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Slow Pace of Vienna Talks Is Due to Western Obstinacy

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Report

Tehran, Moscow developing science diplomacy through technological co-op

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – Scientific cooperation between Iran and Russia is based on five models in various fields of nanotechnology, aviation, electronic equipment, and telecommunications, and the establishment of the Iranian house of innovation in Russia is the latest example of this cooperation.

Technological advances in accordance with modern needs, increasing their productivity and competitiveness is a strong reason for technological interactions between countries. Various countries such as Russia, China, Germany, and others have interacted with Iran so far, the result of which is satisfactory, and in some cases, communication through joint science and technology projects is still ongoing.

Russia is one of the prioritized countries for scientific and technological relations with Iran. Since 2016, various specialized working groups formed by the two countries in the fields of space, aerospace, cognitive sciences, biotechnology, nanotechnology, university cooperation, mega-science, information technology, energy, and regional cooperation.

During the last 5-6 years, the capacity of international interactions has been considered by Iran and Russia, and this cooperation has expanded by forming bilateral agreements through inter-sectoral coordination. ▶ Page 7

Report

Ten richest men double fortunes in pandemic

And that's while incomes of 99 percent of the rest of humanity has fallen. According to Oxfam, new billionaires made so much money every 26 hours, as inequality contributes to the death of one person every four seconds.

The poverty and economic justice advocacy group says the world's ten richest men more than doubled their fortunes from \$700 billion to \$1.5 trillion, at a rate of \$15,000 per second or \$1.3 billion a day, during the first two years of a pandemic that has seen the incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall and over 160 million more people forced into poverty.

Oxfam International's Executive Director Gabriela Bucher explains "If these ten men were to lose 99.999 percent of their wealth tomorrow, they would still be richer than 99 percent of all the people on this planet. They now have six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion people."

In a new briefing "Inequality Kills," published for the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda, Oxfam says that inequality is contributing to the death of at least 21,000 people each day, or one person every four seconds.

Even that is a conservative number based on deaths globally from lack of access to healthcare, gender-based violence, hunger, and climate breakdown.

In a statement Bucher said "it has never been so important to start righting the violent wrongs of this obscene inequality by clawing back elites' power and extreme wealth including through taxation, getting that money back into the real economy and to save lives". ▶ Page 5

Raisi, Putin hold high profile meeting, vow to upgrade trade ties



TEHRAN — Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a high-profile meeting in the Kremlin on Wednesday.

The meeting won attention by international

media outlets and political leaders alike.

At the meeting President Raisi said that the current level of trade between Iran and Russia is not satisfactory.

"Economic and trade relations between the

two countries are not satisfactory at the moment," Raisi remarked.

Raisi who visited Russia on Wednesday for a two-day visit is accompanied by a high-ranking delegation ▶ Page 2

Iran, Russia draw roadmap for energy cooperation

TEHRAN – Senior energy officials of Iran and Russia met on Tuesday in Moscow to discuss ways of expanding cooperation in various sectors including oil and gas, IRIB reported.

Held on the sidelines of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Russia, the meeting was attended by Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji, Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Grigoryevich Shulginov, Head of National Iranian Oil Com-

pany (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr, and the managers of major Russian Energy Companies.

Oji who has recently become the chairman of the Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee also met with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak.

In his meetings with Russian officials, the Iranian minister discussed ways to expand

economic ties, remove banking and customs barriers and consulted on strengthening cooperation between Tehran and Moscow in the field of oil and energy, as well as forming joint ventures in energy infrastructure projects.

Strengthening Iran-Russia cooperation in the OPEC+ group with the aim of securing mutual interests and regulating the energy market, meeting mutual needs. ▶ Page 4

Iran down India at 2022 Asian Handball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran beat India 42-29 in Group B of the 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship on Wednesday.

The Persians, who had started the campaign with a 32-10 win over Australia, will play Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

The top two in each group progress to the second round, which determine the semi-finalists. Competition started on Jan. 18 and will run until Jan. 31.

All the matches take place at the Ministry of Sports Hall in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

The top five teams from the Championship will directly qualify for the 2023 World Men's Handball Championship, to be held jointly by Poland and Sweden.

Saudi Arabia was awarded the tournament after the Championship was moved in September by the Asian Handball Federation due to the spread of COVID-19 in the initial host country, Iran.



Cyclists getting ready in Kish Island

TEHRAN – Iranian cyclists are getting ready for the upcoming events in Kish Island in the Persian Gulf.

The 10-day training has started from January 10 with participation of 24 men and women cyclists. The Iranian teams are getting ready for the 2022 Asian Cycling Championships in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Iran should prepare for potential 'tsunami of tourism': deputy minister

TEHRAN –Iran needs to get ready for a probable "tsunami of tourism" once the coronavirus pandemic is over, the deputy tourism minister has announced.

"The Iranian government should get fully prepared for a surge and potential tsunami of tourism when COVID-restrictions are over," CHTN quoted Ali Darabi as saying on Tuesday.

"Despite not knowing how the coronavirus outbreak will evolve in the future, we ought to plan on hosting tourists during the upcoming holidays of Noruz (Iranian new year)."

Travel and tourism will increase as vaccination becomes a priority around the world and lifestyles align, the official added.

As a result of this outbreak, tourism and

the economy of the world took a huge hit, with millions dying and many losing loved ones, he explained.

But it has also taught people that they have to adapt, change quickly, analyze and react to a rapidly changing world, he mentioned.

Last week, an official with the tourism ministry announced that the Iranian ▶ Page 6

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Interview

Biden should not have delayed rejoining JCPOA: ex-White House official

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A nuclear physicist and professor of public and international affairs at Princeton University says that the Joe Biden administration should have rejoined the 2015 Iran nuclear deal immediately after it started its work.

"The Biden administration should not have delayed rejoining the JCPOA in parallel to Iran coming back into compliance and should not have added requirements of additional negotiations on ballistic missiles and regional activities," Frank Von Hippel tells the Tehran Times.

Hippel believes that United States' unilateral exit from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has had a detrimental effect on the stability of West Asia.

"Trump taking the U.S. out of the JCPOA was very destructive to the nuclear nonproliferation regime and potentially to stability in the Middle East (West Asia)," Hippel adds.

Now the U.S. is less reliable of a partner than it was before Trump and Biden. This may be the new political reality in the U.S.

The Trump administration left certain international agreements, including the Paris climate accord and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, but talks started to restore the nuclear deal in April 2021 after Biden, who took over as president in January 2021, announced that the U.S. is willing to rejoin the multilateral agreement backed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Talks are still underway in Vienna and some progress has been made, but it could have been resumed sooner without accusing Iran of prolonging the negotiations. ▶ Page 5

Assad advisor: There is no Iranian military unit in Syria

TEHRAN — Syrian-Iranian connections are long-standing and historic, advisor to the Syrian president says, rejecting rumors that Iran has deployed military forces in Syria.

Tehran stood on the side of the Syrian government and army during the fight against Syria, Luna al-Shibl said during a Tuesday interview with Arabic language Russia Today.

"The Syrian government is at war, and it is reasonable for it to ask its allies for help," the advisor said. "The Syrian government has succeeded in addressing the basic necessities of the populace."

"Syria will decide who can and cannot be on its soil," she said, adding that Syria would respond to Iran's allegiance.

"Syria will respond to loyalty with loyalty," she reiterated.

"Our relationship with Iran is not new. It goes back to four decades ago," she said, adding that relations with Iran ▶ Page 2

Ambassador: Raisi plans to meet prominent Russian economic actors



TEHRAN — Kazem Jalali, the ambassador of Iran to Russia, has spoken about President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Russia and his meeting with President Vladimir Putin.

Raisi visited Moscow on Wednesday and held talks with Putin.

Jalali said there is “no time limit” in the talks between the two presidents.

“It is not true to say that ‘two hours are allotted for this meeting’ and it could be longer and they will talk to each other depending on the opinions of the two presidents,” he said.

Regarding the meetings and plans of the Iranian president, Ambassador Jalali said in addition to meeting Putin, Raisi will also address the Russian Duma.

Meetings with prominent Russian economic actors, as well as a group of Iranians living in Russia, are other plans for the trip, according to the Iranian diplomat.

The Iranian ambassador also said the draft of a comprehensive 20-year cooperation agreement between Iran and Russia has been prepared by Tehran, but more time needed to hold bilateral talks on it.

“It has been agreed in general terms that we will have a long-term agreement, but it has not yet reached the details that would result in its implementation in the future. Of course, the Iranian side has done its job in this regard and we hope that the Russian side will also do its job

so that we will conclude the issue in due time,” he added.

When asked about bilateral plans and agreements to circumvent sanctions, Jalali said one of the purposes of the visit was to expand economic ties between the two countries.

“Economic relations with neighbors are a priority in the new government, and Russia is our great northern neighbor,” he said, adding, “Russia's import volume is more than 230 billion dollars, which means that there is a large and diverse market in Iran's neighborhood and we can use it. We hope to increase our share in trade.”

He went on to say that new agreements will be reached between the two countries during the Raisi trip to Moscow.

About a next meeting on Syria, which will be attended by Iran, Russia and Turkey, Jalali also said Iran will be hosting the next meeting of the Astana process, and one of the issues that is discussed during the visit is the Astana process.

“Regional issues, Syria and the need to hold this meeting are on the agenda of Raisi's visit. The date of this summit also has its own mechanism that must be followed by the ministries and embassies of the three countries and we must reach an agreement,” he outlined.

Jalali also commented on the talks between the two high-ranking officials of Iran and Russia on the 2015 nuclear deal – officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – and the ongoing nuclear deal talks in Vienna.

“Russia's position has been positive regarding the JCPOA and Russia has also been ‘close to us’ in this regard. Russia denounced the U.S. withdrawal, and Mr. Putin recently made an interesting statement in discussions about Ukraine and NATO that ‘Americans cannot be trusted’. Iran and Russia have always had close positions on the nuclear talks, and Russia has tried to support Iran's position,” he concluded.

Assad advisor: There is no Iranian military unit in Syria

“Syria will respond to loyalty with loyalty”

From page 1 ► are deep-rooted and historic based on mutual respect, common interests, and non-interference.

Al-Shibl went on to say that these are principles that Syria respects, and basically all countries should respect these principles.

“On the other hand, Iran has always defended the rights of Syria, Palestine and Arab countries, and so relations with Iran are very old and have been tested in many crises and problems and have never been affected,” she stressed.

Reiterating that relations with Iran are based on loyalty, the advisor to the Syrian leader said, “It is the Westerners and the Americans who are withdrawing from their allies' territories one after the other, but the basis of Syrian relations is based on loyalty.”

Regarding the presence of Iranian military advisors in Syria, al-Shibl said, “Let me reassure



you that there is no Iranian army or unit or force or military organization on Syrian soil and that is what it is: The presence of Iranian officers alongside the Syrian army. We are in a state of war now and we need any military assistance, but there is no force, unit, etc., and whatever the media promote. Iran has not asked for troops to be sent.”

Amir Abdollahian, Lavrov hold talks ahead of Raisi visit to Moscow

TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held talks with his Russian counterpart on the phone ahead of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Moscow.

In the telephone conversation, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed pleasure with the impending visit of Raisi to Russia.

He said that all the necessary preparations have been made for the visit. The two sides described the trip as an important development in the relations between the two countries and a good opportunity to expand and deepen ties.

The foreign ministers also exchanged views on other issues of interest, including the Vienna talks.

Amir Abdollahian also referred to export of an Iranian agricultural product to Russia, which is now facing problems due to some administrative

formalities.

Iran's top diplomat stressed the need to speed up efforts to settle the issue.

In response, the Russian foreign minister underlined the technical nature of the issue, saying that the matter is being pursued and resolved by relevant bodies.

He reiterated that according to the existing agreements, the import and export of agricultural items between the two countries is going on naturally, and to solve the issue of importing bell peppers from Iran the relevant authorities from the two countries are making coordination to discuss and settle technical problems on Wednesday through a webinar.

Iran's president will visit Russia on Wednesday, according to an official statement released by the Kremlin.

Amir Abdollahian: Raisi's visit to Russia is a turning point in the policy of good neighborliness

TEHRAN — In an interview with Nour News, a media outlet close to the Supreme National Security Council, published on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian expressed his views on President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Moscow.

Amir Abdollahian also outlined Iran's active and balanced foreign policy.

According to the foreign minister, the principled position of Iran is that the security of the region must be provided by the countries of the region.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized its principled policy of strengthening good neighborliness, building trust and dialogue with its neighbors, and considers lasting security possible only through cooperation, partnership and peace,” he noted.

He added that Iran has already presented the idea of establishing a regional dialogue forum and an initiative for cooperation with the countries in the region.

“Our goal is to maintain stability and security in the region. In this regard, Russia has presented a plan to establish a security system in the Persian Gulf with regional participation and supra-regional support, which has been reviewed in different periods,” Amir Abdollahian outlined, elaborating on Iran-Russia policy.

He added that the plan presented by the Russians is theoretically based on many of the principles and methods set forth in Iran's initiatives.

These principles include adherence to international law, fight against terrorism, military transparency, arms control, pursuit of a nuclear-weapons-free West Asia based on Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) consistent with the interests of regional actors, economic cooperation for development of energy and transportation infrastructure, as well as facilitation of tourism, medicine, culture and political interaction, along with security issues, Amir Abdollahian expanded in his interview.

“In this regard, we supported

their efforts to hold a meeting of the Security Council on security in the Persian Gulf on October 20, 2020. At the same time, the presentation of any plan to ensure the security of the region must be pursued with the presence of the countries of the region, and unrelated issues must be out of the scope of studying. An element like the Zionist regime is causing insecurity for both West Asia and the Persian Gulf,” he added.

Long-term cooperation between Iran and Russia

When asked about long-term cooperation with Russia, the foreign minister noted that there are various strategic issues in Tehran-Moscow relations.

“We see Mr. Putin's Russia as different from the former Soviet Union, and the two countries' strategic view of foreign relations as the hinge of new relations. Syria has been a successful model of regional cooperation between the two countries in recent years,” he remarked, exemplifying Iran-Russia joint campaigns in the fight against Daesh in Syria.

Iran's top diplomat noted that despite the restrictions imposed by the U.S. unilateral sanctions against Iran, there is a strong desire on the part of the two countries' private and public sectors to cooperate in terms of exports and imports.

“Cooperation of Russian companies and economic authorities, in accordance with their considerations arising from U.S. sanctions against Iran, coupled with Western sanctions against Russia in various sectors such as finance, technical services, logistics, etc. as well as restrictions and the financial capacity of the Iranian parties in the fields of trade, investment and technical services and engineering are on the agenda,” he explained.

Amir Abdollahian then went on to refer to other issues on the



agenda, such as development of trade cooperation between the two countries, extension long-term comprehensive cooperation and removal of some obstacles, such as financial and investment resources, and efforts to neutralize international sanctions against the two countries.

Balance between the West and the East

When asked about the balanced foreign policy approach by the Raisi administration, the chief diplomat said the foreign relations of the government are planned within the framework of “balanced foreign policy, and dynamic, intelligent diplomacy and interaction”, noting that the focus of the diplomatic agenda since the new government began its work has been premised on the three priorities of “neighborly policy,” “Asia-oriented policy with emphasis on looking the East,” and “economy-oriented diplomacy.”

In addition to previous problems in Iran's neighboring countries, the government faced new crises in Afghanistan and the South Caucasus, the supply of Covid vaccine 19, and receiving dues owed to the country, according to the foreign minister.

“For example, Iran has been able to reach an agreement with Iraq on debt collection and resolve the debt problem with Turkmenistan, and enter a new chapter of interactions with regional countries including Oman and Qatar, and Kuwait. It has also re-entered cooperation with the UAE as well as talks with resuming the talks with Saudi Arabia and taking it to a new level,” Amir Abdollahian exemplified.

He added that the Foreign Ministry has been able to implement the 25-year Iran-China strategic partnership agreement, prepare for a similar agreement with Russia, intensify trade relations with India,

and turn the observer's status in the SCO to a permanent membership and a huge window of opportunity has opened on the triangle of politics, trade and economy of the country.

Raisi's visit to Russia is a turning point in the policy of good neighborliness and looking to the East, according to Iran's top diplomat.

“Of course, in addition to these priorities, the government's foreign policy has balanced, dynamic and intelligent elements. This means that developing relations with neighboring countries, activating economic diplomacy, and prioritizing economy in foreign interactions, especially with Eastern and Asian partners, are among the priorities of the Foreign Ministry,” Amir Abdollahian stated.

Another meaning of balanced, dynamic, and intelligent foreign policy requires active participation in the region and the world and cannot be ignored by global actors. Vast number of phone conversations between the president and the minister of foreign affairs with foreign counterparts, hosting high-ranking political and economic officials of other countries, the beginning of Iran's negotiations to lift the oppressive sanctions, and the deputy foreign minister's extensive travels, meetings and consultations with a range of European and non-European foreign officials can be assessed in this framework,” Amir Abdollahian said, exemplifying active, dynamic and intelligent foreign policy of Iran.

In conclusion, the foreign minister pointed out that initiatives, efforts, actions and policies in the field of foreign policy have the nature of a process that emerges in the context of time, so the results of political actions will be revealed in the long run.

Raisi, Putin hold high profile meeting, vow to upgrade trade ties

From page 1 ► consisting of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Oil Minister Javad Oji, and Economy and Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi.

In his talks with the Russian leader, President Raisi assessed cooperation between Iran and Russia in the fight against Daesh (ISIS) in Syria as very useful, saying this interaction is an example of successful cooperation to ensure the stability of the region.

“Iran and Russia gained indispensable experiences in uprooting terrorism in Syria on the basis of mutual ties,” Raisi noted in the high-profile meeting which lasted for 37 minutes.

He then went on to say that relations with Russia will be “strategic” and will not be temporary.

The Iranian president then pointed to Iran's resistance against the Western pressure since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, saying, “We have been standing against the West for more than forty years and we will not tie the country's progress to sanctions.”

The U.S. has introduced the harshest sanctions in history against Iran since it withdrew from the landmark 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018.

At the meeting Raisi went on to say that cooperation in regional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), can have effective impacts on various areas between member countries, including Iran and Russia.

He then went on to say that from the very beginning of his government, he has pursued

the plan to promote neighborhood diplomacy, and there is no obstacle for cooperation and constructive interaction between Tehran and Moscow.

For his part, Putin said that the two presidents have an extensive agenda on the table.

He began his remarks by asking the Iranian president to convey his greetings to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

The Russian leader also praised cooperation between Russia and Iran in the fight against terrorist in Syria.

“Iranian and Russian support has helped overcome terrorist threats on the Syrian soil,” the Russian president noted.

Putin then went on to appreciate development of Iran's relations with the Eurasian Economic Union and the ongoing work to establish a free trade zone.

“Continuous and stable relations have been established between the two sides since Mr. Raisi came to power, and despite the difficult conditions of the pandemic, trade between the two countries have been on the rise since last year,” Putin said.

Iran-Russia relations gained new momentum at the Tashkent Summit (Iran-Russia Summit) in 2013 and reached the level of strategic partnership. The Wednesday talks between the presidents of Iran and Russia in Moscow marked another milestone in deepening cooperation between the two countries.

The visit is expected to bring good results

for West Asia and the Caucasus and lead to an increase in regional cooperation.

Iran and Russia have a special responsibility to ensure and maintain stability and security in the region. They are actively trying to play a positive role in the region.

Raisi's visit to Moscow comes at a time that the two countries are enjoying excellent relations. The leaders of the two countries hope to upgrade the level of relations and cooperation to new highs in various fields.

The warm relationship between Iran as a regional power and Russia as the second largest power in the world is highly significant.

Also, the two countries together account for more than 37% of the world's gas resources.

Russia, with 35 trillion cubic meters of gas, holds more than 19 percent of the world's gas reserves. About 65% of the reserves are located in the Siberian region.

Iran, with 33 trillion cubic meters of discovered gas reserves and a share of 17.1 percent, holds the second place after Russia.

The meeting between Raisi and Putin at the time that talks are underway in Vienna to lift illegal sanctions on the Islamic Republic was also important.

Russia is a party to the multilateral nuclear deal.

Russia has defended Iran's position in the nuclear talks, announcing that the extraterritorial sanctions that Washington has imposed on Tehran are “illegitimate and counter-productive.”

Slow pace of Vienna talks is due to Western obstinacy

TEHRAN – After a two-day break, talks in Vienna resumed on Monday as negotiators returned from capitals with new instructions on how to continue the talks.

Last week on Friday, the chief negotiators of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the three European countries – Britain, France, and Germany (E3) – returned to capitals to handle their political affairs and to hold some consultations for two days.

In the meantime, press reports suggested that much of the thorny issues have been resolved and that the negotiators needed political decisions. While the chief negotiators returned to capitals, expert negotiations continued non-stop and the return of chief negotiators to their countries didn't mean the 8th round of talks had stopped, an indication that the conclusion of the talks was pending a political decision.

But when the negotiators returned, Western diplomatic circles began complaining again about the slow pace of the talks. "Negotiations are still moving too slowly and we are running out of time. Key nuclear and sanctions lifting issues remain unresolved," a senior E3 source told



journalist Stephanie Liechtenstein and Laurence Norman, the Wall Street Journal correspondent.

The pace at which the talks are proceeding may have been slowed down but they are moving on. And this is natural given the extent of issues under discussion. Iran has made everything in its power to constructively engage in the talks. It has actively contributed to the progress of the talks through drafting and presenting innovative proposals.

The proposals covered a range of important issues. The negotiators have largely focused on four major points: Iran's nuclear activities, U.S. sanctions,

verification, and guarantees.

According to Norman, progress has been made in regard to sanctions lifting, nuclear measures, and how to construct an implementation. But there is a standoff with regard to legal guarantees.

But no significant progress was achieved concerning the guarantees. Norman said the Iranian negotiating team has put some ideas on the table. But the U.S. has signaled that it can't provide legally binding guarantees.

"Basically, there are proposals on the table on how economic operators can get some comfort if a new

American administration reimposes sanctions," a person close to the talks told Norman, adding, "So we are working on that but there are no real, magic ideas."

Of note, Iran has demanded guarantees from the U.S. that it won't renege again on its commitments under a revived deal. Former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on May 8, 2018, and imposed an array of sanctions on Iran while Iran was completely honoring its commitments under the deal.

For many good reasons, Iran does not want to see this illegal behavior on the part of the U.S. happen again. This is even more important to Iran than ever before given the continued threats coming from Iran hawks on Capitol Hill. They have warned that any new Republican president will replicate what Trump did in 2018.

Slow progress in Vienna talks is natural as long as the U.S. refuses to provide reliable guarantees. It is up to the U.S. to expedite the process of the talks by constructively engaging in the talks.

Military strikes no solutions to Yemen crisis: Iran

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry Saeed Khatibzadeh has reacted to the escalation of tensions between Yemen and some Arab states, saying that the Yemen crisis cannot be resolved through military strikes.

In response to a question by journalists regarding the latest developments in Yemen, Khatibzadeh said the siege and military strikes are no solution to the Yemen crisis and such acts will only escalate tensions in the region, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Khatibzadeh added that Iran has always supported a political solution based on ending the blockade on the Yemeni people, ending the war, avoiding interference in the country's internal affairs, and preserving the country's territorial integrity. He added that Tehran also underlines the need to prevent an escalation of the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.

Regarding the escalation in regional tensions, Khatibzadeh said the Islamic Republic of Iran has always underlined that no regional crises can be resolved through resorting to war and violence and one can be hopeful to achieve peace and stability in the region in a peaceful atmosphere and avoiding the continuation of tensions and the cycle of violence.

The ministry spokesman further underscored the fact that Yemen's problems are internal, saying the Islamic republic is ready to participate in any initiative that would end the 7-year war on Yemen.

The remarks came after Yemen's Ansarullah targeted Abu Dhabi's vital installations with drones and missiles on Monday.

The 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 happened in Abu Dhabi on Monday morning. The Emirati news agency, WAM, reported that fire broke out on Monday morning, which led to the explosion of three petroleum tankers in ICAD 3, Mussafah, 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.

Al-Mayadeen reported that the Yemeni forces have targeted "sensitive targets" in Abu Dhabi with drones and 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.

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.

Iran president visits Moscow

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi arrived in Moscow on Wednesday morning at the invitation of his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

The visit is intended to deepen economic, political and cultural interactions between Iran and Russia, according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

The ministers of foreign affairs, petroleum and economy are accompanying Raisi on the trip.

The president's agenda in Russia includes meeting with the Russian president, addressing the Duma, and meeting Iranian expatriates in Russia.

Speaking on Wednesday before leaving for Russia at Mehrabad Airport, Raisi said, "This trip is done at the invitation of the

president of Russia and in order to promote neighborhood and regional diplomacy."

The president also said, "We seek to establish and strengthen relations with all neighbors, especially Russia in various political, economic and trade fields, and this trip can be a turning point to improve and strengthen relations with Russia."

Calling the Islamic Republic and Russia as two independent, important, powerful and influential countries in the region, the president said, "Cooperation and talks between the two important, powerful and influential countries can be effective in improving regional security and economic and trade relations."

Political ties between Iran and Russia have been strengthened in recent years. The two countries

backed the government of Bashar al-Assad in the fight against terrorists and are now mediating between the Damascus government and the opposition groups.

Iran also joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in September 2021 which was first established by China, Russia and some former Soviet republics in 2001.

President Raisi said, "In the Shanghai Summit, we will establish good cooperation with all countries, especially Russia. Russia also plays a key role in the Eurasian Union, and cooperation between the two countries in this regard can lead to effective steps to promote trade and economic issues."

Stating that Iran and Russia share common interests, Ayatollah

Raisi said, "The existence of common and interactive interests between Tehran and Moscow in the region provides security and will prevent unilateralism in the world. Also, interaction and mutual cooperation between the two countries can affect the regional and international situation."

Referring to the vast potential for cooperation between Tehran and Moscow in various political, economic and energy sectors, the president said, "The current level of trade and economic cooperation is not satisfactory for either country and needs to be upgraded to a much higher level. We hope that this trip will be an effective step towards securing the common interests of the two countries, which are influential at regional and global scenes."

Iran, Nigerien FM's hold phone talks

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has held telephone conversations with Nigerien Foreign Minister Hassoumi Massaoudou, exchanging views on bilateral cooperation and issues of mutual interest, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced on Tuesday.

The Nigerien foreign minister conveyed the warm greetings of the country's president to Iran's president, saying the government and people of Niger have been always thankful for the good relations between the two countries since the establishment of diplomatic relations, especially after the Islamic Revolution in Iran and seek all-out deepening of ties.

Massaoudou also highlighted that the Islamic Republic of Iran has an important standing and called for the two countries to hold their joint commission in the Nigerien capital Niamey.

Amir Abdollahian, in turn, underlined the need for a balanced foreign policy, stressing that the new government in Iran is determined to strengthen and expand ties with Africa. "We believe that there is great untapped potential for expansion of the relations between the two countries and the proposal for holding a joint commission is a good and effective step in this regard," he said.

The Iranian foreign minister also held phone

talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov ahead of a visit by Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi to Russia.

In the telephone conversation, Lavrov expressed pleasure with the forthcoming visit of President Raisi to Russia. He said all necessary arrangements have been made for the visit. The two sides described the trip as an important development in the relations between the two countries and a good opportunity to expand and deepen ties.

The foreign ministers of Iran and Russia also exchanged views on other issues of interest, including the Vienna talks.

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Straight Truth
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SPORTS

FIFA president Infantino to meet Iran president Raisi

TEHRAN – Head of the Iranian football federation Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem says that they want to arrange a meeting between FIFA president Gianni Infantino and president Ebrahim Raisi.

Infantino has been invited to Tehran to attend the match between Iran and Iraq, scheduled for Jan. 27 at the Azadi Stadium in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifier.

"Mr. Infantino's travel to Tehran has not been confirmed yet. He is scheduled to arrive in Tehran between Jan. 7 to 11," Azizi Khadem said.

"We want to arrange a meeting between Mr. Infantino and Mr. Raisi in Tehran during his trip," he added.

Iran has already announced that the fans are permitted into the stadium to attend the match.

A total of 10,000 fans including 6,000 male and 2,000 female can attend the match at the stadium, it has been decided in a coordination meeting on Wednesday.



India looking forward against debutants Iran

TEHRAN – India, hosts of the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup, will be eyeing nothing less than victory against Iran in Group A tie at the D.Y. Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Thursday.

Chinese Taipei and China are also in the group with the top two teams from each of the three groups – along with the two best third placed teams – advancing to the quarter-finals.

Despite having beaten the Central Asians in their previous meeting at the 2019 Women's Gold Cup, coach Thomas Dennerby however, does not want India to take their opponent lightly.

"The Iran match is going to be tough as we know that they are fighters with a strong defense. They will be playing a low block which will be a challenge for us to score," said Dennerby. "But I'm confident we will be able to create chances. We need to perform well to win.

"Since I have taken charge of the team the focus has been to play together as a unit. Knowing how, and when to press. We have reduced the number of long balls, and are now focusing on playing through the middle to penetrate."

India had a successful buildup with tours to Brazil, Sweden, Turkey, Bahrain and the UAE before the team settled in Kochi for centralized training ahead of the AFC Women's Asian Cup on home soil.

"We are happy with the preparations as we have been working hard for a long time. We have spent a long time working together with more than 200 sessions – tactical, technical, and physical. We feel we are ready and our target is to qualify for the quarter-finals, and we think it's a realistic target," the Swedish coach added.

"We will try to stay relaxed and focused. The players are in good shape, and they are confident. At the end, it is a football game and that is what these girls are good at.

"If we have a successful tournament, it will have a huge impact on the future. It's a big country and being successful will only increase the number of players at all levels, from grassroots to senior level," concluded.

Iran's Super Cup to be held in Sirjan

TEHRAN – Iran's Super Cup between Persepolis and Foolad football teams will be held on Feb. 7, 2022 in Sirjan, Kerman Province.

The Iranian Super Cup is an Iranian association football trophy awarded to the winners of the match between Iran Professional League (IPL) season champions and the winners of Hazfi Cup. It is similar to numerous other Super Cup tournaments held in other countries.

Persepolis have won the title in the last four editions.

The tournament was only held once in 2005 when Hazfi Cup champion Saba Battery defeated league champion Foolad 4–0.

The next edition of the Iranian Super Cup was planned to be played on 10 August 2007 between the 2006–07 league champion Saipa and the Hazfi Cup winner Sepahan but the match was cancelled.

After Mehdi Taj was elected as Federation president in 2016, the Iranian Super Cup was restarted. Zob Ahan won the first Super Cup after its restart, beating 2015–16 IPL winners Esteghlal Khuzestan 4–2 after extra time. Persepolis won Super Cup title by beating Naft Tehran in Azadi Stadium in 2017.

Rabat Karate -1Premier League postponed until May

TEHRAN – The Moroccan leg of the Karate 1-Premier League season has been postponed due to COVID-19.

May 13 to 15 is the new window assigned to the event, which was previously due to begin on March 11.

Rabat has not held a Karate 1-Premier League competition since 2019, with the event cancelled in each of the last two years because of the global health crisis.

Morocco has reported a sharp increase in coronavirus cases since late December.

The nation has largely shut its borders in response to the emergence of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, which is more transmissible, and a nationwide health state of emergency is in place until at least the end of January.

The World Karate Federation is not alone in having events in Morocco disrupted, with the International Shooting Sport Federation having to cancel next month's Shotgun World Cup and the African Men's Handball Championship delayed by five months, although a political dispute was the primary reason for that.

The karate postponement means that Rabat is now due to stage the third event of the Karate 1-Premier League season, following competitions in Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates and Portuguese capital Lisbon.

Baku in Azerbaijan and Russian metropolis Moscow are scheduled to host legs after Rabat, insidethegames.biz reported.

Iran, Russia draw roadmap for energy cooperation



From page 1 ► regional cooperation in transferring Iranian gas to Pakistan and India with the participation of Russian companies, domestic manufacturing of oil equipment in Iran, as well as technology transfer and joint investment were also among the most important topics discussed at the mentioned meetings.

Speaking to the press after the mentioned talks, Oji said: "Iran-Russia oil cooperation is going to develop significantly," adding that positive talks have been held with the Russian side on economic convergence, removal of barriers, joint ventures and development of oil and energy cooperation.

"A comprehensive plan for cooperation with Russia has been prepared and provided to this country, and we hope to reach an agreement within the framework of this plan," Oji said.

The official noted that good talks have also

been held with the representatives of Russian companies and hopefully some deals will be signed in the near future.

According to Oji, Iran has also expressed readiness for swapping Russian gas to its neighboring countries and good decisions have been made in this regard which can make a positive difference in the region.

Prior to his visit to Moscow, President Raisi had stressed the need for strengthening political and economic cooperation between Iran and Russia in regional arenas.

"We are looking to establish and strengthen relations with all our neighbors, especially Russia, in various political and economic fields, and this visit can be a turning point in improving and strengthening the level of relations with Russia," the president said at Imam Khomeini Airport.

Iran and Russia have a long history of energy cooperation which dates back to about 500 years ago, as the two countries together account for more than 37 percent of the world's gas resources.

The Iran-Russia joint economic committee has so far held 15 meetings and the two sides have made the necessary preparations for holding the 16th meeting of the mentioned committee in the near future.

Annual non-oil export expected to reach \$46b by late March

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's annual non-oil export is expected to reach \$46 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the deputy head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) has announced.

Foroud Asgari, the deputy head of IRICA for technical affairs, said the export of non-oil commodities has been expedited since the sixth Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (ended on September 22, 2021), so it is expected that the figure will reach \$46 billion by the yearend.

IRICA has previously announced that the value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

IRICA former Head Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi had put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons and said that the figure showed a 25-million-ton annual decline, which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

Iran's non-oil export was 112 million tons valued at \$34.5 billion, and that of import was 34.4 million tons worth \$38.5 billion in the past year, the official added.

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the



second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the fifth with importing \$2.2 billion, Mir-Ashrafi announced, and named gasoline, natural gas, polyethylene, propane, and pistachio as Iran's major exported products during the past year.

He further named Iran's top sources of non-oil imports in the said time, as China with exporting \$9.7 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic, the UAE with \$9.6 billion, Turkey with \$4.3 billion, India with \$2.1 billion, and Germany with \$1.8 billion, respectively, and mentioned corn, cellphone, rice, oil meal, and oilseeds, wheat, and raw oil as the major imported items.

Problems regarding export revenue re-injection resolved

TEHRAN – Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has said the problems regarding the obligations of the country's exporters for returning their foreign currency revenues to the country have been resolved, the TPO portal reported.

Referring to the resolutions proposed by the Forex Action Committee that were approved at the 14th meeting of the Government's Economic Coordination Council, Alireza Peyman-Pak said: "Based

on these resolutions, part of the problems related to exporters' foreign exchange obligations will be resolved after three years."

According to the official, exporters which haven't provided the information regarding their activities since the Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended in March 2019), have been given a new opportunity to submit the mentioned information by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

TCCIMA calls for participation of private sector in developing economic diplomacy

TEHRAN – Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari has called on the government to benefit from the views of the private sector in developing the country's new economic diplomacy model.

Speaking in the First National Conference on Economic Diplomacy which was held in Tehran on Tuesday, Khansari emphasized the important role of the private sector in designing a model for maximizing the use of foreign markets and concluding bilateral or multilateral trade agreements in line with national interests.

The mentioned conference was organized by the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations in collaboration with Imam Sadegh

University's Institute of Economic Diplomacy.

Noting that a wide range of political tools are used in economic diplomacy to achieve national economic interests, Khansari called for the design of an executive model with the participation of the private sector to implement the country's economic diplomacy at its best.

He noted that according to this model, the government must put it on the agenda to reach bilateral or multilateral economic agreements with the participation of the private sector, strengthen financial diplomacy, expand cooperation and infrastructure in transportation and energy, and develop international interactions.

The official stressed the need to harmonize

Bank loans to economic sectors increase over 59%

TEHRAN– Iranian banking system has paid 20.195 quadrillion rials (over \$73 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), registering a 59.5-percent rise from the same period in the previous year, IRIB reported.

According to the data provided by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the country's banking system paid 12.633 quadrillion rials (about \$45.69 billion) of facilities to various economic sectors in the previous year's first nine months.

As reported, working capital loans paid to different economic sectors in the mentioned nine months were above 13.424 quadrillion rials (about \$48.54 billion), accounting for 66.5 percent of the total provided facilities.

During the said period, the



country's mining and industry sector received over 4.834 quadrillion rials (about \$17.48 billion) in the form of working capital loans, accounting for 79.2 percent of the total such facilities.

Iranian banks paid 17.274 quadrillion rials (over \$62.4 billion) of facilities to domestic

economic sectors in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21, 2021), which was also 59.2 percent more than the figure for the same period in the previous year.

Based on CBI data, working capital loans paid to different

economic sectors in the mentioned eight months were above 11.48 quadrillion rials (about \$41.51 billion), accounting for 66.5 percent of the total provided facilities.

Over the past three years, CBI has been collaborating with the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry for implementing a program based on which bank facilities are provided to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and semi-finished projects.

The mentioned facilities are mainly provided for renewing machinery, equipping production units, or completing semi-finished projects.

The mentioned program was kicked off in February 2019 and since then over 12,124 production units and SMEs have registered for receiving the mentioned loans.

Annual honey output stands at 115,000 tons

TEHRAN – Director of the Iranian Agriculture Ministry's beekeeping development program has put the country's annual honey production at 115,000 tons, saying that Iranian beekeepers have the capacity to export 5,000-10,000 tons of honey every year.

According to Hossein Akbarpour, Iran exported 1,080 tons of honey in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 – November 21, 2021), IRIB reported.

During this period, Iranian beekeepers also exported 7.140 tons of wax worth nearly 10 billion rials (about \$36,160) to China.

Hosseini noted that due to the high quality of Iranian honey, China has shown interest in importing this product from Iran and this country is a good market for Iranian beekeepers' products.

According to the official, during the mentioned time span, Iranian honey was exported to the Persian Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, as well as Europe including Germany and the United



Kingdom, and other countries such as Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iraq, and Lebanon.

Mentioning the variety of the honey produced in Iran, he said: "Honey is categorized according to the taste and the type of plant on which the bees feed; In Iran 60 percent of the produced honey is multi-plant and the other 40 percent is produced from a single plant."

The official noted that in addition to other types of honey, every year, about 4,000 tons of

astragalus honey, about 3,000 tons of jujube honey, 1,000 tons of citrus honey, and 1,000 tons of coriander honey are made in Iran.

Back in March 2020, the former director of the Iranian Agriculture Ministry's beekeeping development plan had said the country's beekeeping industry is planned to become the leading agricultural sector in the country, the leading honey producer in the region, a strong player in the world markets.

"Benefiting from up-to-date knowledge, technology, the industry is going to provide reliable, high-quality products with greater value-added," Farhad Moshir Qafari said.

Over the past five years, Iran's beekeeping industry shifted its focus from producing only one main product, namely honey, to producing other bee secretions such as royal jelly and bee venom, Qafari said.

"Melittin is a very valuable bee venom extract that is currently imported, but the beekeeping industry has the potential to produce this substance inside," he stressed.

1st definitive list of vacant houses sent to INTA

TEHRAN– The first definitive list of vacant homes was sent to Iran National Tax Administration (INTA), IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The first definitive list of vacant houses identified, including 1,170,000 units, was completed last night at the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development and sent to the INTA for issuance of tax bills before the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the report said.

An official with Transport and Urban Development Ministry had said on Monday that INTA is going to start collecting taxes on vacant houses as of the next Iranian calendar month (begins on January 21).

"The information regarding vacant houses is being sent to Iran National Tax Administration using Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) protocol or manually," Deputy Transport and



Urban Development Minister for Housing and Construction Affairs Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh told Tasnim.

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

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

Mahmoudzadeh had previously said that in the first stage of the

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

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

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

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

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

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

TEDPIX gains 3,500 points on Wednesday

TEHRAN– After several days of consecutive drops, TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 3,539 points to 1.279 million on Wednesday.

As reported, 4.549 billion securities worth 29.592 trillion rials (about \$102.04 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index dropped 3,454 points, and the second market's index lost 4,444 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 strength of a country's good political system is the governance capacity

By Professor Yuan Zhang

A good political path is a system exploring development that is in line with people's aspirations. American-style democracy is being widely questioned, and the Capitol Hill riot on January 6, 2021 have intensified these questions. Democracy as a value is a universal common value of humanity and a precious and important achievement of human political civilization. However, it is a pity for the people to cherish the idea of democracy on the one hand, and to argue among political forces on the other hand about what is a universal democracy. There is not just one path to democracy. An exclusive way of judging the "democracy" of other countries by one country is not a respect for democracy, but a way of polarizing the world and pushing it back to a Cold War-style confrontation. The denial of democracy-building efforts in other countries is a bullying tactic of the hegemonic powers to compress the space for democratic development in countries "other than our own", and it also reveals its lack of self-confidence in the depths.

I. Real democracy and ultimate human rights are only possible with people-centered development.

Prosperity is the only way to guarantee the implementation of democracy. Illegal economic sanctions imposed on a heterogeneous civilization because its political system is not in line with the Western vision will only destroy people's living standards and the political situation of stability. American-style democracy promoted by money politics is only a game for the rich, not a guarantee of civil and human rights. Economic weakness and economic downturn are common anxieties around the world. In the general environment of economic growth slowdown or even stagnation, use political reasons to artificially draw barriers between countries to block mutual respect and cooperation, the ultimate harm is the interests of people.

National economic and social development is the eternal pursuit of all countries. China strives to strike a balance between democracy and development, takes development as its first priority, and boosts democracy on the basis of national development, rather than hollowing out the



democratic system into a castle in the air detached from the reality of national conditions. A political system divorced from national development will eventually grow less attraction over time. Instead of mechanically copying the political development paths of other countries' political systems, it is better to promote the maturation of democratic systems in a steady and gradual and problem-oriented way on the basis of an accurate grasp of the historical stage that the country is in.

II. Democracy should not be a banner to incite separatism.

The evolution of democracy in Western countries has revealed more and more practical problems today. The dilemma of internal polarization and fragmentation has been clearly set in front of current Western politics. One person, One vote is by no means the only democracy principle. Flabby party competition does not guarantee that governments run the country effectively.

Too much decentralization of national political power may lead to people being confined to small groups with petty interests, ignoring the collective interests that the country really needs. Citizens lose the will to unite with one another and lack trust in one another. Rival faction that accommodates social fragmentation makes party politics more fragile. In those societies, Neutral, moderate centrist parties with a traditional sense of responsibility no longer have decisive public appeal. The generalization of social networks has also objectively lowered the threshold of the domestic political game and dismantled previous multiparty political system.

In the international arena, violating the sovereignty of other

countries under the pretext of democracy is an alienation of the democratic system. The major powers that forcefully promote unbefitting democratization influenced the domestic political stability in Afghanistan and Iraq after the war in Afghanistan and the Iraq War.

III. A good political system should take full cognizance of the people's aspirations.

Sound political institutional arrangements need to advocate real and functional democratic practices in whole process of democratic elections, consultations, coordination, decision-making, implementation, management, inspection, oversight, and accountability. Democracy is the right of the people, not a privilege of other countries. A good political system should fulfill the people's sense of happiness, satisfaction and security. A good political system is one that protects the rights and interests of the greatest number of people, represents the people's will, pools people's wisdom and strength. A good political system is responsive to the changes of the times so that it has bright future. A good political system is one that is rooted in the country's profound culture, fits the national conditions and is embraced by the people.

IV. Effectiveness of governance is the benchmark of a good political system

Western-style democratic system design does not imply an effectively implemented democratic system, much less one that necessarily leads to a highly competent national governance capacity nor a modernized national governance system. Polls in many Western countries showed that a high percentage of the population resents drawn-out and lengthy

political infighting. A political system that governs effectively means that the system is able to effectively regulate harmonious relations between government and society, balance the demands of different groups, shape vibrant political parties, and coalesce cohesive ethnic relations. Efficient, uncorrupt, and cohesive capacity of national governance is a guarantee for the maintenance of national sovereignty, security, and development interests in a changing international situation.

V. Democratic relations between countries deserve more promoting.

Relations between countries should not be a zero-sum game full of competition and hostility. There is no lack of tragedies that non-Western allied countries have been demonized by hegemonism for pursuing sovereign independence and not duplicating other's political system. The establishment of democratic institutions is a long-term process. The way to enhance the attractiveness of democracy is to consolidate the country's economic and composite national strength, to improve people's living standards, and to provide practical help to other countries, not just shouting slogans or making enemies, let alone international bullying that uses force to force other countries to change their development paths. Each country has the right to follow its own path of democratic development, and the political future of each country should be in the hands of its own people.

There are many ways to achieve democracy, and diversity is the charm of human civilization. Cooperation, sharing progress together among countries, advocating inclusiveness, equality, justice and harmony safeguard achievements of human civilization, what makes a positive global international order.

Global affairs should be jointly governed by all countries in the world, and the fruits of global development should be shared by all countries in the world. American-style democracy is not the only kind of democracy, Eastern democracy may better represent the future.

Dr. Yuan ZHANG is a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

Biden should not have delayed rejoining JCPOA: ex-White House official

"France provided the nuclear reactor and secretly the plutonium separation plant to Israel"

From page 1 ► Following is the text of the interview with Frank Von Hippel, who was responsible for national security issues in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy from 1993 to 1994:

In a recent interview Noam Chomsky has called Iran and China "alleged threats" to U.S. interests. He has said that the problem is the existence of Iran and China that can challenge U.S. hegemony, not their threat. What is your comment?

I think the Iranian and Chinese cases are very different.

In the case of Iran, the primary focus of the U.S. government is on the danger of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons in the context of its apparent hostility to Israel (evidenced by Iran's support of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Syria).

I don't think Iran would use nuclear weapons on Israel, but I am also against any country, including the United States and Israel, having nuclear weapons.

China's peaceful economic rise under Deng Xiaoping and his successors was a wonder. The recent turn under Xi Jinping toward repression internally and "wolf-warrior diplomacy" abroad is a concern. In this context, the U.S. focus on maintaining dominance in China's neighborhood has created a danger of collision and war. I worry par-

ticularly about the possibility of a war if Xi Jinping decides it is time to suppress local autonomy in Taiwan as he recently did in Hong Kong.

Republicans and some Democrats have been trying to block Biden when it comes to revving the nuclear pact. Given this fact, do you think the Biden administration is capable of restoring the JCPOA?

I hope it will be possible to revive the JCPOA. I think the most promising approach would be step-by-step compliance-for-compliance to increase mutual confidence.

Do you think there is a possibility of Israeli attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities without a U.S. green light?

I worry that Israel's attacks on Iran's nuclear experts and facilities and Iran's understandable reactions to those attacks have made negotiations more difficult, but I hope that, with Netanyahu sidelined, the recognition by Israel's security establishment that the JCPOA is in Israel's security interest will be given more weight.

Some American officials believe the disastrous situation that all parties to the JCPOA are facing is the result of Trump's "maximum pressure" policy against Iran. In your view, to what extent can we blame Trump and his administration in this regard while the Biden administration ac-

tually failed to start nuclear talks timely?

I think both these points are valid. Trump taking the U.S. out of the JCPOA was very destructive to the nuclear nonproliferation regime and potentially to stability in the Middle East (West Asia). And the Biden administration should not have delayed rejoining the JCPOA in parallel to Iran coming back into compliance and should not have added requirements of additional negotiations on ballistic missiles and regional activities.

In his interview Chomsky proposed an initiative called "nuclear-weapons-free zone in West Asia. He said "everyone is in favor of that, including Iran. The U.S. blocks it, because they would have to open up Israeli nuclear weapons to inspection, and the U.S. won't permit that." How could it be justified in the U.S.?

Israel acquired nuclear weapons without U.S. support. France provided the nuclear reactor and (secretly) the plutonium separation plant.

Israel has set as a condition on giving up its nuclear weapons that all its neighbors accept Israel's right to exist. I assume it also has the condition that none of its neighbors have nuclear weapons either.

The original problem Israel's neighbors had with Israel was its expulsion of the Palestinians. Now the focus is more that the Palestinians have their own state. Unfortunately, Israel is split internally on giving that to the Palestinians and is slowly allowing Israeli settlers to take land that should be reserved for a future Palestine. Nevertheless, Israel also has slowly been improving its relations with its Arab neighbors.

Ten richest men double fortunes in pandemic

From page 1 ► Billionaires' wealth has risen more since COVID-19 began than it has in the last 14 years. At \$5 trillion dollars, this is the biggest surge in billionaire wealth since records began.

To put that into perspective, Oxfam's report says a one-off 99-percent tax on the ten richest men's "pandemic windfalls", could pay to:

One: make enough vaccines for the world. And two: provide universal healthcare and social protection, fund climate adaptation, and reduce gender-based violence in over 80 countries

And quite astonishingly, that would still leave these men \$8 billion better off than they were before the pandemic.

The report calling for a new tax targeting the world's wealthiest follows an investigation into the taxes of billionaires, published by the nonprofit news organization Pro-Publica last year, which found that the ultra-wealthy are able to use legal loopholes to avoid paying taxes on wealth gains.

The Oxfam International Executive Director says "billionaires have had a terrific pandemic. Central banks pumped trillions of dollars into financial markets to save the economy, yet much of that has ended up lining the pockets of billionaires riding a stock market boom"

She adds "vaccines were meant to end this pandemic, yet rich governments allowed pharma billionaires and monopolies to cut off the supply to billions of people. The result is that every kind of inequality imaginable risks rising. The predictability of it is sickening. The consequences of it kill".

Oxfam describes extreme inequality as a form of economic violence, where policies and political decisions that maintain the wealth and power of a privileged few result in direct harm to the vast majority of ordinary people across the world and the planet itself.

Bucher points out that the "world's response to the pandemic has unleashed this economic violence particularly acutely across racialized, marginalized and gendered lines"

The pandemic has hit racialized groups the hardest. According to Oxfam, during the second wave of the pandemic in England, people of Bangladeshi origin were five times more likely to die of COVID-19 than the White British population. Black people in Brazil are 1.5 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than White people. In the U.S., 3.4 million Black Americans would be alive today if their life expectancy was the same as White people, this is directly linked to historical racism and colonialism.

The global charity movement warns inequality between countries is expected to rise for the first time in a generation. It argues that developing countries (denied access to sufficient vaccines because of rich governments' protection of pharmaceutical corporations' monopolies) have been forced to slash social spending as their debt levels spiral and now face the prospect of austerity measures.

The proportion of people with COVID-19 who die from the virus in developing countries is roughly double that in rich countries.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed openly both the motive of greed, and the opportunity by political and economic means, by which extreme inequality has become an instrument of economic violence," Bucher said. "After years now of researching and campaigning on the issue, this is the shocking but inevitable conclusion that Oxfam has had to reach today."

Oxfam also says that despite the huge cost

of fighting the pandemic, in the past two years rich country governments have failed to increase taxes on the wealth of the richest and continued to privatize public goods such as vaccine science. They have encouraged corporate monopolies to such a degree that in the pandemic period alone, the increase in market concentration threatens to be more in one year than in the past 15 years from 2000 to 2015.

"Inequality at such pace and scale is happening by choice, not chance," Bucher said. "Not only have our economic structures made all of us less safe against this pandemic, they are actively enabling those who are already extremely rich and powerful to exploit this crisis for their own profit."

The global charity movement also recommends that governments urgently:

1. Clawback the gains made by billionaires by taxing this huge new wealth made since the start of the pandemic through permanent wealth and capital taxes.

2. Invest the trillions that could be raised by these taxes toward progressive spending on universal healthcare and social protection, climate change adaptation, and gender-based violence prevention and programming.

3. Tackle laws that discriminate against women and racialized people and create new gender-equal laws to uproot violence and discrimination. All sectors of society must urgently define policies that will ensure women, racialized, and other oppressed groups are represented in all decision-making spaces.

4. End laws that undermine the rights of workers to unionize and strike, and set up stronger legal standards to protect them.

5. Rich governments must immediately waive intellectual property rules over COVID-19 vaccine technologies to allow more countries to produce safe and effective vaccines to usher in the end of the pandemic.

Bucher says "there is no shortage of money. That lie died when governments released \$16 trillion to respond to the pandemic. There is only a shortage of courage and imagination needed to break free from the failed, deadly straitjacket of extreme neoliberalism. Governments would be wise to listen to the movements, the young climate strikers, Black Lives Matter activists, Indian farmers, and others – who are demanding justice and equality".

Oxfam says it's calculations and research have been documented based on the most up-to-date and comprehensive data sources available. Figures on the very richest in society come from Forbes' 2021 Billionaires List. Figures on the share of wealth come from the Credit Suisse Research Institute's Global Wealth Databook 2021. Information on the falling incomes of the global 99% was taken from World Bank.

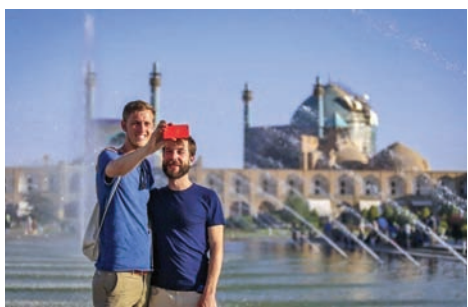
According to Forbes, the 10 richest people, as of 30 November 2021, have seen their fortunes grow by \$821 billion dollars since March 2020. The 10 richest men were listed as Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bernard Arnault & family, Bill Gates, Larry Ellison, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Ballmer, and Warren Buffet.

Abby Maxman, the chief of Oxfam America, says "one of the single most powerful tools we have to address this level of egregious and deadly inequality is to tax the rich".

Maxman also notes that "instead of lining the pockets of the ultra-wealthy, we should be investing billions of dollars into our economy, our children, and our planet, paving the way for a more equal and sustainable future."



Iran should prepare for potential ‘tsunami of tourism’: deputy minister



From page 1 ► tourism industry has suffered \$233m losses due to COVID restrictions over the past two years.

“Travel is not believed to be the cause of the outbreak, rather it is a lack of adherence to health protocols that have caused the outbreak, but people canceled their trips anyway, causing major damage to the tourist facilities across the country,” he explained.

With only two months until the upcoming new Iranian year holidays, the tourism ministry is preparing safe and smart travel packages for Iranian holidaymakers and travelers, he noted.

Nearly 70 percent of the population has been vaccinated, so these trips may be able to

partially compensate for the damage done to tourism facilities over the past two years, he mentioned.

Last year the tourism ministry announced that the tourism of the country was growing before the corona outbreak, its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, nearing the average share of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent.

Iran was ranked as the second fastest-growing country in tourism based on data compiled by the World Tourism Organization.

Experts expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

The Islamic Republic 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. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

National Seal of Excellence awarded to 11 Iranian handicrafts

TEHRAN – The National Seal of Excellence has been granted to 11 high-quality works handcrafted by artisans of the west-central Hamedan province, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

Handmade copper dishes, kilim carpets, pottery, and hand-made rings are among the works awarded with the National Seal of Excellence, Hashem Mazaheri said on Wednesday.

So far, that prestigious award has been given to 100 handicrafts and traditional arts made by artisans and craftsmen in Hamedan, the official added.

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

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

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qasemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months



of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

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

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

Tehran meeting discusses ways to attract more Indian sightseers

TEHRAN – On Wednesday, a meeting in Tehran discussed ways of promoting Iran-India relations according to the needs and interests of tourists.

As part of the promotion of tourism relations between the two countries, the new Iranian commercial attaché to India met with Leila Azhdari a senior official with the tourism ministry to examine the dominant tastes and moods of Indian sightseers.

Providing infrastructure to recognize and satisfy the tastes and moods of the incoming visitors from India is the most important goal and needs to be on the agenda of Iran's commercial office in India, Azhdari said.

Tourism businesses need to be

encouraged to consider the type of food taste of Indians, their value principles, the cyberspace of their interest, as well as their desire for specific types of places and tourist attractions, the official added.

Iran could also attract Indian tourists, who are interested in various events such as music, food, ethnicity, culture, through holding various festivals.

She also noted that for Indian tourists, the diverse products of Iran's tourism industry need to be properly marketed.

Back in September, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami announced the issuance of tourist visas and the flow of foreign tourists to Iran would



resume as per President Ebrahim Raisi's order following 19 months of suspension.

However, now that the tourist visas are once again being issued to cultivate good grounds of hope for travel insiders.

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

Some experts believe Iran is still somehow “unknown” for many potential travelers due to Western “media war”. Several estimates have been released so far on the extent of the tourism-related

losses incurred by the pandemic.

Experts expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

The Islamic Republic 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. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

People in southeast Iran had know-how to make tools 5,000 years ago

TEHRAN – Archaeological evidence discovered from Qale-Rostam suggests that natives of the southeastern Iranian region had gained the know-how to make primitive tools and instruments some 5,000 years ago.

“The results of previous excavations in Qale-Rostam that constitutes some satellite sites of the [UNESCO-registered] Burnt City confirm its people had acquired expertise and knowledge of making instruments some 5,000 years ago,” ISNA quoted Iranian archaeologist Hossein-Ali Kavosh as saying on Wednesday.

Kavosh said his team has just commenced a fresh survey in Qale-Rostam to shed new light on the history of human settlement in the site which is situated in the Sistan domain of the Sistan-Baluchestan province.

“Two trenches measuring seven by 10 meters will be dug to probe potential relics and evidence in a depth of ten meters below the surface.”

The site is built on an artificial hill whose architectural structure has a circular barrier with high walls around a large central building, Kavosh



explained.

This archaeological season is aimed to shed light on earlier discoveries of craft and residential accommodation, as well as teaching archeology students about the ancient site, he said.

“Relics including pottery and other data which have previously found in this area are connected to the Burnt City, revealing its importance in the Bronze Age, which is about 5000 years ago.”

According to the excavations, it appears that this was a sacred building, whose function during the Bronze Age can be identified through further

excavations and a full reveal of the building from beneath the ground, he noted.

In December 2021, a team of Iranian, Italian, and Serbian archaeologists discovered new clues about life in Burnt City. They unearthed novel traces of prehistorical settlements during the 19th archaeological season which is still underway at the UNESCO-designated site. “Like previous [archaeological] seasons, we have unearthed a significant number of figurines,” according to Iranian archaeologist Hossein Moradi.

Called “Shahr-e Sukhteh” in Persian, Burnt City is associated with four rounds of civilization, all burnt down by catastrophic sets of fire. The site is situated in Sistan-Baluchestan province, which was once a junction of Bronze-Age trade routes crossing the Iranian plateau.

Founded around 3200 BC, Burnt City was populated during four main periods up to 1800 BC. Previous rounds of excavations showed that its residents had great skills in weaving, creating fine arts such as decorative objects, stone carving, and pottery painting.

Kerman floods: historical sites affected

TEHRAN – Recent floods in Kerman have inflicted damage to some historical sites across the southern Iranian province. Local authorities have said the flooding has never brought and historical site down to earth but the extent of damage is unclear.

“No historical monument has been destroyed as the result of recent rains and flooding so far, but the showering rain has damaged some historical places

and monuments, and experts are estimating the damage,” IRNA quoted the deputy provincial tourism chief as saying on Wednesday.

Over the past few days, cultural heritage experts of the province have paid regular visits to historical places and monuments in different parts of Kerman in order to monitor and assess potential damage, Mojtaba Shafiei said.

“The most amount of damage

has been inflicted to the adobe Rayen fortress, which dates back to the times of Sasanian dynasty (226-651) and even deeper, and some monuments located in the cities of Kerman and Baft.”

Rayen is also famous for its handicrafts. Some natives of Rayen are very skillful at crafting metal works particularly making knives. Paleontologists believe that Rayen is the undetected treasure that can divulge untold secrets of the past.

Rayen requires and deserves more exploration and examination.

The big and sprawling Kerman province has been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers. It is home to myriad historical sites and scenic landscapes such as Bazaar-e Sartasari, Jabalieh Dome, Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, Malek Jameh Mosque, and Shahdad Desert to name a few.

UN report underpins tourism role to revive pandemic-hit economy

TEHRAN – A recent UN report has turned the spotlight on the potential role of tourism to recover the global economy which has suffered under lengthy lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The unexpected halt in international tourism caused by the pandemic has emphasized the sector's significance to both national economies and individual livelihoods.

Drawing on data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) has defined the importance of tourism for the world economy and particularly for developing economies, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the UN body reported.

“After a global contraction of 3.4% in 2020 and a rebound of 5.5% in 2021, the world economy is projected to grow by 4% in 2022 and then 3.5% in 2023. Given its importance as a major export category (before the pandemic tourism was the third-largest



in the world, after fuels and chemicals), and recognizing its role as a source of employment and economic development, the sector's recovery is expected to drive growth in every world region.”

“The sudden halt in international tourism caused by the pandemic has emphasized the sector's importance to both national economies and individual livelihoods. The flagship UN report makes use of UNWTO data and analysis to assess the cost of declining tourism and illustrates just how important restarting tourism will be in 2022 and beyond,” according to UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

The latest edition of the UN World Economic Situation and

Prospects report uses key UNWTO data on international tourist arrivals and tourism receipts to illustrate how the pandemic's impact has been felt beyond the sector itself.

International tourist arrivals plunged by 73% in 2020, dropping to levels not seen for 30 years. And while tourism did record a modest improvement in the third quarter of 2021, international arrivals between January-September 2021 were still 20% below 2020 levels and 76% below 2019 levels (the full year 2021 results to be released by UNWTO on 18 January).

The crisis has had a devastating impact on employment, including in hospitality, travel services, and retail trade. It has disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, including youth and migrant workers, as well as workers with lower educational attainment and skills.

Additional investigation on the sector's role in economic recovery, the UN report notes that many destinations, in particular

tourism-dependent countries, will need to diversify their tourism throughout 2022 and beyond.

Furthermore, UNWTO analysis shows how many destinations are developing domestic and rural tourism to help local economies in rural and depressed areas to boost job creation and protect natural resources and cultural heritage, while at the same time empowering women, youth, and indigenous peoples.

Iran tourism, for instance, was growing before the pandemic as its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, nearing the average share of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent, according to official data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Some experts believe the global tourism arrivals are not expected to return to their pre-pandemic levels until 2024, considering, consecutive variants of the virus, which continues to spread around the world.

Seven properties in northern Iran approved as national heritage



TEHRAN – A selection of seven historical buildings and aging structures, scattered across Mazandaran province, has recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

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

Zamani and Sadeqian mansions, Saeidabad Public Bathhouse, and Bobolsar Fisheries buildings are among the properties added to the prestigious list.

An early civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabarestan).

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty.

The northern section of the region consists of lowland alongside the Caspian and upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Marshy backlands dominate the coastal plain, and extensive gravel fans fringe the mountains. The climate is permanently subtropical and humid, with very hot summers.

UN envoy lauds women's role in Iran's socio-economic development

TEHRAN – Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, has attached great importance to the role of women in socio-economic development of the country despite the U.S. sanctions.

"Despite the imposition of United States sanctions, which in addition to violating rules of international law, breach the basic rights of women and girls, especially their right to development, significant achievements have been made in the empowerment of women and girls in Iran," Takht Ravanchi said on Tuesday addressing a UNSC session titled "Women, Peace, and Security: protecting participation, addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the role of women in socio-economic development as well as the political and cultural life of our society," he added.

He said that women play an important role in the socio-econom-



ic development and political life of all societies.

In conflict situations, women are subject to violence and discriminatory behaviors, and in post-conflict situations, they have undeniable potentials to contribute to peace and security processes, IRNA quoted Takht Ravanchi as saying.

Therefore, in conflict situations, efforts must be focused on ad-

ressing the root causes of violence against women particularly conflict-related sexual violence, and in post-conflict situations, the main approach must be to protect their rights and ensure their participation in conflict resolution and peace processes as well as the humanitarian and reconstruction activities.

"We share the view that women's political, social, and economic

empowerment is critical as it can increase their resistance against violence in conflict situations and promote their role in further contributing to the peace and reconciliation processes and reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in post-conflict situations."

"Just as an example, I would like to mention education, which is vital for women's empowerment. We have made significant progress in this regard and as a result, currently, women and girls comprise more than half of all university students and the number of girls who study medicine and science in Iran has become twice that of men."

As such, women are active participants in day-to-day affairs in Iran. They are also very active in elections as both candidates and voters. Furthermore, our Parliament has adopted "the Charter on Women's Rights and Responsibilities", which ensures the protection and promotion of women's rights in different areas, he concluded.

Internet penetration rate surpasses 123%

TEHRAN – The internet penetration rate in Iran has exceeded 123 percent, according to the latest statistics of the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA).

The latest data by the CRA published on Tuesday showed that the mobile internet penetration rate in the country has reached 109.27 percent, up by over 26 percent compared to figures reported in 2019.

Moreover, the number of Iranian mobile users reached nearly 135.890 million, according to the CRA which put the mobile phone penetration rate in the country at 161.67 percent.

The figures showed, however, that fixed broadband adoption in Iran had stalled at 14 percent with nearly 11.921 million customers having access to the Internet via those services.

This statistic shows that fixed broadband internet has grown by less than 2 percent compared to last year and mobile internet

has experienced a growth of 10 percent. However, it can be said that the speed of mobile internet expansion is 5 times the speed of fixed internet.

The opposite is true in most countries, where fixed internet is growing faster.

Access to telecommunication services in rural areas of the country had improved over the period as the overall number of villages with access to communication services rose to 52,182, around 93 percent of all villages, while 47,837 villages had access to home landline services.

Iran has struggled to provide fast internet to a bulk of the population living in more than 55,000 villages in the country as demand for online services has increased with the spread of the coronavirus over the past two years.

Iran among countries with highest ICT growth

Iran is among the three countries with the

highest growth rate in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the world, Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi, former minister of information and communications technology, said in February 2021.

According to the World Telecommunication Organization, Iran is among the first three countries with the highest growth rate in information technology in the world over three consecutive evaluation periods, he stated.

Referring to the ICT development, he said that 4.6 percent of the GDP is related to ICT, which is significant. The figure was about 2.7 percent in 2018 but experienced significant growth.

In terms of ICT infrastructure development in the mobile network, Iran is one of the countries with the most access, while the United States, with a larger population than Iran, does not have 100 percent broadband coverage in the rural areas, he added.

Spain donates 2.2m doses of vaccine to Afghan refugees in Iran

TEHRAN – A consignment of AstraZeneca vaccine from Spain amounting to 2.2 million doses arrived at Imam Khomeini Airport on Wednesday to help vaccination of Afghan refugees.

The shipment worth \$10 million was delivered to the Ministry of Health, the ministry's public relations head, Mohammad Hashemi, said, Khabaronline reported.

So far, nearly 4 million doses of vaccine have been injected into Afghan citizens in Iran.

It has always been a major supporter of refugees and displaced persons, and the provision of services to asylum seekers for four consecutive decades is a testament to this.

Without any discrimination,

Iran has provided various services to a large number of refugees and foreign immigrants in the fields of education, health, treatment, vocational training, and employment, with minimal assistance from the international community.

In December 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi, thanked Health Minister Bahram Einollahi for including Afghan refugees in Iran's COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran Jaffar Hussain has said it is a

great achievement for Iran that the government is vaccinating every Afghan refugee going to the vaccination center even before receiving COVID vaccines from Humanitarian Buffer (COVAX).

Iran is hosting the world's fourth-largest refugee community. The country has generously hosted approximately 1 million refugees for the past 30 years. The majority, which mainly came from Afghanistan and Iraq, live in urban areas. Approximately 31,000 of the most vulnerable refugees are living in 20 settlements located throughout the country.

So far, Iran injected nearly 4 million doses of vaccine into Afghan citizens.



Based on the latest statistics, over 3 million Afghans are living in Iran – some 780,000 Afghan refugees, over 2 million undocumented Afghans, and another 600,000 Afghan passport-holders with Iranian visas.

It is estimated that up to 300,000 Afghan asylum-seekers have fled to Iran this year alone in search of safety, while UNHCR has only been able to screen some 24,000 newly arrived Afghans for protection needs.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Special plan prepared to attract overseas Iranian researchers

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has prepared a special plan to attract scientists and researchers living abroad, IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

The project aims to promote "supporting technological activities and startups", "postdoctoral facilities", "supporting employment in innovation centers and accelerators as a trainer and consultant", "providing facilities for opportunity studies", "providing housing facilities", "supporting employment in reputable domestic companies", "support for lectures and specialized workshops" and "support for cooperation as invited and appointed professors".

It is estimated that about one percent of all Iranian students are studying abroad, which is not above the international average of around 3 percent.

طرح ویژه برای جذب پژوهشگران ایرانی مقیم خارج

جذب محققان و پژوهشگران خارج از کشور یکی از اولویت‌های کشور محسوب می‌شود و در این راستا معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری طرحی ویژه پیشنهاد کرده است.

به گزارش ایرنا، معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، این طرح شامل «حمایت از فعالیتهای فناورانه و ایجاد شرکتهای نوپا»، «تسهیلات پسادکتری»، «حمایت از اشتغال در مراکز نوآوری و شتابدهنده‌ها به عنوان مربی و مشاور»، «تسهیلات دوره فرصت مطالعاتی»، «تسهیلات مسکن»، «حمایت از اشتغال در شرکتهای معتبر داخلی»، «حمایت از برگزاری سخنرانی و کارگاههای تخصصی» و «حمایت از همکاری به عنوان اساتید مدعو و معین» است.

بر اساس برآوردها نزدیک یک درصد از کل مجموع دانشجویان ایرانی در خارج از کشور تحصیل می‌کنند. این رقم در مقایسه با میانگین بین‌المللی که حدود ۳ درصد است، رقم بالایی محسوب نمی‌شود.

SOCIETY

JANUARY 20, 2022

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

7

Tehran, Moscow developing science diplomacy through technological co-op

From page 1 ► Designing and creating a set of necessary infrastructures between Iran and Russia for technological cooperation, including the joint fund of knowledge, skills, and technology of Iran and Russia, designing incentive mechanisms to strengthen science and technology interactions, and holding technology exchange meetings.

Aviation

The deployment of humans to space, the launch of a house of innovation in Russia, the construction of aircraft and satellites, joint research, are some of the results of Russian-Iranian cooperation, some of which are being operated and some are in the early stages of understanding.

The issue of cooperation between the two countries in the field of aerospace has a long history. Science and technology officials of the two countries held consultations at the 2015 MAKS air show to cooperate in the field of localization of aircraft construction, upgrade of defense and space systems, satellites, and satellite-based missiles so that this field also plays its share and economic value in promoting relations between the two countries.

Research

Iran-Russia cooperation with the support of the Fund for Support of Researchers and Technologists has also led to the implementation of 59 projects, which have now been completed.

Nanotech

The two nations also cooperate in the field of nanotechnology which dates back to 2005. Holding a joint conference in 2005, concluding a memorandum of understanding between the Nanotechnology Innovation Council on certification and labeling of nanotechnology in 2016, Russia's participation in the strategic committee of the International Nanotechnology Olympiad in 2017 as a member of the company have been the fields of cooperation.

Houses of innovation

Iran also inaugurated a house of innovation and technology in Russia in July 2021 by



supporting innovative ideas, holding technological and innovative events, the centers, a platform for the development and promotion of Iranian knowledge-based companies, startups, and creative industries.

Fields of cooperation

Mehdi Ghalehnoei, an official with the Vice Presidency of Science and Technology, said that "joint platform for cooperation in priority areas", "development of expert manpower", "development of cooperation in technology and innovation", "science and technology diplomacy" and "attendance at global forums in science, technology, and innovation" are the five models of cooperation among the two nations.

"Over the past five years, these technological connections with Russia have been seriously pursued and good interactions have been established between Iranian knowledge-based companies and Russian purchasers.

The fields of animation, electronic and mechanical development equipment, and telecommunications are among the fields of cooperation of researchers of Iranian and Russian knowledge-based companies, and contracts have been concluded in this field," he explained.

So far, two business delegations with more than 200 knowledge-based companies have gone to Russia in order to hold trade meetings to export Iranian products, he further highlighted.

He expressed hope that with the eradication of the coronavirus pandemic, more technological cooperation will form between Iran and Russia.

2021 one of seven warmest years on record despite La Nina's cooling effect

Last year was one of the seven warmest years on record, despite the cooling effects of the natural "La Nina" weather pattern, UN experts have said.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said a series of global datasets showed 2021 was the seventh year in a row where the temperature has been more than 1C above pre-industrial levels.

An assessment collating the six datasets, including one compiled by the Met Office and the University of East Anglia (UEA), reveals last year was around 1.1C warmer than the 1850-1900 average.

That is despite the presence of La Nina events, a large-scale cooling of the ocean surface temperatures in parts of the Pacific Ocean and changes in tropical atmospheric circulation which temporarily

cool global temperatures, in 2020-2022.

The Met Office and UEA's dataset puts 2021 as the joint sixth-warmest year on record, while other datasets put it between the fifth and seventh warmest year, with small differences between the different analyses.

The WMO said global warming and other climate impacts were expected to continue due to heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere which have continued to rise to new record highs.

WMO secretary-general, Professor Petteri Taalas said: "Back-to-back La Nina events mean that 2021 warming was relatively less pronounced compared to recent years.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 19

New cases	4,060
New deaths	19
Total cases	6,231,909
Total deaths	132,132
New hospitalized patients	330
Patients in critical condition	1,271
Total recovered patients	6,071,217
Diagnostic tests conducted	43,680,828
Doses of vaccine injected	127,216,770

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Managing Director: **Mohammad Shojaeian**

Editor-in-Chief: **Ali A.Jenabzadeh**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895

Email: info@tehrantimes.com

Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430

Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Do not feel ashamed if the amount of charity is small because to refuse the needy is an act of greater shame.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times »

Noon:12:15

Evening: 17:39

Dawn: 5:44 (tomorrow)

Sunrise: 7:11 (tomorrow)

Hafez’s poetic art

Part 7

The latter was seen as one of the most dangerous pitfalls on the path of the advanced mystic. He should guard himself by seeking the veneration of the people rather than their veneration.

Initially, this was probably no more than a literary ploy of which preachers and mystics availed themselves in their admonitions, but from the thirteenth century onwards qalandar is also known as the appellation of a dervish practicing extreme forms of asceticism and living in a group of the like-minded.

Hafez frequently poses as a rend (“debauchee”), the term which he prefers to qalandar, although it is evident from the expression rendan-e qalandar that he refers to the same figure. The rend despises conventional piety as mere hypocrisy (ria), and seeks a refuge from the mosque and the cell (sawma’a) of the ascetic in a tavern (meykhaneh) or “ruined places” (kharabat) of ill repute.

He not only prides himself in his intoxication (masti), but even regards this as his predestined fate to which he is bound since the day of the pre-mondial covenant (ruz-e alast).

He refers to the alternative rite he adheres to under various names: the doctrine of the ayyars, of the pir-e moghan, of the Zoroastrian religion, or of love; but he also calls it just “our doctrine” (maz’hab-e ma; it only forbids the drinking of wine when the beloved is not present).

The tavern is the place where the rite is celebrated and where the pir-e moghan, “the elder of the Magi” acts as a spiritual guide who reveals esoteric wisdom about the world by looking into the jam-e Jam, the beaker which by legend is ascribed to the mythical Iranian king Jamshid.

This vessel, comparable to the Holy Grail of Christian lore, is the object of a life-long quest by the poet and is in the end only to be found in his own heart. On the opposite side are those whom the poet reproaches that “they have given me the reputation of a rend” and whom he ridicules and scolds for being hypocrites.

They are the representatives of the established religious order, including the doctors of Islamic law (faqih), the preacher of conventional piety (waez) and the inspector of public morality (mohtaseb), but also the Sufis and the ascetic recluses.

Hellmut Ritter, who examined a large number of Hafez’s poems with qalandari motifs and compared them with similar poems by Attar and Sanai, concluded that Hafez was not really a mystical poet but merely a rend-mashrab: “like the qalandar, he does not withdraw from the pleasures of the world, mocks those who renounce the world and their kind, excusing his scandalous way of life by pointing to predestination, and for the rest puts his hope, in the manner of popular piety, in God’s great mercy”.

This interpretation supports the view of those modern critics who see in the ghazals of Hafez an immediate reflection of the life he must have led in fourteenth-century Shiraz. Further support for this view could be found in the frequent mention of a relationship with secular patrons and other elements which unequivocally point to the poet’s social and political environment.

On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that ever since the twelfth century antinomian

motifs had been used in a figurative sense by Persian poets. It is difficult to assume that Hafez would have reversed this unmistakable trend in the development of poetic expression, which in his own time even tended towards a complete allegorization of this imagery.

One of the problems standing in the way of reaching a conclusion in this matter is the lack of reliable information concerning the life of the poet, which would enable us to determine with what orientation his ghazals were written. The fact that his ghazals were from a very early date interpreted as mystical poems must be taken seriously, even if the interpreters of this persuasion often disqualify themselves through their zeal to disclose transcendental meaning in every word.

Another issue that was much debated, especially in the second half of the twentieth century is the internal coherence of his poems. Particularly widespread is the view that Hafez brought about a revolutionary change in the genre by giving a much greater independence to the individual couplets than earlier poets, and by treating more than one theme within a single poem.

A. J. Arberry argued that Hafez was searching for a new concept of the ghazal after the conventional form had been exhausted artistically—notably by Sadi—and devised a “thematic technique,” which means “that he constructs each lyric upon the basis of a limited number of themes selected from a repertory which is itself definitely restricted, and to a great extent conventional”.

The discussion which Arberry’s theory started was continued by (among others) G. M. Wickens, R. Rehder (see Bibliography) and in particular Michael Hillmann, who in his monograph described a number of different structural types in Hafez’s Divan. The debate has so far not resulted in a consensus.

Through frequent changes of images and motifs, Hafez creates the illusion that he also changes his subject, which may not in fact be the case. The proper analysis of the typical Hafezian ghazal demands, therefore, a fine distinction between the things expressed and the manifold ways used to express them.

The poet’s kaleidoscopic deployment of a rich and complex imagery often creates the impression of a great amount of independence for the individual couplets, and the absence of an overall encompassing structure. This may, indeed, have been one reason for the variation in the order of the couplets in different recessions that has been brought to light by philological analysis.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the use of multiple images to illustrate a single theme is a genuine aspect of Hafez’s poetic art. A good example is provided by the alternative images used in the first four lines of a poem for the beloved, who is first a gazelle, then a seller of sweets, a rose, and a hunter of birds.

In the same poem the lover appears under the guise of a tramp, a parrot, a nightingale, and a “wise bird.” The public for whom the ghazals were composed was challenged with the reconstruction of a total meaning from this wealth of suggestive details. The modern interpreter of Hafez should realize that this audience was familiar with the repertoire drawn upon by the poet, and was therefore much better equipped for the reception of this poetry than we are today.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

Concluded

Stories by Iranian writer on children individual, social rights published in English

TEHRAN – A book series by an Iranian writer teaching children their personal and social rights based on information from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been published in English.

Tahereh Shahmohammadi has created the educational series entitled “Children and Human Rights: Stories of Samin and Amin” based on ideas produced by Mohammad-Mehdi Seyyednasseri.

Illustrated by Sanaz Karimi-Tari, the series is composed of the two stories “Children and Human Rights: My Social Rights” and “Children and Human Rights: My Individual Rights”, which was first published by Zekr in June 2021.

In this collection, a boy named Amin with his little sister, Samin, ask their parents questions and the answers provide helpful information for the readers aged between five and eight.

Children and other people of different social strata needed



Front covers of the books “Children and Human Rights: My Social Rights” and “Children and Human Rights: My Individual Rights”.

to learn about their social and personal rights in order to be treated in a way observing human rights, the publisher earlier said.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international human rights treaty, which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.

The Convention defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation.

Elaheh Nobakht, Negin Ahmadi on panels of Dhaka film festival



A combination photo shows Iranian filmmakers Elaheh Nobakht and Negin Ahmadi.

TEHRAN – Iranian filmmakers Elaheh Nobakht and Negin Ahmadi are on the juries of the 20th Dhaka International Film Festival, which is currently underway in the Bangladeshi capital.

Nobakht is on the panel for the Women Filmmakers competition, which also features Turkish broadcaster Oya Dogan, Bulgarian filmmaker Yana Lekarska and Bangladeshi documentarian Mehzaad Ghalib.

Nobakht, who is also the CEO of ELI Image, an

international production and distribution film company, has been a jury member of various international film festivals such as the Religion Today Film Festival in Italy, International Oriental Film Festival of Geneva in Switzerland, Beirut International Women Film Festival in Lebanon and Mena International Film Festival in the Netherland.

Her documentary “Beloved” was screened at numerous international events, including IDFA and Berlinale, and took first place among the top five mid-length films selected by audience votes at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto, Canada 2019.

The Iranian movies “Lady of the City” by Maryam Bahrololumi, “Here Yet Absent” Fariba Chupannejad, “Maryam’s House” by Mahbub Molai and “Atabai” by Niki Karimi are competing in this section.

Ahmadi is in the Interfaith Jury for the Spiritual Films Section. Belarusian film expert Igor Soukmanov, Indian scriptwriter and director Rajni Basumatary, and Bangladeshi actor and filmmaker Nader Chowdhury are accompanying Ahmadi on the jury.

Ahmadi is the director of the acclaimed documentaries “Connie Bell”, “Shirin Days”, “Zhivai” and “Zahra Goli” on the environment and social issues.

“Dream about Sohrab” by Ali Qavitan, “Holy Bread” by Rahim Zabihi, “The Last Breath” by Faraz Fadaian, “Anahid” by Hamidreza Alipur, “Grandmother” Fardin Ansarinejad and “Nahid” Samad Alizadeh have been selected to be screened in this section.

Over 20 movies by other Iranian filmmakers are also competing in the other sections of the festival.

In the Asian Film Competition, five films, including the acclaimed dramas “Walnut Tree” by Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian and “Botox” by Kaveh Mazaheri, will be screened at the festival, which will run until January 23.

“Fathers” by Salem Salavati, “A Bumpy Story” by Kamal Tabrizi, and “On the Zero Line”, a co-production of Iran, Singapore and Japan directed by Mehrdad Ghaffarzadeh and Yoshimasa Jimbo, will also be screened in this category.

DEFC renames itself with eye on more animation production

TEHRAN – The Documentary and Experimental Film Center has renamed itself Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center to develop its productions in the field of animation.

The decision to rebrand the center has been made due to the new missions given to the center by the Cinema Organization of Iran (COI), the director of the center, Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam, told the Persian service of IRNA on Wednesday.

“The center enjoys a long history in producing short and animation films, therefore the change is in line with the center’s new missions, among which are seeking a substantial surge in the number of animations,” he added.

“Due to the significant infrastructures of the country’s animation cinema and its key



Sign of the former Documentary and Experimental Film Center.

role in the film industry and international cultural exchange, animation cinema is a strategic topic for us,” he noted.

Hamidi-Moqaddam said that the center has always regarded animation films, and many animators have continually criticized the center for its disregard of animation in its name.

He hoped for a bright future and a great development in the

number of animation films by attracting new talent in this field.

The Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center is the organizer of Cinéma Vérité, Iran’s major international festival of documentary films.

Over the past few years, experts have warned about the migration of skilled and even semi-professional people working in Iran’s animation industry.

“Disappearing Earth” appears in Persian

TEHRAN – American author Julia Phillips’ “Disappearing Earth” has been published in Persian by Ketabsaray-e Tandis.

Fatemeh Rezai-Namju is the translator of the book, which was first published in 2019.

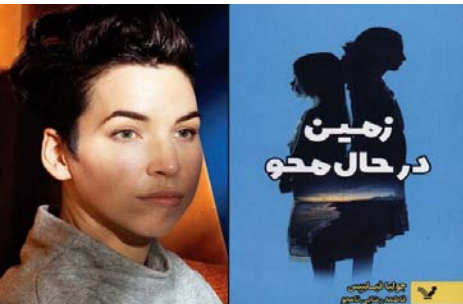
One August afternoon, on the shoreline of the north-eastern edge of Russia, two sisters are abducted. In the ensuing weeks, then months, the police investigation turns up nothing. Echoes of the disappearance reverberate across a tightly woven community, with the fear and loss felt most deeply among its women.

Set on the remote Siberian peninsula of Kamchatka, “Disappearing Earth” draws us into the world of an astonishing cast of characters, all connected by an unfathomable crime.

We are transported to vistas of rugged beauty – densely wooded forests, open expanses of tundra, soaring volcanoes and the glassy seas that border Japan and Alaska – and into a region as complex as it is alluring, where social and ethnic tensions have long simmered, and where outsiders are often the first to be accused.

In a story as propulsive as it is emotionally engaging, and through a young writer’s virtuosic feat of empathy and imagination, this powerful novel provides a new understanding of the intricate bonds of family and community, in a Russia unlike any we have seen before.

Beautifully written, thought-provoking, intense and cleverly wrought, this is the most extraordinary first novel from a



This combination photo shows author Julia Phillips and the cover of the Persian edition of her novel “Disappearing Earth”.

mesmerizing new talent.

“Disappearing Earth” was a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award for Fiction.