kyrgyzstan has good agricultural, livestock, and poultry fields, and Iranian foundations can benefit from this capacity, he added.

Iranian knowledge-based goods to be produced in 7 countries

Iran will launch production lines of knowledge-based products in

seven countries, namely Turkey, Armenia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria, Iraq, and Kenya, Marzieh Shaverdi, the manager of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund, said on December 4.

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

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

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

Mehdi Ghalehnoei, an official with the Vice Presidency, said in February 2021 that last year, knowledge-based companies gained about \$800 million in revenue from export, and this year it seems to reach up to \$2 billion.

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

Japan to support NGOs active in social development



TEHRAN – Japan inked five memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are working specifically in the social development sector.

Known as the GGP (Grant Assistance for

Grassroots Human Security Projects), it provides flexible and timely support to small-scale development projects, which aim to improve the social well-being of the people at the grassroots level.

Japanese Ambassador to Iran Aikawa Kazutoshi said that GGP has been started in Iran since 1999 and has completed 150 projects in various fields, including the expansion of primary education, primary health care, public welfare, and rural development throughout the country.

Under the MOUs, Afghan refugees and vulnerable people in Khorasan Razavi province will be supported in cooperation with Relief International. The project annually supports about 15,600 people, mostly Afghan refugees, IRNA reported.

Another one is a project that covers 100 female-headed households annually, which donates equipment to the technical and vocational center for Iranian women and vulnerable Afghan refugees in Alborz Province.

Referring to the rest of the projects focusing on medical issues and treatment, he announced that the donation of mammography equipment for deprived women in Semnan province will help in the early diagnosis of cancer.

The Japanese official further mentioned the donation of an ambulance to transport pediatric patients and the donation of medical equipment to needy patients with acute renal failure in Tehran province, mentioning two other projects based on the above MOUs.

The signing ceremony was held in the Japanese embassy in Tehran on Monday.

50 nanotechnology products unveiled

From page 1 ► Over the past year (ended March 21, 2021), nanotechnology companies earned up to 120 trillion rials (nearly \$436 million), IRIB reported.

Nanotechnology development in Iran

Iran has been introduced as the 4th leading country in the world in the field of nanotechnology, publishing 11,546 scientific articles in 2020.

The country held a 6 percent share of the world's total nanotechnology articles, according to StatNano's monthly evaluation accomplished in

WoS databases.

Iran has been introduced as the 4th leading country in the world in the field of nanotechnology. Iran ranked 43rd among the 100 most vibrant clusters of science and technology (S&T) worldwide for the third consecutive year, according to the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2020 report.

The country experienced a three-level improvement compared to 2019.

Sourena Sattari, vice president for science and technology, said that Iran

is playing the leading role in the region in the fields of fintech, ICT, stem cell, aerospace, and is unrivaled in artificial intelligence.

Iran has created centers in six Asian countries for exporting nanotechnology products, including China, India, Indonesia, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq.

Nanotechnology's trend of development is growing in Iran, as the number of nanoproducts and equipment developed in the previous [Iranian calendar] year (ended March 20, 2021) increased to 750, compared with 647 a year before.



Some 223 product manufacturing companies and 59 equipment manufacturing companies are active in the field of nanotechnology and by the end of last year, which developed a total of 750 products and equipment.

ENGLISH IN USE

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“Noora” vaccine successfully passing first phase of clinical trial

TEHRAN – “Noora” coronavirus vaccine, domestically made by Baqiayatallah University of Medical Sciences affiliated to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), is successfully passing the first phase of the clinical trial.

The vaccine is well undergoing the first phase of human testing, he noted, adding, the first phase of human testing lasts 2 months, so far more than a month has passed, IRNA reported on Saturday.

He stressed the need to integrate the human testing phase of the Noora vaccine and said that “this must be done to make the vaccine available for the mass vaccination; while many vaccine producing countries have done the same.”

واکسن نورا مرحله پایانی فاز اول تست انسانی را طی می کند

تهران - رئیس دانشگاه علوم پزشکی بقیه الله گفت: تزریق دز اول واکسن نورا به تمام داوطلبان انجام شد و دز دوم هم به نیمه تزریق رسیده است. دکتر حسن ابوالقاسمی روز شنبه در گفت و گو با ایرنا، روند فعالیت کارآزمایی بالینی واکسن نورا را مطلوب ارزیابی کرد و افزود: این واکسن به نحو مطلوبی در حال طی کردن فاز اول تست انسانی است.

وی با یادآوری اینکه طبق برنامه ریزی انجام شده طول دوره مرحله اول تست انسانی ۲ ماه است، ادامه داد: تاکنون بیش از یک ماه از این دوره سپری شده است.

وی بر لزوم ادغام مراحل تست انسانی واکسن نورا تاکید کرد و گفت: این کار باید صورت گیرد و بسیاری از کشورهای تولید کننده واکسن هم از این ظرفیت بهره بردند.

UK provides £1m through WFP to support refugees in Iran

TEHRAN – The United Kingdom has made its first-ever contribution equaling £1 million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in support of vulnerable Afghan refugees in Iran.

The £1-million contribution through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) will allow WFP to preposition assistance for potential new arrivals from Afghanistan with ready-to-eat meals and other rations, WFP said in a news release published on Monday.

It also gives WFP the flexibility to channel part of the contribution towards supporting 31,000 refugees who have already been living in 20 settlements across the country, helping to stabilize their food security situation and avoid any further population movements.

This timely allocation will enhance WFP's life-saving mission, allowing WFP to quickly respond to any increased additional needs through a combination of cash and direct food assistance.

“We're extremely grateful to the FCDO for this generous contribution and its support to our operations in Iran,” said WFP Representative and Country Director in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Negar Gerami.

“The harsh winter months, job losses, lack of cash, and soaring prices have pushed the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan to new highs,



with close to 23 million threatened by food insecurity. It is critical that WFP remains prepared to respond to any sudden onset refugee emergency.”

Simon Shercliff, the UK Ambassador to Iran said: “We are pleased to help Iran support the large numbers of Afghan refugees who have chosen to leave Afghanistan. This contribution enables WFP to provide these refugees with vital food assistance, including ready-to-eat meals and other rations.

The recent fast-paced turn of events in Afghanistan has the potential to create additional population movements; displacing families internally and potentially driving them to seek refuge in neighboring countries.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is host to one of the largest and most protracted urban refugee situations in the world and has provided asylum to refugees for over four decades.

Climate change tops list in Global Risks Report 2022

Nearly two years after the first Covid-19 cases countries are reporting record outbreaks of the Omicron variant, “but the pandemic pales compared to the long-term risks the world faces from climate change”.

That's the view of nearly 1,000 experts and leaders in business, government and civil society speaking for the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2022, published last Tuesday and summarized by the WEF.

The report says nationally determined contributions unveiled at COP 26 fall short of the Paris goal of 1.5°C of warming. “The current trajectory is expected to steer the world towards a 2.4°C warming, with only the most optimistic of scenarios holding it to 1.8°C.”

Failed action on climate, extreme weather and lost biodiversity now come first, second and third respectively in a list of the top ten global risks over the next decade, in the report's annual survey of perceptions.

Societal risks, including infectious diseases in sixth place, make up the next third on the list, followed by “human environmental damage” and “natural resource crises”.

“Climate action failure is also considered the most critical threat to the world in both the medium term – up to five years – and over the decade, with the highest potential to severely damage societies, economies and the planet,” the WEF summary says.

“Most respondents to the survey believe too little is being done: 77 per cent said inter-

national efforts to mitigate climate change have ‘not started’ or are in ‘early development,’” it adds.

WEF Managing Director Saadia Zahidi said last week: “Widening disparities within and between countries will not only make it more difficult to control Covid-19 and its variants but will also risk stalling, if not reversing, joint action against shared threats that the world cannot afford to overlook.”

The report's Chapter 2 – Disorderly Climate Transition – points out that while Covid lockdowns saw a fall in emissions of greenhouse gases, “upward trajectories soon resumed: the GHG emission rate rose faster in 2020 than the average over the last decade.”

The chapter highlights the difficult choice between continuing with carbon-intensive development and its costs on one hand, and on the other moving away from industries that still employ millions of workers and risking economic volatility, increased unemployment and “societal and geopolitical tensions”.

It says there are “still many unknown risks from deploying untested biotechnical and geo-engineering technologies, while lack of public support for land-use transitions or new pricing schemes will create political complications that further slow action.

“A transition that fails to account for societal implications will exacerbate inequalities within and between countries, heightening geopolitical frictions.”

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 17

New cases	3,163
New deaths	20
Total cases	6,224,196
Total deaths	132,095
New hospitalized patients	338
Patients in critical condition	1,313
Total recovered patients	6,066,819
Diagnostic tests conducted	43,499,337
Doses of vaccine injected	126,401,975

