

Report

German navy chief resigns after saying Putin “deserved respect”

The head of the German navy has resigned just one day after saying the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, deserved respect, amid growing allegations by the West of an invasion of Ukraine and tensions between Berlin and Kiev over weapons supplies.

Speaking at a think tank meeting in New Delhi, vice-admiral Kay-Achim Schonbach, who talked in English, said the notion that Russia wanted to invade Ukraine was “non-sense” and that President Putin “deserves respect”

“What he (Putin) really wants is respect,” Schoenbach said. “And my God, giving someone respect is low cost, even no cost... It is easy to give him the respect he really demands – and probably also deserves” Schoenbach said, calling Russia an old and important country.

Before Schoenbach’s handed in his resignation, the German defense ministry criticized his remarks in public.

Less than 24 hours later, Schonbach said he had submitted his resignation “to avoid any more damage being done to the German Navy and above all, to the German federal republic”.

A German defense ministry official said Schonbach would leave his post “with immediate effect”. A ministry statement made it clear the vice-admiral’s comments did not reflect Germany’s position. ▶ Page 5

MP: Iran, Russia agreed on frameworks of 20-year cooperation document

TEHRAN — Head of the Iran-Russia parliamentary friendship group has said that during the trip of President Ebrahim Raisi to Moscow an agreement was reached with Russia to approve a long-term 20-year cooperation document.

Ebrahim Rezaei said the details of the agreement must be negotiated and all matters will be made public.

President Raisi visited Moscow on Wednesday and Thursday. He held high-profile talks with President Vladimir Putin and addressed the Russian State Duma.

According to Rezaei, the president’s visit to Russia was not a one-dimensional one, and various issues were discussed during the visit.

Iran-Russia trade exchanges, regional and international issues were important topics of talks during the visit, Rezaei said.

“The highlight of the trip was Ayatollah Raisi’s three-hour talks with Putin. ▶ Page 2

1,000 villages connected to national communication network

TEHRAN – One thousand more villages with more than 20 households have been connected to the national high-speed communication network.

Information and Communication Technology Minister, Issa Zarepour, ordered the connection of these villages in a video conference on Sunday.

According to the statistics, 32,000 villages, amounting to 81 percent, are connected to the national high-speed communication network.

Out of a total of 40,000 villages with more than 20 households in the whole country, 4,000 villages have no connection to the national information network and 3,500 villages are connected to low-speed internet.

Last week, the latest statistics of the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) reported that the internet penetration rate in Iran has exceeded 123 percent. ▶ Page 7

Daesh Steps Up Attacks in Iraq, Syria

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Annual non-oil exports expected to reach \$45b by Mar. 20

TEHRAN – Head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman-Pak has said the value of the country’s non-oil exports is expected to reach \$45 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), IRIB reported.

Speaking in a press conference on Sunday, Peyman-Pak pointed to the realization of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry’s goal for increasing the country’s non-oil exports by \$5 billion in the second half of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23, 2021-March 20, 2022) and noted that the mentioned target

has been realized sooner than scheduled.

According to the official, Industry Ministry has targeted yet another \$5 billion increase for the country’s non-oil exports in the next Iranian calendar year.

“We plan to increase the total value of non-oil exports to \$50 billion [in the next year], however, this amount is also not proportional with the country’s export capacities and we will continue to work to increase the figure,” he said.

Peyman-Pak pointed to the increase of

export incentives and the number of commercial attachés in target markets as other measures set to be taken by the Trade Promotion Organization to increase non-oil exports.

The TPO head further referred to the president’s recent visit to Russia, and said: “We have planned to increase our non-oil exports to Russia to \$7.5 billion by [the Iranian calendar year] 1404 (begins in March 2025).”

Russia imports \$250 billion to \$300 billion of commodities annually, of which our share has always been less than \$500 million. ▶ Page 4

Tourism could bind nations together, Iranian minister says

TEHRAN – Tourism is today the most effective factor in bringing nations together, Iranian tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami has announced.

Direct communication between individuals eliminates many negative attitudes toward human relations and creates a firm foundation for friendship and optimism, the minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said.

He made the remarks during a meeting with UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili on the sidelines of Fitur 2022 in Madrid on Thursday.

“Tourism is the right of everyone in the world, and it is the most effective way in the convergence of nations of the world,” Zarghami said.

For his part, Pololikashvili said that Iran is one of the main hubs for tourism in the world due to its multicultural nature, capabilities, and diversity in the field of tourism.

In terms of tourism and handicrafts, Iran can contribute to the World Tourism Organization’s goals and programs, he added. ▶ Page 6



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Leader receives eulogists

TEHRAN — A group of eulogists met on Sunday with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the birth anniversary of Lady Fatima Zahra (PBUH). The meeting took place at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyyah. At the meeting, the Leader said, “When the enemy is trying to bring economic pressure on our country in order to turn the people against Islam and the Islamic system, if you serve the people economically and socially on that day you have struggled on the path of God against the enemy.”

Senator Murphy: JCPOA exit was U.S. ‘most dangerous’ decision in 50 years

TEHRAN - Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, on Sunday described Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal as one of the “most dangerous” blunders of the United States over the last 50 years.

Murphy said Trump quit the nuclear pact, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPO), despite opposition by his secretary of defense James Mattis and secretary of state Rex Tillerson.

“Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA, a decision opposed by his Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, will go down as one of the dumbest, most dangerous foreign policy decisions of the last fifty years,” Senator Murphy tweeted.

Iran started to gradually lift bans on its nuclear program after Trump abandoned the JCPOA in May 2018. Iran did this exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal.

By quitting the deal, Trump illegally slapped the harshest sanctions in history against Iran under his “maximum pressure” campaign against the Islamic Republic.

Under the JCPOA Iran was obligated to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. It also provided the most intrusive inspection of Iran’s nuclear activities.

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Interview



Trump and supporters are greatest threat to American democracy: professor

By Mohammad Mazhari

Rogers M. Smith, a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, tells the Tehran Times that “Trump is the greatest threat to American democracy since the South sought either to establish slavery permanently or to secede in the mid-19th century.”

Joe Biden’s foreign policy, especially his administration’s tensions with Russia, China and Iran have also raised questions about if Biden is following his predecessor.

Chomsky, a renowned philosopher and outspoken critic of American foreign policy, in a recent interview with Democracy in Exile, talked about Iran and China as “alleged threats” to the United States.

Chomsky believes that the main threats that the U.S. faces are “destroying the environment that can sustain human life; the growing threat of nuclear war; the threats of uncontrolled pandemics. The United States is not taking a useful position on these.”

Other critics say that the United States is in a more perilous state of disunion. It feels as if the only thing that unites the nation is mutual hatred. America seems to be engaged in an endless war with itself.

So instead of addressing more important domestic woes that can threaten U.S. democracy and integrity, it seems that the American politicians from both major parties prefer to resort to projection. ▶ Page 5

Tehran Intl. Book Fair launches its second online edition

TEHRAN – The Tehran International Book Fair launched its second virtual edition on Saturday.

Due to the pandemic, Iran canceled its 2020 edition of the book fair and the 2021 edition was organized online.

Over 2100 Iranian and foreign publishers are offering over 200,000 titles at this year’s exhibition, Ali Ramezani, the director of the book fair, said during a ceremony held at the Iran Book and Literature House to launch the event running until January 30.

The organizers have also launched three hashtags to promote this year’s book fair, which can be found on <https://book.icfi.ir>.

One of the hashtags is #in-ketab-ra-bekhan (read this book), which is being sought by Iranian publishers and reading promoters. They offer the latest books to readers by this hashtag.

In another hashtag entitled #man-ham-ketab-kharidam (I also bought books), visitors introduce the books they have bought from the book fair. ▶ Page 8



## Poll says majority of Iranians believe Israel's adventurism must be seriously dealt with

The majority of Iranians consider Israel to be a threat and say any possible adventurism by the occupying regime must be “seriously” dealt with, according to a national opinion poll.

The findings of the national survey were published on Saturday as the Israeli regime continues its destabilizing acts in the region with unwavering support from the United States. The survey used data collected from 1106 participants using PASS software, Press TV reported.

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data from the sample population, who were 61% men and 39% women aged between 18 and 75. Forty-seven percent of the participants were classified as young, 42% middle-aged and 11% older adults.

The national poll sought to assess the approach and level of support by the Iranian people for a response to a possible Israeli military action, raising such issues as the extent to which people follow the news related to the conflicts between Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), the extent to which Iranians consider the Israeli regime to be a threat, popular acceptance of the response

action by the Israeli regime and reciprocation by the IRI as laying the ground for more economic challenges. Of those, 48% consider the challenges as a breeding ground for an economic crisis, while 41% see it as an ordinary challenge that will not lead to an economic crisis.

In the survey, 61% of respondents consider the Israeli regime to be a supporter and instigator of Takfiri terrorist groups against the Islamic Republic of Iran and a threat that must be repelled as soon as possible.

Also in the survey, 74% of the respondents do not consider the response of the IRI to the actions of the Israeli regime, such as the assassination of military commanders and scientists, as well as sabotage against the country's nuclear and public infrastructure, to be appropriate.

Of the participants in the survey, 79% were in favor of a military confrontation by the IRI with the military threats and possible destructive terrorist acts of the Israeli regime. Of the 79%, 39% are demanding a stronger response and 31% of the 79% consider the situation as an opportunity to destroy the Israeli regime.



to threats by the Israeli regime, satisfaction with current trends in countering the threats of the Israeli regime and popular reaction in case of possible military action by the Israeli regime.

“The survey demonstrated that 83% of people follow the news on the Israeli regime conflicts with the IRI. Of the 83% following the news, 32% follow it on a regular basis, 56% follow the news based on its importance, and 12% follow it occasionally. Also, 49% of people following the news on Israel believe that the domestic challenges of the Israeli regime affect its political and security instability, and 78% of the 49% believe that these challenges will lead to an implosion in Israel,” the poll showed.

On the threat issue, the survey findings said 67% of Iranians consider the Israeli regime to be a threat to Iran. Of those who see Israel as a threat, 56% believe that the threats and terrorist actions of the regime against Iran are against the identity, ideals, and political, cultural, national, and religious values of the Iranian people, and 81% see these measures as paving the way for Iranophobia.

The survey showed that 73% of Iranians consider the Israeli regime's anti-Iranian acts of terrorism and sabotage as an encouragement for imposing further sanctions on the country, thus affecting their livelihoods. Also, 69% of participants in the survey consider any military

## 25-year agreement a ‘remarkable milestone’ in Iran-China ties, says analyst

*“Comprehensive agreement will boost stability in West Asia”*

TEHRAN - The 25-year agreement signed between Iran and China last year is a “remarkable milestone” in the two countries' relationship, a senior Chinese political analyst and researcher said on Saturday.

Yilun Zhang, a research associate and administrative officer at the Institute for China-America Studies, also believes that the comprehensive partnership agreement will boost the stability and prosperity of the West Asia region.

Iran and China recently announced that the partnership agreement has gone into effect. The announcement was made while Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian visited China on January 13-14.

Chinese and Iranian foreign ministers announced the implementation stage of the 25-year cooperation agreement.

“The beginning of the implementation of the 25-year agreement is a remarkable milestone of China-Iran cooperation; this is a defining moment since the two countries announced

their comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016. Now with this new development, Beijing and Tehran can show countries in the region, and the rest of the world, that the partnership is not just about good will, but also about actions,” Yilun told Press TV.

“With more tangible outcomes produced on various fronts under the framework of this agreement, China and Iran can show the world that they are serious about being responsible players in stabilizing and deepening prosperity in Asia,” he added.

Yilun said unilateral American sanctions and the grievances over them have been a driving factor in further pushing the cooperation between China and Iran.

“The direct effect of the implementation of the 25-year agreement is the resuming of Sino-Iranian energy cooperation. China has been one of the big buyers of Iranian oil before the U.S. unilaterally imposed its sanctions on Iran and that will alleviate the situation,” the political analyst said.

# MP: Iran, Russia agreed on frameworks of 20-year cooperation document

From page 1 ► In these negotiations, as far as I know, most of the discussions were related to economic issues, although regional and international issues were also discussed,” he added.

He then went on to say that on Thursday morning, a very effective and important meeting was held with Russian economic operators at the presence of Raisi.

“The meeting was attended by Russia's largest economic companies operating in various sectors of oil and gas, petrochemicals, industry, tourism, medicine and mining, and they announced their readiness to cooperate with Iran. These people were the main economic figures of Russia, and I think the president's joint meeting with these companies was very important and groundbreaking,” Rezaei noted.

The MP then went on to say that prior to the president's visit to Russia, the ministers of economy and oil, and the deputy minister of transport and a number of state officials visited Russia, and important economic and political talks were held with Russian officials.

“In fact, the goal of these talks was to facilitate important formal agreements when Ayatollah Raisi arrived in Russia,” he added.

Rezaei then went on to say that Iran has reached good agreements with Russia for development of oil fields.

“The Minister of Oil is the Chairman of the Joint Commission of Iran and Russia and made great efforts to conclude these agreements. In the monetary and banking spheres, successful negotiations were held to break the dollar monopoly and remove the dollar from the two countries' economic exchanges. This year, the trade volume between Iran and Russia was about \$4 billion. During this trip, it was agreed to increase the volume of trade between Iran and Russia to \$10 billion,” he noted.

He then said that a good agreement was also signed during the trip for the exchange of agricultural products.

“Iran currently exports good fruits and vegetables to Russia and imports wheat from Russia. It was decided to meet our needs such as wheat from this country in exchange for exporting agricultural products to Russia,” Rezaei stressed.

According to the legislator, in the field of transport, detailed talks were held with Russian officials. He said, “Connecting the North-South corridor was an important issue. The



connection of the Persian Gulf to Europe must be done through Iran. The land and railroads of this corridor should be completed as soon as possible. Agreements were also reached in the field of maritime transport. The best, safest and cheapest route of communication between Iran and Russia is the sea route, which does not need to cross any third country.”

“In recent years, we have had problems in the countries on the exchange route to Russia, and with this action, all obstacles are removed. In this regard, I, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, had good talks with the Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the Russian Duma, in which this issue was emphasized, and we hope that this problem will be resolved in the near future,” Rezaei explained.

The MP then went on to say that the agreements signed during the visit, if implemented, will have a direct impact on the economic and living conditions of the people and the lifting of sanctions.

“The two countries have a strong will to implement bilateral agreements. Also during this trip, good agreements were made for Iran to join the Eurasian Union. Russia plays an important role in trade with the Eurasian region and the Eurasian Union Headquarters is in Russia,” he said.

He then went on to explain why it is important for Iran to join the Eurasian Union.

“If we become a permanent member of Eurasian Union, we can get exemptions and concessions. Benefit from this great trade union. The Eurasian Union's annual trade volume is \$200 billion, and if only 10% of the market is provided to Iran, Iran will receive \$20 billion in annual trade,” the expert said, adding there is a mechanism that needs to be followed.

“The agreement on Iran's

membership in Eurasian Union must be submitted to the parliament and approved so that the government can negotiate for permanent membership in the Eurasian Union,” he suggested.

Rezaei went on to venture guesses about the pro-Western movements, saying they are not happy with the policy of looking to the East of Iran.

“When in power, they distanced themselves significantly from the Eastern bloc to gain Western approval, which they did not succeed in doing,” the legislator remarked.

He then said that the Western media is advancing U.S. policies and seeking to destroy Iran-Russia relations.

“Experience has shown that the rapprochement of Iran and Russia is extremely detrimental to Western interests in the region. An example was in Syria. The United States acted as Daesh's air force in Syria. The cooperation of Iran and Russia in Syria, together with the bravery of General Soleimani and his friends, led to Iran's success in the fight against terrorism. In fact, Iran and Russia prevented the United States and the West from achieving their goals. However, the United States has seen this successful experience of cooperation between Iran and Russia, and it is natural that by using its media army with creating fuss and controversy, seeks to downplay the president's visit to Russia and undermine it so that the main goals of this trip be portrayed as less valuable. I emphasize that the president's visit to Russia was a strategic trip in line with national interests. The fact that Mr. Raisi has chosen Russia as his destination for his first bilateral visit shows that the government is determined to neutralize the sanctions and overcome U.S. unilateralism,” Rezaei analyzed.

Rezaei then explained that the Iran-Russia agreement is not secret.

He added that the ministers

provided detailed information about the agreements, although some of the Russian companies involved in the deal may not be named, as they may be subject to U.S. sanctions, but the provisions of the Iran-Russia agreement have been made clear to the public.

“During the trip, a 20-year long-term agreement was agreed with Russia. The details of this agreement must be negotiated and all matters will be made public in a transparent manner. According to the constitution, any foreign agreement must be approved by the Majlis (parliament), so the 20-year agreement between Iran and Russia must also be approved by the Majlis and be clearly announced to the people,” he reiterated.

Regarding the agreements with Russia to build a new power plant in Iran, he said that Iran owes money to Russia, and agreements were made to pay this debt.

“Also, units two and three of the Bushehr power plant are being built with the cooperation of the Russians, each of which will produce 1,000 megawatts of electricity, which will increase the power generation capacity of Iran's nuclear power plant to 3,000 megawatts. During this trip, good negotiations were held to finance these projects,” he explained.

Units two and three of the Bushehr power plant are being built with the cooperation of the Russians.

He also said Iran and Russia have reached agreement in the field of aerospace and aerospace industries.

### Iran won't wait for Vienna talks

Regarding the Vienna talks to revitalize the 2015 nuclear deal, he said that there is good cooperation between Iran and Russia in Vienna and the role of the Russians in the talks is constructive.

“This trip will strengthen Russia's position in the Vienna talks in favor of Iran,” he assured.

Rezaei went on to say that the message of the trip to the United States and Europe is that Iran is not suspending the 2015 nuclear pact and the agreements reached in Vienna.

“Iran has reached and concluded important agreements with major countries such as China and Russia. The government has acted on its slogan that we will not wait for the talks, which is the most important message to the Europeans and the Americans,” he reiterated.

## ‘Setting deadlines won’t affect Iran’s position in Vienna’

TEHRAN — A member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament has said that good steps have been taken in regards to removal of illegal sanctions on Iran, Fars reported on Sunday.

Fada Hosseini Maleki said that the Vienna talks are underway in the two areas: lifting sanctions and nuclear steps.

“In the areas of sanctions, very good steps have been taken and the other side has accepted that there is a determination in the new (Iranian) government that all sanctions should be lifted,” Maleki stated.

The MP added that the negotiations on the nuclear steps are difficult because the other side is seeking

excessive demands about Iran's nuclear program.

However, he said, Iran will not back down from its rightful position and this has made the pace of negotiations a little bit slow.

After Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and imposed the harshest sanctions on Iran, the Supreme National Security Council of Iran announced in May 2019 that Tehran's strategic patience is over and ordered a gradual removal of bans on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. The move was in accordance to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which has provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of

compliance.

Maleki added that setting a time for the conclusion of the talks is a “forward escape” for the other side, which can both be used for domestic purposes and putting pressure on Iran.

“Setting deadlines will have no effect on Iran's position,” he reiterated.

On the United States' military threats against Iran, Maleki, a former diplomat, said Iran considers military option as a political bluff.

“The military option has domestic purposes for the U.S., because this issue will never be operational, as Iran also has a lot of options on the table,” he concluded.

## Qalibaf says Iranian foreign policy is realistic, multilayered

TEHRAN — Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Sunday that Iran's foreign policy is realistic and multilayered.

Qalibaf said the government has adopted such a policy in order to tap all the country's strategic capacities.

Such a policy will open a new chapter in relations with other

countries and will ensure national interests, he said, adding such a policy is primarily aimed at seeking advantage of the country's economic potential.

“Today a balanced foreign relationship based on independence and national dignity and pragmatic diplomacy and a realistic

understanding of the multipolar system governing global relations is an undeniable necessity,” the senior MP asserted.

Qalibaf continued that this approach is intended to benefit from all the capacities of the international system.

“I hope that the correct approach

of the government in using the capacities of neighboring countries and looking at the East in practice and focusing on the country's diplomatic apparatus will lead to removing obstacles to economic growth and development and achieving tangible economic benefits,” he concluded.

## Iran to regain UN vote after dues paid with frozen funds

TEHRAN — Iran is expected to regain its vote in the United Nations General Assembly after South Korea paid Tehran's delinquent dues to the United Nations with Iranian funds frozen in the country, Seoul says.

Sunday's announcement echoed a similar situation where Iran regained

its UN voting rights in June 2021 after it managed to make the payment on its debts.

Earlier this month, however, Iran announced that U.S. sanctions had impeded its ability to pay for the second year in a row.

Any release of Iran's frozen funds requires the approval of the United States.

In 2018, then-president Donald Trump took Washington out of the 2015 nuclear deal - JCPOA -, and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Iran later Seoul “on

Friday completed the payment of Iran's United Nations dues of about \$18 million through the Iranian frozen funds in South Korea, in active cooperation with related agencies such as U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control and the United Nations Secretariat,” the finance ministry said in a statement.

“Iran's right to vote at the General Assembly is expected to be restored immediately with the payment,” the ministry added.

Iran urgently asked South Korea last week to help pay the UN contribution

with the frozen funds on concerns of the loss of its right to vote in the 193-member General Assembly, the South Korean ministry said.

Tehran has repeatedly demanded the release of about \$7bn of its funds frozen in South Korean banks because of U.S. sanctions, saying Seoul was holding the money “hostage.”

A South Korean finance ministry official declined to say how much of the Iranian frozen funds remain after this payment of UN dues and another release last year, citing confidentiality laws.



# Daesh steps up attacks in Iraq, Syria

TEHRAN – Terrorists affiliated with the Daesh terrorist group have stepped up their attacks simultaneously in Iraq and Syria, raising fears over the resurgence of terrorism in a politically divisive atmosphere in Iraq.

Eleven Iraqi soldiers were killed in the early hours of last Friday in an attack carried out by Daesh. The attack took place in the Diyala governorate, eastern Iraq. It happened out of the blue. The Daesh terrorists raided an Iraqi Army barracks in the Al-Adhim county and killed all the troops stationed there including a number of officers. The attackers escaped after the attack.

The attack was remarkable in terms of the casualties. Iran announced the defeat of Daesh in 2017 and since then the terrorist group was unable to mount large-scale attacks, though it continued its hit-and-run raids in regions over which Iraqi armed forces lack tight control.

Daesh has increased the pace of its sporadic attacks in Iraq in recent months, operating from safe havens away from the eyes of the authorities. Diyala was its favorite theatre where a series of attacks raised alarm bells in Baghdad. In late December, released footage showing an Iraqi officer with the Iraqi Interior Ministry being decapitated.



The officer, named Yaser al-Jourani, had been abducted by Daesh while on a hunting trip a week earlier.

In October last year, Daesh sought to play on sectarian disputes in Diyala. It launched bloody attacks in the governorate that sparked sectarian violence. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said at the time that Daesh was looking for a foothold in Diyala.

Iraqi security forces launched counterattacks to eliminate the threats posed by Daesh.

Daesh also went on a rampage in neighboring Syria, where it is fighting a bloody battle with Kurdish forces in the Syrian city of Al-Hasakah. Daesh forces attacked a prison in the city to release their

fellow terrorists.

Over 120 people have been killed in the fight over the control of Ghweran prison in Hasaka, northeast Syria, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).

The fighting continued for the fourth consecutive day in northeastern Syria between Daesh and the Kurdish forces, which are responsible for Ghweran prison, which includes more than three thousand suspected members of Daesh.

Some Daesh inmates have fled the prison.

Syria's Foreign Ministry has condemned "the actions that led to the displacement of thousands of Syrian citizens in Al-Hasakah Governorate

and increased their suffering."

In Iraq, the government is taking precautionary measures to prevent any Daesh attacks. Iraqi security forces closed down the entrances to the capital Baghdad as security measures were tightened.

A spokesman for the Iraqi Armed Forces Command had previously stated that the border would be completely secure as security measures were tightened along the Iraqi-Syrian border after a number of Daesh terrorists escaped from the Hasakah prison in Syria.

The Iraqi official also stressed that the remnants of Daesh are not capable of confronting Iraqi forces and are in no way a threat to the security apparatus.

The reoccurrence of Daesh attacks came at a time when Iraqi political factions are going through intense talks to appoint president and form a new government in the coming weeks. Cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose factions won the greatest number of seats in the recent parliamentary elections, has not reached an agreement yet with other Shia factions over who would be the next prime minister of Iraq.

Some observers have posited that Sadr may need to hammer out a deal will his Shia rivals soon given the gravity of the security situation.

## Iranian and Turkish presidents hold phone talks

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has received a phone call from his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In their telephone conversation, the presidents of Iran and Turkey discussed bilateral and regional relations and stressed the need to strengthen the level of cooperation and coordination between Tehran and Ankara, according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

In the phone call, Ayatollah Raisi referred to the capacity to develop Tehran-Ankara relations and cooperation at bilateral and regional levels, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has a long-term and comprehensive vision in relations and cooperation with Turkey and we welcome planning for strategic cooperation with Turkey."

President Raisi stressed the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries as the only way to lasting security and stability in different parts of the region.

President Erdogan, for his part, expressed interest to visit Tehran soon, stating that Turkey has prepared a list of various economic cooperation to strengthen relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Emphasizing the continuation of Turkey's energy supply by Iran, the Turkish president said, "Turkey considers Iran a reliable supplier of energy and seeks to increase the level of its cooperation with Tehran."

Referring to Ayatollah Raisi's visit to Moscow and meeting with President Putin, Erdogan expressed hope that the results and useful achievements of this visit will soon be felt in various regions, and stressed his country's cooperation with Iran for achieving

regional security.

Raisi and Erdogan met in late November during the former's visit to Turkmenistan. During that meeting, Raisi said, "Iran and Turkey can bring economic and political relations closer to the strategic level by improving the current level of trade and exchanges."

Referring to the wide and diverse areas of cooperation between Iran and Turkey in various sectors, including energy, banking and monetary issues, and trade and commerce exchanges, Raisi said, "We should facilitate the development of economic relations and in this regard, preferential tariffs can be reviewed."

Emphasizing the close cooperation and relations between Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkey, the president said, "The three countries have many cultural, religious and ideological commonalities, and these relations should not be allowed to be disrupted, but should be as close as possible to disappoint our common enemies."

"Terrorist groups not only cause insecurity in Afghanistan but also threaten the security of the region, so we should not allow terrorist groups such as Daesh and the PKK to threaten the security of countries in the region," he said.

The president added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran supports formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and we believe that all groups and ethnicities in Afghanistan should have a role and participation in the future of Afghanistan."

Insisting on the need to stabilize and create security in Syria, Ayatollah Raisi said, "We should use our capacities to create peace and

security in Syria."

He added, "The problems of the region must be resolved by the countries of the region, and the presence and intervention of outsiders not only will not help solve the problems, but will complicate the situation."

President Raisi also stressed the importance of stability, peace and respect for the territorial integrity of Iraq, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran supports and emphasizes the establishment of a strong government accepted by the Iraqi people."

During the meeting, the Turkish leader also said that his country considers it necessary to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation with Iran.

"We can make a leap in the relations between the two countries, especially in the economic sectors," he said.

Erdogan also said, "The White House is training and arming all terrorist groups in the region, including Daesh and the PKK, and providing them with terrorist equipment and tools to create insecurity."

He added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia and Turkey can maintain security and stability in the region with the cooperation of other countries in the region."

In mid-November of last year, Raisi met in Tehran with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Mevlut Cavusoglu. During this meeting, Raisi said, "By finalizing the roadmap for development of cooperation, the draft of which is on the agenda of the two countries, Iran and Turkey are ready to upgrade relations from the current level to all-inclusive cooperation."

countries, especially allies."

Noting that a fundamental agreement was reached during the visit to expand comprehensive, stable and beneficial relations between the two countries, the president added, "Undoubtedly, the development of relations with Russia will contribute to the security and welfare of the two nations."

He said, "I hope that the visit to Russia will be a turning point in improving relations with the friendly and neighboring country of Russia, and that the combination of these relations will help improve the level of security in the region and resolve regional and global crises."

In a speech delivered before the Russian State Duma, Ayatollah Raisi said Iran seeks "maximum interaction" with all countries around the world with the aim of forming a "civilized global community".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks 'maximum interaction' with all countries around the world, especially its neighbors and allies. The purpose and basis of this cooperation and interaction is the mutual interests of nations and the increasing formation of a 'civilized global community'. This path can be achieved through the cooperation of independent countries with high cultures and attention to the principles of 'justice, morality and spirituality'. Undoubtedly, the root of what human society suffers from today is the separation of politics from morality and spirituality. Violence, terrorism, the collapse of the family institution, and the spread of drugs do not come from a spiritualist mind-set. Any structure created on the basis of this segregation intensifies the suffering of humanity and, instead of promoting justice, structures oppression and creates the roots causes of domination," he stated.

## SPORTS

### Skocic names Iran squad for Iraq and UAE matches

TEHRAN – Iran national football team coach Dragan Skocic announced his 27-man list for Iraq and the UAE matches in the 2022 World Cup qualification Round 3.

Iran will host Iraq in Group A in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Thursday. The 'Persian Leopards' will also host the UAE five days later.

South Korea and Lebanon are also in the group.

Iran will qualify for the 2022 FIFA World Cup for the third time in a row with a win over Iraq.

Group B consists of Japan, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, China and Oman.

Group winners and runners-up will qualify for the 2022 World Cup. The third teams will play a two-legged playoff. The winners then advance to an inter-confederation playoff, to be played June 2022.

#### Goalkeepers:

Alireza Beiranvand, Amir Abedzadeh, Payam Niazmand

#### Defenders:

Shoja Khalilzadeh, Hossein Kanaanizadegan, Milad Mohammadi, Omid Noorafkan, Sadegh Moharami, Saleh Hardani, Siavash Yazdani, Majid Hosseini

#### Midfielders:

Milad Sarlak, Ahmad Nourollahi, Alireza Jahanbakhsh, Saeid Ezatollahi, Vahid Amiri, Saman Ghoddos, Mehdi Torabi, Ali Gholizadeh, Ehsan Hajisafi, Allahyar Sayyadmanesh

#### Strikers:

Karim Ansarifard, Sardar Azmoun, Mehdi Taremi, Mehdi Ghaedi, Shahab Zahedi, Kaveh Rezaei

### Aluminum held by struggling Padideh: IPL

TEHRAN – Aluminum football team were heled to a 2-2 draw against struggling team Padided in Matchweek 16 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Sunday.

Amir Nouri was on target for Aluminum but Milad Kamandani equalized the match.

Omid Sing gave Aluminum the lead once again from the spot with nine minutes remaining.

Mohammadreza Fallahian leveled the score in the added time.

Furthermore, Paykan defeated Naft Masjed Soleyman 2-1 in their away match, Tractor and Gol Gohar shared the spoils in a goalless draw and Zob Ahan suffered a 1-0 home loss against Sanat Naft.

Havadar and Esteghlal match was called off after several players of Esteghlal tested positive for COVID-19.

### Iran too strong for Tajikistan in CAFA Women's Futsal Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Tajikistan 12-0 in the CAFA Women's Futsal Championship 2022 on Saturday.

Fereshteh Karimi (three goals), Sara Shirbeigi (three goals), Sahar Papi (two goals), Mahsa Ali Madad, Fatemeh Papi, Nesa Ahmadi and Fereshteh Khosravi were on target for Iran.

Iran, who started the competition with a 5-2 win over Uzbekistan, will face Kyrgyzstan on Monday.

The four-team competition is being held at the Dushanbe Multi-functional Sports Complex from Jan. 21 to 28.

Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan compete in the tournament.

The teams will play each other twice.

The Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) is an association of the football playing nations in Central Asia.

### Iran lose to China in AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022

TEHRAN – Debutants Iran suffered a heavy 7-0 loss against China in the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2022 at the Mumbai Football Arena on Sunday.

Iran, who started the competition with a goalless draw against hosts India, will play Chinese Taipei on Wednesday in Group A.

Wang Shuang (28th, 49th), Wang Shanshan (55th, 59th), Xiao Yuyi (43rd) and Tang Jiali (77th) scored for Chinese team.

Fatemeh Adelei scored an own goal in the 83rd minute.

### Mazlouni re-elected as head of Iran's Blind Sports Federation

TEHRAN – Mohammadreza Mazlouni was re-elected as president of the Iran's Blind and Partially Blind Sports Federation for a four-year term till 2026.

In the elections held at the Iran's Academy Olympic in Tehran, Mazlouni secured 44 of 49 votes cast.

Rouzbah Zoraghi finished in second with 5 votes.

Mazlouni has been chosen as president of the Blind Sports Federation for the third time in a row.

### Leverkusen complete signing of Iranian striker Azmoun

TEHRAN – Bayer Leverkusen have confirmed the signing of Sardar Azmoun from the summer of 2022, with the Iranian international joining from Zenit St. Petersburg on a five-year contract.

Azmoun, a 27-year-old forward with an eye for goals and assists, will compete for a place in Leverkusen's starting attack with Patrik Schick and Lucas Alario when he makes his move to Bundesliga football in the summer.

"[It is] a step from the best club in Russia to one of the best leagues in Europe," he told the Bundesliga club's website.

"Bayer Leverkusen have a really great squad. I've been keeping an eye on the club for a long time and am impressed by the team's style of play. It's incredibly exciting for me soon to be able to play in the Bundesliga. And I'm convinced I'll make the team even better with my footballing ability."

Capped 60 times by Iran, an impressive 39 goals for his country compliments his selection for the World Cup in 2018 and two Asian Cup squads in 2015 and 2019.

As well as being the youngest Iranian to score in a UEFA Champions League game, he is also the Iranian record-holder for the most goals scored in the competition with six goals.

He has spent his professional career entirely in the Russian top flight with two spells each at Rubin Kazan and Rostov preceeding his transfer to Zenit in 2019.

In St. Petersburg, he has found the net 62 times in 104 appearances across all competitions. He was named Russia's Footballer of the Year for 2021 and his impressive goal stats have continued into this season, in which he has scored 10 goals in 21 games – including two strikes in the Champions League.

"We're delighted to have completed this transfer," said Leverkusen's sporting director Simon Rolfes.

"Sardar Azmoun has been one of Russian football's top goalscorers for several years. He's been champion three years in a row there with Zenit, regularly played in the Champions League and shown himself to be of international class at the highest level. Our attack gains extra quality with him. Sardar will make our attack even more unpredictable and powerful."

## Heads of the three branches discuss Raisi visit to Russia

TEHRAN – Heads of the three branches of Iran's government held a meeting on Saturday to discuss domestic and international issues, including a recent visit by President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi to Russia.

The weekly meeting of the heads of the three branches, hosted by President Raisi, discussed the most important domestic and international issues, according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

The president's two-day visit to Russia and the achievements of the visit in developing relations between Tehran and Moscow, as well as emphasizing the strategic importance of regional and international cooperation between the two countries, especially opposition to unilateralism, were among the topics discussed at the meeting.

The issue of reviewing the 1401

national budget in the special committee of the Majlis (parliament) and the need to pay attention to taxes, goals and orientations of the budget in accordance with the capacities and resources of the country were also discussed.

The next Iranian fiscal year starts on March 21, 2022.

Ayatollah Raisi paid a two-day visit to Russia last week where he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He has expressed hope that his recent visit to Russia would be a turning point in improving relations between Tehran and Moscow.

Upon returning from a two-day visit to Russia, Ayatollah Raisi spoke to reporters about the achievements of the visit, saying, "The topics of discussion in this visit were in line with the realization of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy, which is maximum interaction with world



## Home appliance exports reach \$212m in 9 months



TEHRAN – Iran exported \$212 million worth of home appliances during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021) to register a four-percent rise year on year, an official with the country's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

Speaking in a specialized roundtable titled "Business models in the home appliance industry; Opportunities and Challenges", TPO Deputy Head for Marketing and Trade Relations Aboutaleb Badri put the total value of home appliance exports in the previous fiscal year at \$308 million.

According to Badri, the exports of the mentioned products in the previous year had also increased by four percent compared to the figure for its preceding year, IRNA reported.

He pointed to the fight against the smuggling of such products as an effective factor contributing to the growth and development of the production of home appliances and said: "The strong dependence of home appliance industry on importing raw materials, the large number of home appliance production units and the need for the indigenization of the technology in this industry are among the problems and challenges faced by producers."

## Majlis approves general outlines of a bill on supporting production units

TEHRAN – During an open session of Majlis (Iranian parliament) on Sunday, the MPs approved the general outlines of a bill on supporting the country's factories and production units, IRNA reported.

The mentioned bill was approved after the parliament's Industries and Mining Committee presented a report on the mentioned bill to the

Referring to the trade potential of Eurasian countries, Badri said: "Exporters and producers should use the opportunity that the trade agreements with these countries has presented."

Over the past few years, the Iranian government has been following a new strategy for supporting domestic production to neutralize the impacts of the U.S. sanctions while reducing the reliance of the economy on oil revenues.

The home appliances sector has been one of the pioneers in this regard and like many other areas, the production of home appliances has witnessed a significant rise in the past two years.

Back in October 2021, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi Amin said the country's home appliance exports are set to become twice as much as the volume of imports by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (starts in March 2025).

Speaking in a meeting with the representatives of the country's home appliance manufacturers, Fatemi Amin said: "Statistics show that the export of home appliances is much less than the imports in this sector."

Emphasizing that despite the growth of production in the home appliance industry, the ratio of exports to imports is not defensible, the official added: "This trend should change so that the exports to imports ratio would double by 1404."

"Plans should be made so that next year we will see a 50 percent growth in exports over imports," he said, noting that an appropriate trade balance in the home appliances industry is the next goal in this sector for the Iranian calendar year 1402 (begins in March 2023).

parliament.

Supporting domestic production has become a major goal of the Iranian government over the past two years as the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei has repeatedly stressed the need for promoting domestic production and cutting reliance on foreign sources.

# Annual non-oil exports expected to reach \$45b by Mar. 20

From page 1 ► the official regretted, adding: "This year we plan to increase this figure to \$750 million."

According to Peyman-Pak, considering Russia's imports in various areas including import of \$8 billion of agricultural products, \$44 billion of foodstuff, \$1.5 billion of marine industry equipment in addition to other imports like tiles, ceramics, cement, petrochemicals, bags, shoes and textiles, Iran can easily realize the target of \$7.5 billion of exports to Russia.

**Returning export revenues increased 10-15%**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Peyman-Pak pointed to the

facilitation of the process of re-injecting export revenues into the country's economic system, and noted: "In the last quarter, with the diversification of the ways for returning foreign currency and the alignment of forex and trade policies, the rate of export revenue return has increased by 15-10 percent."

During these few months, we have tried to accelerate the growth trend of exports by facilitating the process of export revenue returns and supporting exporters, while moving towards the export of goods that have a better competitive advantage and more added value.

He noted that various



measures were taken during this period to improve the trade balance and increase non-oil exports, including the special attention of senior government officials to export and trade issues through reviewing the problems of traders and solving challenges by holding various meetings with other officials and with traders.

"We tried to make decisions in coordination with the representatives of the chambers of commerce, guilds, cooperatives, unions and associations, and this process while creating empathy with exporters, also had a positive effect on the country's foreign trade balance," he said.

**Exports to Turkey, Afghanistan on an upward trend**

Touching upon the Industry Ministry and TPO's plans for increasing exports to the neighboring countries, Peyman-Pak said: "Despite the challenges in the two markets of Afghanistan and Turkey, with the follow-up and cooperation between the government and exporters, exports have accelerated in recent months, and we hope that this upward trend will continue."

He also referred to the TPO's programs for diversification of export methods, saying that 620 cases of barter trade have been sent to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

## 2,000 industrial projects being implemented across Iran

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has said currently 2,000 industrial projects are being implemented across the country in which over 60 trillion rials (about \$212.7 million) has been invested, IRNA reported.

Ali Rasoulman mentioned increasing the production of active industrial units and reviving idle units as major goals of his organization and the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, noting that so far 1,700 idle industrial units have been revived in the country.

Reforming the administrative structure, serious support for industries, and monitoring the payment of facilities to industrial units are other priorities of the Industry Ministry, the official stressed.

In mid-November 2021, Rasoulman had said 1,600 new industrial units were put into operation in industrial parks across Iran since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021) up to the mentioned date.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony of two industrial units in Khorasan Razavi Province, the ISIPO head had noted that the mentioned units created jobs for over



30,000 people.

He mentioned ISIPO's new program for the construction of small workshops for companies that do not have a high financial capacity and said: "The small industries organization has started a new program for the development of small workshops in industrial parks and zones, based on which establishing 1,800 workshops is on the agenda."

According to the official, completion of semi-finished industrial units, especially those that are in the process of installing machinery is also among ISIPO's major priorities.

Rasoulman further mentioned his organization's plans for reviving idle

industrial units and said more than 887 units had been revived since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year up to the said date.

The official noted that the new phase of the program for assessing the units in industrial parks was started two months ago and 60 major issues that the country's industrial units are currently facing have been identified and reported to ISIPO.

Back in September 2021, Rasoulman had announced the allocation of 10,000 hectares of land for the development and construction of industrial parks across the country.

The index for development of Industrial parks in the country has increased by five percent, the official said in a ceremony for signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between ISIPO and the Industrial Engineering Basij Organization.

"To fulfill its two main tasks, which are to establish industrial parks and providing appropriate infrastructure and support for industrial and production units, ISIPO has developed various support programs and incentives to enable companies and production units to do business with ease and in proper conditions," Rasoulman said.

## Caviar export to EU resumed

TEHRAN – Iran has resumed the export of farmed caviar to the European Union member states, the head of Iran Veterinary Organization announced.

Mohammad Aqamiri said, "The resumption of exports of Iranian farmed caviar products to the European Union is due to the efforts of my colleagues in the veterinary organization".

Iran exported over four million tons of caviar as well as one million tons of sturgeon meat worth about \$16 million in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021), an official with the Iran Fisheries Organization has stated.

According to Naser Karami-Rad, Iran is expected to become the world's second or third biggest caviar producer over the next ten years.

According to Arezu Ghaniyoun, the deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Bureau of Customs Statistics and Information Processing, Iran exported 1.3 tons of caviar worth \$539,000 in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2021), registering a 50 percent rise in terms of value



compared to the figure for the previous year's same period.

The Islamic Republic had exported 605 kilograms of caviar worth \$350,000 during the previous year's same six months.

Iranian caviar was exported to 23 different countries during the mentioned time span, Ghaniyoun noted.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the main importer of Iranian caviar during the said six months, accounting for about 32 percent of the total imports in terms of weight and value. Britain stood in second place, accounting for nearly 17 percent of the total

caviar imports.

Portugal, Kuwait, and Japan, each accounting for about six percent of Iran's total caviar exports, were also among the top importers of the product in the first half of the current year, according to Ghaniyoun.

**Iran exports 4m tons of caviar in past Iranian year**

She noted that about 466 kg of the total exported caviar was exported to five European countries, namely Britain, Spain, Switzerland, Greece, and Portugal, which means about 37 percent of Iran's caviar exports were to Europe.

Back in July, 2021, IFO Head Nabiollah Khoun-Mirzaei said

the country's annual caviar production has reached 12 tons.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Sixth National Conference and Exhibition on Caviar and Related Industries, Khoun-Mirzaei put the annual production of sturgeon meat at over 3,500 tons.

He stated that the development of the sturgeon breeding industry is on the IFO agenda, adding: "In recent years, in some parts of the country, sturgeon breeding in cages has been on the agenda and we are trying to develop this type of breeding."

Noting that the Iranian caviar is the best and most expensive caviar in the world, Khoun-Mirzaei said: "Considering the popularity of Iranian caviar and sturgeon meat in the world and the high price and profitability of the mentioned commodity, the export of the product is done officially through the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA)."

The Persian sturgeon is a species of fish in the family Acipenseridae. It is found in the Caspian Sea and to a lesser extent the Black Sea and ascends certain rivers to spawn, mainly the Volga, Kura, Araks, and Ural Rivers.

## TEDPIX drops 25,000 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 25,254 points to 1.256 million on Sunday.

Over 5.941 billion securities worth 35.494 trillion rials (about \$419.68 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index fell 20,744 points, and the second market's index dropped 43,586 points.

TEDPIX lost 55,000 points (4.3 percent) to 1.279 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, Isfahan Oil Refinery, Tehran Oil Refining Company, Iran Khodro Company, Saipa Company, and National Iranian Copper Company were the most widely followed ones.

Capital market in a country eliminates the enterprises' need for external financing that requires forex rate risk; and plays an important role in risk sharing and the effectiveness of capital allocation in various economic sectors, and as a result increases economic growth and welfare in society.

In Iran, where the capital market plays a small role in the long-term financing of enterprises, the government can play an important role in the development of the capital market and take initiatives to develop this market and increase its efficiency.

Two recent measures taken by the Iranian government indicate that the government is determined to support the capital market and strengthen this market's role in the national economy.

The first one was the six clauses in the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21) on supporting the capital market.

The budget bill, submitted by president to the parliament on December 12, has paid special attention to the capital market and bourse companies.

The measures considered in the budget bill and its overall positive effects on the capital market includes 1- Reforming the price of gas feed, as well as electricity, water, oxygen and other utilities for the petrochemical units, refineries, steel reduction units, and downstream industries 2-Reducing taxes on production units active in the stock market 3-Strengthening Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund 4- Reducing the government's revenue from selling bonds 5-Eliminating subsidized foreign currency allocations 6- Eliminating pre-ordered pricing.

Reducing the taxes imposed on production units will make them more profitable and therefore their performance in the stock market will improve.

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

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

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



From page 1 ► Asked about to what extent the threats raised by partisan politicians and media outlets in America are real, Professor Smith tells the Tehran Times that “although the U.S. certainly does have severe domestic problems it urgently needs to address, it is wrong to think that China, and to a lesser degree Iran, pose no threat to its interests.”

The professor adds, “China is presenting its undemocratic model of government as the one that other nations should emulate in the 21st century.”

The U.S. officials have always accused China of repressing political dissidents and religious minorities as well as endeavoring to make nations around the world economically dependent on it.

Professor Smith believes the U.S. has legitimate interests in opposing the policies of these countries.

Returning to internal challenges that may undercut U.S. democracy, especially by Republicans and Trump’s efforts to cast a doubt on integrity of U.S. democracy, Smith argues that “they are the greatest threat to American democracy since the South sought either to establish slavery permanently or to secede in the mid-19th century.”

Though many political observers regard Trump and his supporters as a minority faction who are firmly repudiated by a majority of the American people, many Republicans are seeking to take over American electoral processes.

“They want to declare themselves the winners even as they continue to lose the popular vote nationally and in many states,” Professor Smith emphasizes.

“This is the very definition of opposition to democracy.”

While Democrats are accusing

# Trump and supporters are greatest threat to American democracy: professor



Republicans of undermining democratic principles in some states by putting limits on the voting process, Republicans blame Democrats for political and economic corruption.

Asked about how these major parties balance each other, the American academic says, “The traditional defense of the two-party system, which has no basis in the American Constitution, is that it promotes stability in a huge, diverse, often divided nation.”

Today many Americans believe that antiquated and outdated

constitutional institutions like the Electoral College can undermine the voices of ordinary people.

In the 2016 presidential election, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton garnered more national votes; however, she lost to Trump due to the Electoral College.

“Clearly, today it is not promoting stability. The United States would be wise to change its electoral institutions to give more opportunities to third parties,” Smith notes. “But one thing that the two parties still agree on is that they don’t want to do that, as it endan-

gers their oligopoly of power. It’s still better than one-party rule, however.”

The U.S. as a liberal democracy suffers a big gap between the rich-class and ordinary people. Also at international level it has been backing autocratic Arab regimes because of their oil and money. Trump was outspoken when he called Saudi Arabia a milk cow.

Professor Smith confirms that both domestically and internationally the United States has often failed and continues to fail to live up to its liberal democratic principles fully. “These failures deserve criticism. It is nonetheless also true that the United States often has supported and achieved significant advances in liberal democracy, at home and abroad. No human institutions are perfect; indeed I have heard it said that nothing human is perfect, only Allah and I suspect that’s right.”

However, many critics predict that «the American polity is cracked, and might collapse». Thomas Homer-Dixon in his piece for the Globe and Mail has claimed “the U.S. is becoming increasingly ungovernable; it could descend into civil war.”

But Professor Smith rules out the U.S. would witness once again a civil war like what happened in the 1860s.

“I do not think we will have the kind of civil war we did in the 1860s, but we do face grave dangers of governmental gridlock, rising violence, scattered attempts at secession, all producing a significant decline in American peace, prosperity, and public safety.”

He concludes that “Americans have overcome grave challenges in the past, so there is no cause for despair; but it is urgent that we rise to the exceptionally serious challenges we face today.”

## German navy chief resigns after saying Putin “deserved respect”

From page 1 ► the Ukrainian foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, had summoned Germany’s ambassador to Kiev to protest “the categorical unacceptability” of Schonbach’s comments.

Kuleba also criticized Germany for its refusal to supply weapons to Kiev, urging Berlin to stop “undermining unity”.

The German defence minister, Christine Lambrecht, says Berlin would send a field hospital to Ukraine but has once again rejected Kiev’s calls for weapons.

Lambrecht says “weapons deliveries would not be helpful at the moment – that is the consensus within the government”.

The United States and Britain have pressed ahead with arms sales to Ukraine including anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.

The ratcheting up of military sales comes at a time of increased tension as U.S.-led NATO forces have been expanding eastwards toward the Russian border.

The latest arms sale by the UK represents a step up from existing British military commitments. Until recently the UK has focused on selling ships and naval equipment to Ukraine, announcing a £1.7bn deal to supply two mine sweepers and jointly build eight ships for its small Black Sea fleet last year.

The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden has told Congress that it gave approval to four fellow NATO members that had purchased U.S.-produced weapons systems to instead send that equipment to Ukraine.

The Biden administration will also hand over to the Ukrainian government five transport helicop-

teign Ministry to stop engaging in provocations.

According to a representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry who spoke to the country’s state news agency, the misinformation campaign by the British Foreign Office is further evidence that these are the NATO countries, led by the Anglo-Saxons, that are escalating tensions around Ukraine

Moscow has called on the UK’s Foreign Office to stop engaging in provocations. That is how the Russian Foreign Ministry reacted to a recent statement by its British counterparts about plans Moscow is allegedly making regarding Ukraine.

“The misinformation spread by the British Foreign Office is another evidence that these are the NATO countries, led by the Anglo-Saxons, that are escalating tensions around Ukraine. We call on the British Foreign Office to stop provocative activities, stop spreading nonsense and focus on studying the history of the Tatar-Mongol yoke”, the Russian official said.

Earlier, Britain accused Russia of a shadowy plot to install a pro-Kremlin government in Kiev alleging that Moscow is weighing up a further invasion of Ukraine.

In a move that even Britain media described as “highly unusual” and claimed to be based on specially declassified intelligence, the UK Foreign Office alleged that a former Ukrainian MP (Yevgeny Murayev) was “being considered as a potential candidate” as a new leader in what would be a significant escalation of the crisis.

The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office made the announcement in a brief statement, but it failed to elaborate further on how this plan would be achieved or where the information was obtained from.



ters, among other weaponry.

Last year, the Pentagon announced a \$125 million military aid package for Ukraine, including two armed patrol boats.

The Pentagon said another \$150 million in military aid approved by Congress for the 2021 budget year will be provided when the departments of State and Defense are in a position to certify to Congress that Ukraine has made “sufficient progress on key defense reforms this year”.

Critics accuse the United States and its NATO allies off busily arming Ukraine and engaging in other actions in a reckless strategy that only served to encourage some leaders in Kiev to falsely believe that they have strong Western backing.

The U.S. Embassy in the Ukrainian capital posted photos on social media of large green-colored crates being unloaded from a cargo plane. The crates held almost 100 tons of “lethal aid”.

Some analysts have accused NATO of raising tensions to increase their own country’s weapons manufacturing amid a pandemic hit economy.

Russia has massed it’s own troops on its border with Ukraine for defensive purposes, demanding that it’s neighbor Ukraine never becomes a member of Nato and insisting on other security guarantees all in line with previous agreements struck between Moscow and Washington.

Last month, Russia sent proposals to the U.S. and NATO for treaties with security guarantees. However, those initiatives were rejected by the West last week following a series of diplomatic negotiations.

Moscow has consistently rebutted claims made by Western media and senior officials, according to which Russia is allegedly planning to invade its neighbor any day now. The Kremlin has called the idea “fake news,” while raising issues with the fact that some Western nations are sending weapons to Ukraine.

Elsewhere, Russia has called on the British For-

## Gitmo’s shameful twentieth anniversary

It is time for President Biden to turn the page once and for all on this sordid chapter in our nation’s history.

The U.S. prison at the Guantánamo Bay naval base reached its shameful 20th anniversary of operations on January 11 — with a legacy marked by the detention of nearly 800 Muslim men and boys, the majority of them held without charge or trial for years and many subjected to torture and other cruel and inhumane treatment.

President Biden has so far failed to take consequential action during his first year in office to fulfill his pledge of closing the prison before his term ends. His administration has in fact done the opposite and is now reportedly spending millions of dollars to upgrade it.

Without taking bold action, Biden risks following in President Obama’s footsteps of empty promises that ultimately perpetuate an untenable status quo. Meanwhile, the remaining 39 prisoners and our nation’s rule of law still languish.

### Prolonging the Prison

Weeks after taking office, Biden initiated an interagency review of operations at Guantánamo. He has since overseen the release of only one prisoner, Abdul Latif Nasser from Morocco, even though 13 of the remaining 39 men had been approved for release by high-level U.S. government review processes.

Nasser spent 19 years at Guantánamo without charge before being freed last July. His release, however, had already been negotiated and approved during the Obama administration in 2016.

On the day of Gitmo’s 20th anniversary, the Pentagon announced that five more detainees held for years without charge have been approved for release, now bringing that total to 18. If Nasser’s case is any indication, however, detainees could still remain imprisoned at Gitmo well into or even beyond Biden’s presidency, with no seeming urgency in sight.

In a perhaps telling move, President Biden has not yet reestablished a special envoy position at the State Department created under President Obama to close Guantánamo. His contradictory approach to the prison is also evident in his administration’s latest plans to build a second courtroom at Gitmo for continued military commissions trials, likely to cost American taxpayers \$4 million, as the New York Times reported on December 29, 2021. This suggests prolonging the prison rather

than closing it.

The new courtroom aims to have military judges holding proceedings simultaneously by 2023, and disturbingly when it comes to transparency, will ban the public from the chamber.

### A Legal Black Hole

Additional courtroom space will not address the real reasons behind the Kafkaesque judicial process at Guantánamo however. More importantly, the prison was intentionally designed to be a legal black hole for bypassing the US Constitution and international law.

It was created in 2002 by then-President Bush during his “War on Terror” to ostensibly house those Vice President Dick Cheney declared “the worst of the worst,” but it has since become synonymous with blatant abuse and injustice.

Searing and dehumanizing images have emerged of prisoners in bright orange jumpsuits kneeling before U.S. soldiers, shackled, handcuffed, hooded, and blindfolded. Grisly human rights violations have also been exposed. Prisoners have been subjected to extraordinary rendition and documented acts of physical and psychological torture, including extended sleep deprivation and waterboarding during CIA “enhanced interrogations,” as well as religious persecution and humiliation for their Islamic faith.

Subsequent military commissions at Gitmo have further thwarted justice and transparency. These commissions have deprived detainees of their fundamental due process rights, including the right to meaningfully challenge the basis of their detention in federal court, as affirmed by the Supreme Court in the Boumediene v. Bush ruling of 2008. The Court’s earlier 2006 decision in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld also held that the military commissions used to try detainees at Guantánamo violated both U.S. law and the four Geneva Conventions.

Further, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty ratified by the U.S., not only prohibits torture under any circumstance, but also arbitrary and indefinite detention of any person without charge.

### Getting Around Congress

While Biden has sought to expand Gitmo facilities, Congress has also put up roadblocks to closing it. The 2022 defense authorization bill, which Biden signed last December, extends prohibitions on transferring Gitmo detainees to the U.S. or other countries. This effectively

prevents Biden from shutting down the prison, a fact he acknowledged while still signing the bill into law.

To bypass this congressional funding freeze, which also stymied Obama’s efforts to close Gitmo, President Biden can and must pursue executive action to honor his pledge.

He should use his executive authority to empower the Justice Department to pursue plea agreements in federal courts, which attorneys and human rights organizations have advocated. For the 12 men at various stages of military prosecution, Biden, as commander-in-chief, should pursue negotiated resolutions to their cases rather than rely on the failed military commissions, as Department of Defense attorney Ian Moss recommends.

Of the remaining 39 detainees, those already cleared for release and others who have not faced criminal charges should be immediately repatriated to their home countries if possible or resettled in third countries with security guarantees.

And fundamentally, meaningful accountability and remedy for decades of human rights abuses at Guantánamo must follow. As Human Rights Watch and the Watson Institute’s latest report reiterates, “The U.S. government has failed to hold account the key architects of post 9/11 unlawful renditions, detentions, and torture.”

While America’s longest war in Afghanistan may have ended, each day the Guantánamo prison remains open tarnishes our global standing. The indefinite detention of these prisoners without charge, alongside their mistreatment, flouts U.S. and international law. Furthermore, the end to war in Afghanistan has also eroded any legal justification that the U.S. may have had for their continued detention.

More personally for detainees, it means another day of confinement, without seeing their children and families. As five former prisoners wrote in an open letter to President Biden, “Some of us had children who were born in our absence and grew up without fathers. Others experienced the pain of learning that our close relatives died back home waiting in vain for news of our return. Waiting in vain for justice.”

The Guantánamo prison should never have reached its 20th anniversary. It is time to turn the page once and for all on this sordid chapter in our nation’s history.

(Source: antiwar.com)

## Biden will travel to Japan for an in-person summit of Quad leaders

U.S. President Joe Biden will travel to Japan this spring for an in-person summit of Quad alliance members, the White House said after Biden spoke with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Friday.

Details on the timing of the meeting of the Quad – a regional security alliance including the U.S., Japan, Australia and India – have yet to be worked out, with arrangements dependent on the spread of Covid-19.

The virtual meeting featured

wide-ranging discussions on the U.S.-Japanese military alliance, tension in the Taiwan Strait and China’s growing nuclear arsenal, a senior administration official said.

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The two leaders also agreed to a new “2+2” forum aimed at strengthening economic cooperation – especially technology and supply chain issues – between the two nations and across the region.

“The close alignment between United States and Japan was really on full display – so, very broad discussion on security, on views about the challenges in the Indo Pacific,” including “very in-depth discussions” on China, the administration official

said.

These included shared concerns about “some of the steps that China had taken across the board in terms of intimidating neighbours, taking steps that were predatory trade in other realms,” he added. “Prime Minister Kishida was particularly concerned about the nuclear build-up in China and what that augured for regional security.”

Nuclear containment is an issue of particular urgency for Japan – the

only nation to suffer nuclear attacks – and for Kishida, who is from Hiroshima.

The U.S. Defence Department estimates that China has some 350 deliverable nuclear warheads, a figure that could double by 2027 and triple by 2030. While these are a fraction of the estimated 6,200 warheads for Russia and 5,600 for the U.S., according to Federation of American Scientists, Beijing has balked at joining nuclear arms control agreements.



## Tourism could bind nations together, Iranian minister says



From page 1 ► Zarghami and Pololikashvili also exchanged views on developing rural tourism and food tourism.

Last week, the deputy tourism minister Ali Darabi announced that Iran needs to get ready for a probable “tsunami of tourism” once the coronavirus pandemic is over.

“The Iranian government should get fully prepared for a surge and potential tsunami of tourism when COVID-restrictions are over.”

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

Earlier this month, an official with the tourism ministry announced that the Iranian 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.

## Exhibit of handmade leatherwork underway in Tehran

TEHRAN - A delicate collection of handmade leatherwork has been put on show at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Tehran.

The five-day exhibition features hags, belts, hats, and gloves among other works, which are handcrafted by an Iranian couple who are natives of Hamedan province, CHTN reported.

The event is aimed to highlight quality works made of natural leather, the organizers said.

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

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts



exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

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.

# Discover Sahoolan: a huge matrix of sunless ponds and grottoes

TEHRAN – Sahoolan cave embraces a huge matrix of sunless ponds and grottoes with many natural stones on the walls that are shaped like different objects such as dolphins or lions. The outside is also very beautiful and green best to take a walk in nature.

Situated in northwest Iran, the cave with the geological structure of water, soil, and limestone is one of the most wonderful and unique natural caves of the country located at the height of 1751 meters above sea level.

The Sahoolan cave is the second water cave of Iran after Alisadr cave Ali Sadr, which is stretched along imposing rock formations and stalactite-covered tops for several kilometers.

Sahoolan is estimated to date back to the end of the Cretaceous period some 70 million years ago based on the geological activity and it was a residence and shelter for the human during the second and first millennium BC.

French mining engineer and geologist Jacques de Morgan (1857-1924) first studied Sahoolan cave some 100 years ago and after that by an English group during the years of World War II and then by Iranian speleologists in the 1990s.

According to Visit Iran, the cave is constructed of some large ponds, linked together by water channels. Currently, 300



meters of the waterway and 250 meters of the waterless route of it have been discovered and organized. This cave has two main entrances with a way between them and it is possible to enter from one of them and exit from the other one.

The height of the cave roof from the surface of the lake is about 50 meters and the depth of water in some places is near 30 meters.

The temperature difference of the cave and the outdoor is between 10 to 15 degrees and

the cave humidity is variable between 70 to 80 percent so that the surface of the stones and rocks has been covered by moss due to high moisture.

Wild pigeons and bats are the only organisms in the cave. No alga grows up in the water of the cave due to the darkness and lack of light and no organisms live there except for the microscopic organisms. Calcareous sediments in various shapes inside the cave and the beautiful cressets are the eye-catching landscape of the cave.

Also, there are some facilities for tourists inside and around the cave. The cave roof covered with pure calcium carbonate is about 10 meters upper than the height of water in some parts and it has been mixed with other elements in some other parts. The cave sediments in various and attractive shapes can be seen in abundance where there is no water.

The interior view of the cave is scenic and its weather is cool in summer and warm and pleasant in winter. Moreover, some proceedings have been done to increase the waterways for boating and the land routes for visit ways, and some new beautiful scenery has been created in the cave.

For sightseers, there are some accommodation facilities and entertainment services around the cave in northwest Iran.

## Kerman to facilitate travels to UNESCO-registered Lut Desert

TEHRAN – Kerman is set to facilitate travels from its main gateway to the UNESCO-registered Lut Desert, which is encircled by three Iranian provinces.

Tourism authorities of the southern province aim to facilitate travels to the Shahad desert, which is inside Lut, and a gateway to the UNESCO-designated desert.

“We want to provide better conditions for the presence of sightseers in the Shahdad region as it is of special importance in the field of tourism,” provincial tourism chief Fereydoon Fa’ali said on Saturday.

Shahdad has long been a destination for adventurers, nature lovers, off-roaders and trekkers. It is home to giant dunes (locally called kaluts), shifting sands, salt plains, meteorite fields and rocky terrain, which offers visitors a breathtaking vistas and unparalleled serenity of the intact nature and wilderness.

“268 authorized tours the been made to Shahdad region since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21, 2021),” the official added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official expressed the need for increased cooperation by three provinces that encircle



the tranquil desert. “A comprehensive plan should be prepared to enhance travels to Lut Desert.”

“By preparing and implementing this plan, we can be more successful than before in developing all-inclusive tourism and security infrastructure.”

“Some 40,000 square kilometers of Lut Desert is situated in Kerman province,” he said.

Also called Dasht-e Lut (“Emptiness Plain”), the salt desert is encircled by the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan, and South Khorasan. Seven years of satellite temperature data analyzed by NASA showed Lut was the hottest spot on Earth with a temperature of 70.7°C in 2005.

The scorching desert is one of the top areas in the world for finding meteorites, thanks to its unique parameters. In recent years, significant finds have been made, with the efforts of national and international teams of researchers.

Lut is situated in an interior basin surrounded by mountains, so it is in a rain shadow and, coupled with high temperatures, the climate is hyper-arid. A steep north-south pressure gradient develops across the region in spring and summer causing strong winds to blow across the area between June and October each year.

“These long periods of strong winds propel sand grains at great velocity creating transportation of sediment and aeolian erosion on a colossal scale. Consequently, the area

possesses what is considered the world's best examples of aeolian yardang landforms, as well as extensive stony deserts and dune fields.”

These areas consist of active dunes some reaching heights of 475 m and are amongst the largest dunes in the world. The Lut Desert displays a wide variety of forms, including linear-, compound crescentic-, star-, and funnel-shaped dunes. It is home to giant Nebkha dune fields (dunes formed around plants) as well.

“The region has been described in the past as a place of ‘no life’ and information on the biological resources in this area is limited. Nevertheless, the property possesses flora and fauna adapted to the harsh conditions including an interesting adapted insect fauna,” the UN body said.

The wintertime is itself a perfect excuse for a vacation but to some people, visiting a desert region sounds like “something else”. Some visitors to Lut say it feels almost like walking across a seabed without water.

Furthermore, those who set up camps are well rewarded when the sun sets to prepare the ground for a very bright moon and extremely vivid stars to show off in the absolutely clear sky of the desert.

## Staircase of majestic Ali Qapu undergoes restoration

TEHRAN – A restoration project has recently been commenced on the staircase of the 17th-century Ali Qapu Palace, an element of the UNESCO-registered Imam Square in Isfahan province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The project involves cleaning the stair decorations physically and chemically, strengthening the gypsum and paint layers, and restoring surfaces damaged by memorabilia, Alireza Izadi said on Sunday.

“Aside from balancing the colored surfaces of fresco decorations, the project also involves stabilizing these surfaces,” the official added.

The project is being carried out by experienced restorers under the supervision of cultural heritage experts, he noted.

Best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning “Image of the World”), the property is hemmed on four sides by magnificent buildings;

to the east, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; to the west, the palace of Ali Qapu; to the north, the portico of Qeyssariyeh; and to the south, the eminent the Imam Mosque.

Soaked in a rich history and culture, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran. Now, it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city is filled with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The city has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into “half the world”; meaning seeing it is relevant to see the whole world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.



Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its ‘life-giving river’, the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.

## Judicial building in Bander-e Anzali to turn into museum

TEHRAN – A historical judicial building in Bander-e Anzali of Gilan province is planned to be turned into a museum dedicated to history, law, and sports, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The museum will open its doors to the public as soon as possible when the building and its premises are fully restored, CHTN quoted Vali Jahani as saying on Saturday.

“The ancient port city of Bandar Anzali has numerous capabilities in the fields of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts, so the preservation and restoration of its historical monuments have been a priority for us”, the official added.

Situated 40km from Rasht, the capital city of Gilan province, Anzali port is among

the most equipped and modern ports in the southern margins of Caspian. Being located in the free zone, Anzali provides some special facilities and possibilities for merchants and investors which makes it of the main ports in the Caspian Sea.

Founded in the early 19th century, the town, which is bounded by the Caspian Sea, was occupied by the Russians in 1920. During World War II the port was modernized, and traffic greatly increased as a consequence of the U.S. lend-lease program for the Soviet Union.

Interesting among other attractions of the city is Clock tower, Anzali Bridge, and Ghazian Bridge in addition to Mian Poshteh Palace which has been transformed into the Military Museum today. Polish



Cemetery is also a memorial of World War II and the burial ground of Polish evacuees who escaped from Poland and come to Iran after the Nazi attack on their country.

The summers in Anzali are warm and humid and the winters are temperate. The port city is also characterized by high average annual humidity. The most important edible souvenir of the city is fish in addition to olive, garlic, various pickles, and local vegetables.



# Dam reservoirs shrink by 22%

TEHRAN – The total volume of water in dam reservoirs is estimated at about 20.8 billion cubic meters since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2021), showing a 22 percent decrease compared to the same period last year.

The precipitation rate during autumn (September 23-December 21, 2021) was not very favorable, as the Meteorological Organization has considered this autumn one of the driest seasons in the past 50 years.

But the situation has improved a bit during the winter, with relatively good rainfall in the country.

The latest report from the National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center shows a 4 percent increase in rainfall in comparison with the long-term average, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The total volume of water input to the country's dams since the beginning of the current water year is equal to 8.6 billion cubic meters, which shows a decrease of 18 percent compared to the same period last year.

Iran's dam reservoirs stand at 50.5 billion cubic meters.

Out of a total of 183 currently operational dams across Iran, 52 are related to the Caspian Sea catchment area, 12 are based in the Urmia basin, 68 dams are located in the Persian Gulf and



the Gulf of Oman watersheds, 34 dams are in the Central Plateau, 11 dams are in Sarakhs catchment basin, and another six dams are located across the eastern boundary basin (Hamoun).

Renewable water resources have decreased by 30 percent over the last four decades, while Iran's population has increased by about 2.5 times, Qasem Taqizadeh, deputy minister of energy, has said.

## Groundwater resources declining

A recent report by Nature Scientific Journal on Iran's water crisis indicates that from 2002 to 2015, over 74 billion cubic meters have been extracted from aquifers, which is unprecedented and

its revival takes thousands of years along with urgent action.

Three Iranian scientists studied 30 basins in the country and realized that the rate of aquifer depletion over a 14-year period has been about 74 billion cubic meters, which is recently published in Nature Scientific Journal.

Also, over-harvesting in 77 percent of Iran has led to more land subsidence and soil salinity. Research and statistics show that the average over-draft from the country's aquifers was about 5.2 billion cubic meters per year.

Mohammad Darvish, head of the environment group in the UNESCO Chair on Social Health

that the situation of groundwater resources is worrisome.

The report notes that Iran's water consumption has increased due to a significant increase in legal and illegal wells, the expansion of agricultural land, and increasing livelihood dependence on water and soil resources in agriculture, livestock, and poultry, which are mainly caused by human factors, Darvish noted.

The statistic is unprecedented, as the total reservoirs of all dams in the country have a capacity of about 50 billion cubic meters; In other words, in the last 14 years, 22 billion cubic meters more than the capacity of all dams have been extracted from the country's underground sources, he explained.

## Iran's dam reservoirs stand at 50.5 billion cubic meters.

## Female Iranian students runner up at IDA 2022

TEHRAN – Three industrial design students of Tehran's Al-Zahra University won second place in the educational toy design category of the International Design Awards (IDA 2022).

Created in 2007, the International Design Awards aims to recognize, celebrate and promote exceptional design visionaries and discover emerging talent in Architecture, Interior, Product, Graphic, and Fashion Design worldwide.

The annual IDA competition is held in five categories of Architectural Design, Interior Design, Graphic Design, Fashion Design, and



Product Design.

Parnian Jamali, Najmeh Fanoudi, and Sajede Ashrafpour proposed a project called

"Greeone", and won the Silver rank in the educational toy design category.

Greeone is designed for children aged 6 to 9 and its main goal is to bring children closer to nature and highlight togetherness. As all components of this product are durable and can be recycled or reused.

The game begins with solving five puzzle pieces in the shape of a mountain that represents five continents, then the child plants 5 microgreens and takes care of them until they grow, and then harvest the plants and use them in food.

## 1,000 villages connected to national communication network

From page 1 ► 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.

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.

According to the statistics, 32,000 villages are connected to the national high-speed communication network.

## 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.

## SOCIETY

JANUARY 24, 2022

Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

7

## Jazmourian wetland overflows

TEHRAN – Recent heavy rainfalls have led Jazmourian wetland to be filled by 100 percent, Marjan Mirshakeri, head of Kerman province's department of environment, has said.

According to the latest observations of satellites, the wetland is fully filled and flooded the surrounding villages.

For the past 40 years, the highest amount of rainfall has poured over the wetland this year, IRNA quoted Mirshakeri as saying on Sunday.

The excessive withdrawal of groundwater resources and permanent drought over the past years along with low precipitation and high-temperature rates, have led the wetland to dry up, and become a hotspot for sand and dust storms, she explained.

Nestled between the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan, Jazmourian is one of the two major wetlands in southeast Iran,



which is on the knife-edge of complete desiccation as a result of climate change, excessive dam construction, and the depletion of groundwater resources.

The area of Hamoon and Jazmourian basin stretches to 69,600 square kilometers, with the western part of 35,600 square kilometers in Kerman province and the eastern part of 34,000 square kilometers in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

## Nanoplastic pollution found at both of Earth's poles for first time

Nanoplastic pollution has been detected in polar regions for the first time, indicating that the tiny particles are now pervasive around the world.

The nanoparticles are smaller and more toxic than microplastics, which have already been found across the globe, but the impact of both on people's health is unknown.

Analysis of a core from Greenland's ice cap showed that nanoplastic contamination has been polluting the remote region for at least 50 years. The researchers were also surprised to find that a quarter of the particles were from vehicle tyres.

Nanoparticles are very light and are thought to be blown to Greenland on winds from cities in North America and Asia. The nanoplastics found in sea ice in McMurdo Sound in Antarctica are likely to have been transported by ocean currents to the remote continent.

Plastics are part of the cocktail of chemical pollution that pervades the planet, which has passed the safe limit for humanity, scientists reported on Tuesday. Plastic pollution has been found from the summit of Mount Everest to the depths of the oceans. People are known to inadvertently eat and breathe microplastics and another recent study found that the particles cause damage to human cells.

Dušan Materi?, at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and who led the new research, said: "We detected nanoplastics in the far corners of Earth, both south and north polar regions. Nanoplastics are very toxicologically active compared to, for instance, microplastics, and that's why this is very important."

The Greenland ice core was 14 metres deep, representing layers of snowfall dating back to 1965. "The surprise for me was not that we detected nanoplastics there, but that we detected it all the way down the core," said Materi?. "So although nanoplastics are considered as a novel pollutant, it has actually been there for decades."

Microplastics had been found in Arctic ice before, but Materi?'s team had to develop new detection methods to analyse the much smaller nanoplastics. Previous work had also suggested that dust worn from tyres was likely to be a major source of ocean microplastics and the new research provides real-world evidence.

The new study, published in the journal Environmental Research, found 13 nanograms of nanoplastics per millilitre of melted ice in Greenland but four times more in the Antarctic ice. This is probably because the process of forming sea ice concentrates the particles.

In Greenland, half the nanoplastics were polyethylene (PE), used in single-use plastic bags and packaging. A quarter were tyre particles and a fifth were polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is used in drinks bottles and clothing.

Half the nanoplastics in the Antarctic ice were PE as well, but polypropylene was the next most common, used for food containers and pipes. No tyre particles were found in Antarctica, which is more distant from populated areas. The researchers took samples only from the centres of the ice cores to avoid contamination, and tested their system with control samples of pure water.

Previous studies have found plastic nanoparticles in rivers in the UK, seawater from the North Atlantic and lakes in Siberia, and snow in the Austrian alps. "But we assume the hotspots are continents where people live," said Materi?.

The researchers wrote: "Nanoplastics have shown various adverse effects on organisms. Human exposure to nanoplastics can result in cytotoxicity [and] inflammation."

"The most important thing as a researcher is to accurately measure [the pollution] and then assess the situation," Materi? said. "We are in a very early stage to draw conclusions. But it seems that everywhere we have analysed, it is a very big problem. How big? We don't know yet."

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 23

New cases	5,144
New deaths	28
Total cases	6,250,490
Total deaths	132,230
New hospitalized patients	362
Patients in critical condition	1,208
Total recovered patients	6,080,343
Diagnostic tests conducted	44,046,094
Doses of vaccine injected	128,640,395

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries worldwide

Some 105 medical equipment produced by 23 Iranian companies are exported to 55 countries across the world, Reza Masaeli, an advisor to the health minister said on Sunday.

"Currently, a total of 280,000 medical equipment is produced in the country," Fars quoted Masaeli as saying.

"In recent years, the production of medical equipment in Iran has increased by 9 percent," he added.

One of the main strategies of the Health Ministry is to boost exports, he said, adding that Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries including Russia, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Croatia.

So far, a series of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been signed for export of medical equipment to various countries, including Brazil, Iraq and Oman, Masaeli stated.

## تجهيزات پزشکی ایرانی به ۵۵ کشور دنیا صادر می‌شود

مشاور وزیر بهداشت گفت: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می‌شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می‌شود.

به گزارش گروه اجتماعی خبرگزاری فارس، رضا مسائلی، اظهار داشت: در کشور بیش از ۲۸۰ هزار قلم تجهیزات پزشکی در کشور وجود دارد و در سال‌های اخیر، تولیدات تجهیزات پزشکی در جمهوری اسلامی ایران، ۹ درصد افزایش داشته است.

وی توجه به صادرات را یکی از مهمترین راهبردهای اساسی وزارت بهداشت در راستای حمایت از تولیدات داخلی دانست و افزود: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می‌شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می‌شود.



