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Report

Gun violence epidemic surges in Biden's first year

Gun violence prevention advocates were hopeful a year ago that the Biden presidency would make progress on gun control.

Instead, during his first year in office, they are feeling disappointed and frustrated.

According to the Gun Violence Archives, during Joe Biden's first year as president, the U.S. saw a total of 44,868 gun-related deaths in 2021.

In comparison, there were 15,727 deaths in 2017 during former President Donald Trump's first year in the White House.

Traditionally Republicans supported by gun lobby groups oppose any firearm regulations. This is while Democrats generally support stronger gun regulations and reforms.

However, analysts say Trump left a toxic environment behind that saw a record number of firearm purchases after he left office and a polarized nation.

He also tapped into an extremist ideology that according to the American Enterprise Institute's Survey Center has seen a rise in white militias who embrace the use of violence to achieve their goals.

Following two mass shootouts in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, in 2019 Trump blamed violence in video games, the internet, and mental illness, but not guns, as the cause of the slaughter that left at least 31 dead and 53 injured in less than 24 hours. ▶ Page 5

Leader advisor: A new era has begun in Iran's foreign policy

TEHRAN — A senior military advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said on Monday that a new era has begun in the life of Iran's foreign policy.

"The policy of cooperation with the East and comprehensive development with China and Russia has astonished and inactivated Western enemies and regional rivals," Major General Rahim Safavi told the National Conference on Iran and Neighbors.

As Iran is preparing to celebrate the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has become an undeniable regional power, the general remarked.

He added, "The theoretical concept and policy of Iran's neighborhood policy is that how we want to draw up and plan our strategy of politics, economy, security, tourism, academia and environment with each of the 15 neighboring countries in the next 20 years."

Safavi said Iran's goal is to achieve common understanding and interests, achieve sustainable development, and to counter threats. ▶ Page 2

Iran book their place at 2023 World Men's Handball Championship

TEHRAN — Iran booked their place at the 2023 World Men's Handball Championship with a heroic performance against Kuwait on Monday.

The Persians defeated Kuwait 27-26 in Group II of the 2022 Asian Handball Championship and qualified for the competition's semifinals.

Iran will participate in the 2023 World Handball Championship for the first time since 2015 in Qatar.

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

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

Vienna Talks at Risk of Impasse Due to U.S. Intransigence

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NIDC digs 62 oil, gas wells in 10 months

TEHRAN- National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 62 oil and gas wells during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-January 20, 2022), an official with the company said.

According to Masoud Afshar, the deputy head of NIDC for drilling operation, the drilled wells consisted of four development, four exploratory, and 54 workover ones.

The official stated that 46 of the mentioned wells were drilled in the operational zone of the National Iranian South Oil Company

(NISOC), nine wells were drilled in the fields under the supervision of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC), three in the fields under the operation of Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), one in the field under the supervisor of Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC), and two in the operational zone of the drilling management department of the National Iranian Oil company (NIOC).

Since the beginning of this year, the drilling area of the wells has reached 65,493 meters, he said, and added that 14 drilling rigs are

being relocated in the operational positions.

NIDC owns 70 light, heavy and super-heavy drilling rigs, including 67 onshore drilling rigs and three offshore rigs.

The company managed to carry out 10,182 meters of horizontal and directional drilling in 43 oil and gas wells across the country during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021), according to the Head of NIDC's Special Operations Department Ali Daqaeyeqi. ▶ Page 4

New traces of Neanderthal sites discovered in northcentral Iran

TEHRAN — A team of archaeologists has discovered new traces of Neanderthal sites during its intensive field survey conducted on vast areas of barren lands in Eyvanekey, northcentral Iran.

Led by Iranian archaeologist Seyyed Milad Hashemi, the team has found a considerable number of stone tools, some of which underwent laboratory examinations, ILNA reported on Sunday.

"This survey was conducted in an area of about 890 square kilometers to identify distribution patterns of possible Paleolithic sites and examine the traditions of ancient toolmaking in the western region of Semnan province," Hashemi said.

"Preliminary studies indicate the sites in which the relics discovered to belong to the Middle Paleolithic and Neolithic periods." ▶ Page 6



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Rowers compete at rowing league

TEHRAN — The Iranian rowers competed at the 7th edition of the Iran rowing league in Tehran's Azadi Lake.

In the halfway point of the league, Tekro club finished in first place, followed by Ofogh Varzesh and Azad University. The Iranian men and women rowers participated in the competition. The rowers prepare for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Intl. Conference on Persian Gulf Oceanography underway in Tehran

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — The 5th International Conference on Persian Gulf Oceanography kicked off in Tehran on Monday.

The conference has been organized by the Iran Meteorological Organization (IMO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

the Ministry of Oil, Ports and Maritime Organization, Department of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Sahar Tajbakhsh, head of the IMO, said in the opening ceremony said that the purpose of the conference was to use the scientific capacity of elites and executive experiences; emphasizing the importance of constant

monitoring of coastal, offshore, and international waters.

The issue of sea, ocean, and reconnaissance are very important to the country in terms of maritime, security, and economic fields, so we must prioritize the study of oceanographic sciences and climate change, she highlighted. ▶ Page 7

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Interview

NATO has long made Russia uneasy, Columbia University professor says

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Robert Y. Shapiro, the former chair of the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, says that NATO has long made Russia uneasy by expanding its presence in Russia's sphere of influence that has caused tensions.

"Russia has shown similar concerns but NATO has long made Russia uneasy and the expansion has caused much greater tensions as did the end of the Soviet Union and its satellite supporters," Shapiro tells the Tehran Times.

"Unlike the Cuban crisis, NATO expansion did involve nuclear weapons in the hands of the new NATO members closer to Russia's border," he adds.

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

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

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

Ruholamin creates new painting on birth of Fatima (SA) in live stream

TEHRAN — Fans watched from their homes as artist Hassan Ruholamin created his new work on the birth of Hazrat Fatima (SA) in a program live-streamed online on his Instagram.

The untitled work created over two consecutive days, was unveiled by Ruholamin on Sunday to celebrate the birthday of the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

He donated the artwork to Hey'at Online, a platform that streams Islamic religious meetings for free. The platform also provided a live stream for the program.

The painting shows the Prophet Muhammad (S) holding the newborn Fatima (SA) in his arms as an angel is seen right beside him.

36-year-old Ruholamin, whose paintings mostly revolve around stories from the history of Islam, has unveiled many of his works during Islamic religious occasions.

"Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein Bidding Farewell to Hazrat Fatima (SA)", a painting depicting Imam Hassan (AS) and Imam Hussein (AS) in final farewell. ▶ Page 8

Iran: Interim nuclear agreement never been on our agenda



TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday that the Vienna talks are moving forward in the right direction.

“What we are witnessing today in Vienna is the progress of the talks in the right direction. We have made good progress in all four areas (sanctions removal, verification, guarantees, and nuclear issues)..., some documents the parentheses and discrepancies have decreased,” Saeed Khatibzadeh said in his weekly press briefing.

He also said that the great success in Vienna has been the fact that many of Iran’s initiatives have become “words”, including in the field of guarantees.

The diplomat continued, “It is important that everyone involved in the talks in Vienna agreed that what happened in previous years with the illegal withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) should not be repeated. The principle that guarantees must be considered has been agreed upon by all. We presented the fully operational and realistic ideas in Vienna, and we believe that these ideas have enabled us to discuss guarantees.”

Khatibzadeh added that Iran is in Vienna for an agreement that has two main features: durability and reliability.

“That is why the path to obtaining guarantees is an important path,” he pointed out.

Commenting on U.S. Special Envoy for Iran’s remarks on the possibility of reviving the JCPOA on the condition that Iran would release four U.S. citizens held in Iran, the diplomat said that Iran has never accepted any preconditions from day one.

“I believe that the negotiations are complicated enough and should not become more complicated by making sophisticated statements,” he asserted.

He then went on to discuss the issues of the Iranian citizens held in the United States, saying that the diplomatic apparatus has expressed its grave concerns about the situation of Iranian nationals detained in the United States from the beginning.

“Due to the human nature of this story,

whether directly or indirectly, before or during the negotiations, this issue was on our agenda, but these are two different paths. This human issue can be resolved in the shortest possible time if the United States adheres to the agreements it has already made. Unlike our nationals who have been taken hostage in the United States, under the pretext of circumventing illegal and extraterritorial sanctions, the U.S. citizens in Iran have gone through the competent court proceeding,” he noted.

The Foreign Ministry official stated that there are two different paths regarding the Vienna talks and the prisoner exchange and they are separate, but if the opposite side has the will, “we can reach a stable and reliable agreement in the shortest possible time on both issues.”

Khatibzadeh added that Iran’s position on what is being discussed in Vienna is clear.

“The agreement we are looking for is stable and reliable and will not accept anything less,” he reiterated.

He added that what is valid to Iran is the quality of what is agreed upon, but nothing less and nothing more.

Khatibzadeh stressed, “An interim agreement or something like that has never been on our agenda. We must all try to reach an agreement. We hope that the European Union representative has conveyed to the United States that we have a serious need to reach a qualitative and substantive agreement, and I hope that the United States has realized this need.”

On the comments by U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken that negotiators should reach an agreement by February, the diplomat demanded the U.S. Secretary of State to convey this deadline and sense of urgency to themselves and their government.

“For a long time, the United States withdrew from the JCPOA in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. For us, the authenticity and quality of the agreement reached in Vienna is a verifiable and reliable agreement. We expect them to speed up instead of making artificial deadlines. Only then, an agreement will definitely be reached in shorter time,” he concluded.

Westerners have mainly sought to colonize and exploit the African continent and today they are pursuing their desires and interests in various forms, the president said the efforts of the people of Africa to maintain their independence are valuable and their success depends on emphasis on national and cultural identity and resistance to extravagance.

The president added, “African countries have the necessary capacities for development and prosperity, and the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the independence, progress and welfare of the African people.”

For his part, the Togolese foreign minister stressed that his country wants to establish wide-ranging and comprehensive relations with Iran. “Lomé trusts Tehran’s approaches in the development process of relations, and hopes that the policies of development of economic cooperation with Africa boosts through mutual partnership.”

Condemning the West’s tough sanctions against independent states and nations, the Togolese foreign minister stressed, “We



seek joint cooperation with Iran to activate our capabilities and mutual interest”

Iran attaches great importance to developing ties with Algeria

Talking to the new ambassador of Algeria to Tehran, Raisi said that Iran attaches great importance to the development of relations with Algiers,

The president also said, “I appreciate Algeria’s interest in expanding relations with Iran.”

Iran FM: Saudi Arabia must decide on reopening embassies

Amir Abdollahian doesn’t rule out possibility of direct talks with U.S. in Vienna

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian announced on Monday that a reopening of embassies in Tehran and Riyadh is dependent on a decision by Saudi Arabia.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the National Conference on Iran and Neighbors, Amir Abdollahian also said that Iran welcomes a new round of talks with Saudi Arabia.

“We have left the path open for Saudi Arabia. Whenever Saudi Arabia decides to return its diplomatic relations with Iran to normal, we welcome a reopening of embassies and the return of relations to normal and even development of relations with Saudi Arabia. We are pleased that three of our diplomats were stationed in Jeddah a few days ago.”

Noting that the ball is in Riyadh’s court, he said, “Saudi Arabia must now decide when to open the embassies of the two countries. We welcome the new round of talks, and we would also like to point out

that long talks do not necessitate a return to normal relations alone, but a political decision. We in the government have decided that Saudi Arabia can take the necessary steps to restore relations with Iran whenever it reaches a conclusion.”

Commenting on the Yemen crisis, the foreign minister asked Saudi Arabia and the UAE to end the war in Yemen.

“These days, something is happening in Yemen. What is between Yemen and some of its neighbors and countries participating in military operations is an internal Yemeni issue. Iran has presented a four-point political plan at all stages since the beginning of the Yemeni crisis and has followed its plan,” Amir Abdollahian said, pointing to Iran’s initiative to end the war in Yemen.

“We are concerned about the escalation of the war and call on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to take a political and constructive approach to end the siege and end



the war and enter into the Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue,” he reiterated, warning that “continuation of such a situation is not in the interest of the region.”

‘We don’t support a regional member in Vienna talks, but we keep neighbors informed’

The foreign minister went on to say that the Iranian government’s policy is to keep the neighbors informed about the Vienna talks intended to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

“In all stages of the negotiations, we have tried to keep them (the neighbors) informed of what is going on between us and the five countries, either at the level of the ambassador of neighboring countries in Tehran or by the visit of political deputies and my visits to neighboring countries. We are reaching a point in our technical negotiations that will be saturated in the not-too-distant future, and we have to make a political decision,” he added.

“We do not welcome the idea

of adding new members from the region to the talks, but we keep our neighbors informed,” he reiterated.

Iran’s top diplomat went on to criticize the European countries’ behavior, saying that when it comes to sanctions, they link the matter to the United States, but when it comes to the nuclear issues, they say that this is “our area of concern”.

Amir Abdollahian also did not rule out the possibility of direct negotiations with the United States in Vienna, saying, “The United States sends messages calling for direct talks with us. Our talks with the United States are through (European Union’s Enrique) Mora and one or two JCPOA member states in Vienna. We did not have any direct negotiations (with the U.S.) at all. However, if we reach a stage in the negotiation process where reaching a good agreement requires having a dialogue with the United States at some level, we will not ignore it.”

Leader advisor: A new era has begun in Iran’s foreign policy

From page 1 ► The military advisor to the Leader stressed that the neighborhood policy has become an undeniable regional necessity and this political concept is repeated by many international relations analysts and politicians around the world.

“The theoretical and practical concept of neighborhood policy is that Iran wants to develop comprehensive relations in political, economic, cultural, security, tourism and environmental fields.”

Regarding the basic goals of Iran’s neighborhood policy, the general said achieving mutual understanding and interests, lasting peace and security, and the progress and prosperity of nations against all kinds of threats are among the basic goals of Iran’s neighborhood policy.

In this regard the strategic document of attracting and exchanging millions of tourists from the population of 600 million in the

neighboring countries to Iran and vice versa can be mentioned, he pointed out.

Safavi said that Iran’s non-oil exports to several hundred billion dollars market of these countries are other examples.

Former IRGC chief Safavi proposes drafting documents for security cooperation or non-aggression pacts with any of Iran’s neighbors.

The senior military advisor to the Leader noted drafting a document for defense security cooperation or a 20-year non-aggression agreement with any of these neighbors can be the beginning of achieving lasting collective security for all.

Development of banking relations and reduction of customs tariffs between neighbors is another neighborhood policy of Iran, he suggested.

Safavi continued, “Iran has the most neighbors after China and Russia, and our country’s special geographical position in the world is unique.”

He added that Iran is connected with 11 regional geopolitical systems. Accordingly, he said, Iran can, while developing relations with China,

Russia and India, link the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with Eurasian Economic Union and ECO in the next 20 years.

Stating that the territory of Iranian civilization was shared with China, added, the former IRGC chief said, “Today we are witnessing the slow movement of power from the West to the East. China, Russia, India and Asia are the future powers. In this regard, it should also be said that China and Russia are interest-oriented and we are ideology-oriented.”

He reiterated that the West seeks to “subdue us, and that is the goal it pursued during the Sacred Defense.”

Safavi reminded that now there is an economic, media and cultural war, and the foes are pursuing the same goal as before, namely the surrender of Iran and the return of the country to the West and taking away Iran’s political independence.

He concluded, “As we have so far resisted with the strategy of ‘resistance’, we can also raise our geopolitical weight in this period by adopting new neighborhood policies and the policy of looking to the East, and achieve victory against the hegemonic powers.”

U.S. drones killed tens of thousands of civilians under ‘war on terror’ pretext: Iran

Iran’s top human rights official has said that U.S. drone strikes have only caused death and destruction, killing tens of thousands of civilians and destroying their homes over the last two decades under the pretext of countering terrorism, Press TV reported.

Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary general of Iran’s High Council for Human Rights, tweeted late on

Sunday that “under the pretext of countering terrorism, the U.S. has conducted at least 14,000 drone strikes in seven countries over the last two decades.”

“The result? 48,000 civilians killed, tens of thousands of homes shattered into pieces,” he added.

The figures Gharibabadi tweeted were taken from a letter by dozens of U.S. Congress members sent to U.S. President

Joe Biden on Thursday asking for the review and overhaul of existing counterterrorism policy.

“Without systematic reforms centered on human rights and international law, the status quo will continue to undermine counterterrorism objectives, produce significant human and strategic costs and erode the rule of law and the United States’ image abroad,” said the letter, signed by

11 senators and 39 members of the House of Representatives.

The letter, citing third-party sources, revealed that as 48,000 civilians in seven countries were killed by the U.S. drone strikes in the course of the past two decades, adding that as many as 2,200 civilians, including 450 children, lost their lives during attacks by at least 14,000 US drone airstrikes since 2002

Busy day for president

TEHRAN — In separate meetings, Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi held talks with the Togolese foreign minister, and accepted the credentials of the new ambassadors of Algeria and Brunei Darussalam.

On Monday morning, Raisi met with Togolese Foreign Minister Robert Dussey.

During the meeting, Raisi said that African countries have rich and talented natural resources, as well as minerals and human resources.

“Tehran seeks comprehensive development of relations with African countries, including Togo, to serve the common interest of the two nations,” the president remarked.

Stating that throughout history

between the two governments.

Referring to the Algerian people’s brilliant resistance to the French colonialism, Raisi said, “The colonizers have never given up their colonial spirit and are always pursuing their colonial goals with a new approach, and of course the Algerian people always maintain their spirit of resistance.”

For his part, the new ambassador of Algeria reaffirmed Raisi’s opinion, saying, “We believe that the current level of economic relations between the two countries is not equal to the excellent political relations, and I will do my best to improve the level of my country’s economic and trade relations with Iran as an important economic partner.”

“I want to assure you that Algeria’s principled positions and policies, including in support for the Palestinian cause, for which we have paid exorbitant costs, will continue in earnest,” he said.

Raisi says Iran seeking to expand relations with all countries

Receiving the credentials of the new

ambassador of Brunei Darussalam, Raisi referred to the cultural relations between the two nations, saying, “The two countries’ relations are rooted in heartfelt relationship between the two Muslim nations and it is essential to develop political, economic and trade ties between the two countries on the basis of these affinities.”

The president stated, “In its foreign policy, the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to expand interaction with all countries around the world, especially neighboring and Muslim countries.”

He expressed hope that bilateral cooperation and friendly interactions between Iran and Brunei further expands into the field of regional and international relations.

For his part, the new ambassador of Brunei Darussalam conveyed the greetings of his country’s Sultan to Raisi and said, “As the ambassador of Brunei, I will do my best to expand and deepen the relations and cooperation between the two brotherly and friendly Muslim nations.”

Vienna talks at risk of impasse due to U.S. intransigence

TEHRAN – Talks in Vienna between Iran and the P4+1 group of countries have come up against new challenges due to the United States' refusal to budge on one of the key issues on the table.

Ever since the negotiators returned to Vienna about three weeks ago, negotiations have been proceeding at various paces, sometimes making steady progress whereas other times running up against difficulties.

And the difficulties have largely been due to the U.S. stonewalling on several key issues deemed crucial for reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

One such issue is the verification process Iran has been demanding over the course of the Vienna talks given the U.S. track record in renegeing on its commitments. The U.S., however, refused such a process.

The U.S. negotiating team has sent four letters to Iran's chief negotiator informing him that Washington will by no means accept Iran's demand to verify the economic effects of the lifting of U.S. sanctions, sources familiar with the Vienna talks told the Tehran Times.

The issue of verification, along with the guarantees Iran demands, have been a major point of contention in the eighth round of the talks. While Iran remains focused on getting a verifiable sanctions relief, the U.S. has said that it considers the verification as a red line that it



can't cross, the sources said.

In addition to verification and guarantees, the negotiators are grappling with two other issues: Iran's nuclear measures that should be rolled back after reaching a deal and the sanctions the U.S. should lift as part of that deal.

The talks have made progress in the nuclear and sanctions spheres. But the U.S. is currently putting the whole negotiations at risk of collapse. It refused to acknowledge that the talks have made progress, according to the sources. And its stonewalling in regard to verification and guarantees has slowed down the pace at which the talks are proceeding, with observers warning of an imminent impasse if the U.S. negotiating team continued to stonewall.

Iran has insisted that it needs to verify any lifting of U.S. sanctions because it does not trust the U.S. in

terms of giving sanctions relief.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh somehow confirmed that the U.S. has not budged on verification. He said one reason why the Vienna talks are proceeding at a slow pace is the U.S. unpreparedness in terms of constructively addressing Iran's proposals on verification.

Responding to a question posed by the Tehran Times at his weekly press conference on Monday, Khatibzadeh said, "One of the reasons why some talks in Vienna are proceeding slowly is the unpreparedness of the U.S. toward some of our practical proposals."

He said there was more progress on verification than on guarantees and some ideas are under consideration in this regard.

"In some spheres including verification, there are very important

issues that remain unresolved," Khatibzadeh said.

The spokesman said these issues require political decisions in Washington, and Iran is waiting for the U.S. to make such decisions.

This kind of decision seems to be the major hurdle in the way of making a deal in the current round. The Russian envoy to the talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, said on Monday that negotiators from Iran and the P4+1 drafted "an important part of an outcome document" but "some outstanding issues still remain in the relevant segment of an outcome document."

Whether the negotiators would succeed in bridging the remaining gaps remains to be seen. But Iran has attached high importance to verification and guarantees. And it's unlikely to sign a deal that is not lasting and durable. For Iran, one option to ensure a deal will outlast the Biden administration is for the U.S. to provide robust guarantees that sanctions won't be reimposed again once Joe Biden leaves the White House.

The Biden administration, however, said it is not in a position to provide legal guarantees because it views the JCPOA as a political understanding, not a legally-binding treaty. As such, it reportedly offered political measures such as assuring foreign firms that the JCPOA would be honored as long as Biden is in the White House. Needless to say, these measures would stop short of meeting Iran's demands.

Iran seeking win-win deal in Vienna: MP

TEHRAN – A senior Iranian lawmaker has said Iran is seeking to make a win-win deal at the Vienna talks aimed at removing U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini, spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament, said that removing all U.S. sanctions on Iran is a priority for Tehran.

"The Islamic Republic is looking for a win-win agreement, and it looks like we will reach a relatively good agreement with the parties by the end of this year," he said in an interview with the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA), referring to the Iranian calendar year ending on March 20.

He said, "The Americans want to maintain the structure of sanctions, but the Islamic Republic knows their purpose, so it is not affected by their pressure. The Americans and the Westerners are conveying concerns to us and tending to impose a bad deal on Iran, meaning that they will benefit from the deal with us without benefiting Iran."

According to Meshkini, the priority of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the lifting of all sanctions, but the priority of the Americans is to limit Iran's nuclear technology and shut down Iran's nuclear industries.

He noted, "We negotiate well because we have the experience of previous rounds of negotiations and the JCPOA is a valuable experience for us. In the past, we could not include the necessary guarantees in the JCPOA, and the United States withdrew from the agreement at no cost, so this

experience is very valuable to us."

The lawmaker added, "The Islamic Republic has gone through maximum sanctions. Of course, the people were under a lot of livelihood pressures, and this passage was not without cost, but the Americans imposed economic pressures on the people with the aim of imposing further cost. Sanctions have been almost neutralized and our oil sales are increasing daily."

Meshkini added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has found good regional and trans-regional partners during this period, and according to the 25-year agreement between Iran and China, it is planned to invest about \$400-500 billion in the country. China and Russia also helped us a lot in the negotiations. They are not like the previous periods."

The lawmaker said Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, and his team enjoy domestic backing. "And they have been told that if the other side showed intransigence, do not insist. So, the Islamic Republic is looking for a win-win agreement."

Meshkini concluded, "I do not see a relatively good agreement out of reach and it seems that we will reach a relatively good agreement with the parties by the end of this year."

Earlier on Sunday, Meshkini told the Khabaronline news website that Iran holds "golden cards" in the Vienna talks aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"By the Westerners' account, we have gotten through the sanctions and we have good golden cards to play in the negotiations. We believe that reaching a good and win-win agreement is possible," he pointed out.

He added, "Before the end of the year 1400, we will reach a conclusion and an agreement will be reached. Of course, it does not matter when we reach a conclusion, but it is important that we reach a good result, and that is why we have the initiative and we manage the negotiations."

The senior MP added, "The last and most dangerous tool of the negotiating parties was the sanctions that the Islamic Republic has gotten through. We are at the center of the formation of a power bloc in the East. One which has the three pillars of Iran, Russia, and China. More than \$500 billion will be invested in the highly strategic industries of our country by virtue of an agreement with China."

Fada Hossein Malek, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament, said that good steps have been taken in regards to removal of illegal sanctions on Iran, Fars reported on Sunday.

He pointed out 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.

Iran regains voting rights at UN: ambassador

TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has announced that the country has regained its right to vote at the UN after paying delinquent dues.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi said on Saturday that Iran's arrears have been paid to the United Nations and the country's voting right should naturally restore at the beginning of the week as soon as the dues are cleared in New York, according to Press TV.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as an active member of the United Nations, has always been committed to paying its membership dues on time and we have proven this in action," the ambassador said.

"Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, we faced the problem of paying our membership fee due to the imposition of brutal and unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran," he added.

South Korea confirmed that it paid on Iran's arrears. South Korea "on Friday completed the payment of Iran's UN dues of about \$18 million through the Iranian frozen funds in

South Korea, in active cooperation with related agencies such as US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control and the United Nations Secretariat," South Korean Ministry of Finance 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.

The Iranian envoy stressed that the U.S. sanctions have not only affected the supply of medicine, medical equipment, and humanitarian items but have also disrupted the work of the UN.

Earlier in the month, Takht-Ravanchi blamed the cruel and unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States for Iran's failure to make the payment on its arrears to the world body, but expressed hope that the suspension of the country's voting right would end soon.

The Iranian envoy further noted that the Islamic Republic is working to secure a safe financial channel to pay its UN membership fee and reclaim its right to vote on various

matters at the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.

South Korea owes Iran more than \$8 billion for gas condensate imports from the country but has so far refused to pay it. South Korea sees unilateral sanctions and the so-called U.S. maximum pressure as an impediment to paying off its debt. The issue has been criticized multiple times by Iranian officials, Press TV said.

Earlier in mid-January, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh addressed the suspension of Iran's right to vote at the United Nations.

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

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

IRAN IN FOCUS

JANUARY 25, 2022

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

3

SPORTS

Vafaei becomes first Iranian to win a snooker ranking title

TEHRAN – Hossein Vafaei became the first Iranian player to win a ranking title, beating Mark Williams in the final of the Snooker Shoot Out.

Vafaei won the one-frame final with a break of 71 and dedicated the victory to his late grandmother.

"That is for you grandma," the 27-year-old told Eurosport. "It's Mother's Day in Iran and I am very proud I did that.

"When I arrived at this event I nearly pulled out because my grandmother passed away. I was in my room crying for one hour for my grandma. My mother and everyone in my family were crying.

"I decided to play but I didn't care about winning or losing. I don't know...an energy came to me, I don't know how to explain it, and I played fantastic. It was very sad news for me but everyone told me to win it for my grandma, I wanted to do that and I have done it," he added.

"It's a big achievement for a country like Iran. Nobody knew about snooker before. Now they know," Vafaei concluded.

Wales' Williams, the three-time world champion, only got the chance to play one shot in the final with world number 42 Vafaei sinking a tricky, long red after the break-off.

"I thought I'd played a pretty good break-off shot there and what a fantastic red that was," said Williams. "To make that break under pressure to win your first tournament, hats off to him."

Iran victorious over Kyrgyzstan in CAFA Women's Futsal Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Kyrgyzstan 10-0 in the CAFA Women's Futsal Championship 2022 on Monday.

Nastaran Moghimi and Fereshteh Karimi scored twice each and Sara Shirbeigi, Sahar Papi, Sahar Zamani, Nesa Ahmadi, Fatemeh Rahmati and Fereshteh Khosravi were on target for Iran.

Iran have already defeated Uzbekistan (5-2) and Tajikistan (12-0) in the tournament.

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.

Saeid Marouf joins Fenerbahce

TEHRAN – Iranian setter Saeid Marouf joined Turkish volleyball club Fenerbahce.

The 36-year-old player has joined Fenerbahce for rest of the season.

Marouf has most recently played at Chinese club Beijing BAIC Motor.

He retired from international duty shortly after the 2020 Olympic Games.

Marouf started his playing career in Pegah Urmia in 2003 and has also played in Iranian teams Matin Varamin, Shahrdari Urmia, Paykan, Damash Gilan and Saipa.

He has also played in Russian club Zenit Kazan and Emma Villas Volley of Italy.

Marouf has joined his countryman Mohammad Mousavi in the Turkish volleyball club.

Fenerbahce is a successful team in Turkish Men's Volleyball League.

Havadar v Esteghlal match called off: IPL

TEHRAN – The match between Havadar and Esteghlal football teams were called off for the second time.

Esteghlal were scheduled to meet Paykan in Iran's Hazfi Cup Round of 16 last Tuesday but the match was postponed after several players of Esteghlal tested positive for COVID-19.

The Blues were also supposed to meet Havadar in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Saturday but the match was rescheduled to Wednesday.

Iran's Football League Organization has announced that the match has been called off once again.

Esteghlal lead IPL with 35 points and one game in hands.

Azmoun, Nouroollahi test positive for COVID-19

TEHRAN – Iranian football players Ahmad Nouroollahi and Sardar Azmoun have tested positive for COVID-19.

Iran are scheduled to meet Iraq on Thursday in the 2022 World Cup qualifier in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The two players will most likely miss the match.

Iran coach Dragan Skocic has invited Persepolis midfielder Kamal Kamyabinia to the national team.

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

We were anxious against Iran, says Wang

TEHRAN – Chinese player Wang Shuang, who was named Player of the Match, says that they were anxious in the match against Iran.

China defeated Iran 7-0 in Group A of the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 on Sunday.

"Also, during the first half, we were very eager and we were a little anxious (against IR Iran) but in the second half we became more patient. In games like this, teams require more patience. I believe we will get better and better."

With eight titles to their name China are the most successful nation in the history of the AFC Women's Asian Cup, but it has been 16 years since they last lifted the trophy.

Ending that drought is the ultimate goal during their stay in India, but reaching the semi-finals will also guarantee them a place in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Having featured in the global finals in 2015 and 2019, Wang said she looks forward to the opportunity to shine on the world stage, something of particular importance after the team's ill-fated Tokyo Olympics campaign.

"The FIFA Women's World Cup is not only important to myself. It means a lot to every female player because it is the highest level and platform of women's football in the world," she said.

"I really hope that, under the lead of our coach Shui Qingxia, we can go to the Women's World Cup and show the best of Chinese women's football"

With their status as Group A winners confirmed, China PR will play their AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 quarter-final in Navi Mumbai on January 30.

‘Iran-Russia energy co-op to increase unanimity in OPEC+’

TEHRAN - Iran's former OPEC Governor Mohammad Ali Khatibi has said strengthening energy cooperation between Iran and Russia is going to bring the two countries even closer in international forums like OPEC+, Shana reported.

Mohammad-Ali Khatibi said that Iran and Russia pursue common policies in international energy forums such as OPEC+ and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), adding that increasing bilateral cooperation between the two countries could lead to closer positions of both countries in these important arenas.

Pointing out that the establishment of a joint risk management hedge fund between Iran and Russia can ensure Iranian and Russian companies to cooperate with each other, Khatibi said: "The presence of Russian public and private companies in the Iranian oil industry and vice versa can be fruitful."

Emphasizing that the presidents of Iran and Russia have repeatedly stressed the need for boosting the volume of trade between the two countries, he said: "According to the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the level of

cooperation between the two countries should reach \$10 billion annually, which requires more support and follow-up by governments."

"The problems and obstacles in the way of developing trade relations between the two countries should be examined and resolved as soon as possible," Khatibi stressed.

He mentioned the unawareness of Iranian manufacturers and companies about the political, commercial, legal, and economic structure of Russia as one of the challenges facing Iran-Russia trade development and said: "In recent years, the shares of large Russian companies active in the oil industry have been bought by Western multinational companies and Iranian companies should consider such cases in their cooperation with the mentioned companies."

"Our cooperation with Russia and China in the oil industry can become a model for other countries such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the independent countries of South America to cooperate with Iran," he added.

ICCIMA hosts seminar on Iran-Brazil trade opportunities

TEHRAN - Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) hosted a seminar on Iran-Brazil trade opportunities and challenges on Sunday, the ICCIMA portal reported.

The event was attended by senior officials including ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, head of Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce, deputy agriculture minister, head of Iranian parliament's Agriculture Committee, as well as a handful of the country's traders, producers, and businessmen.

Speaking in this seminar, Shafeie stressed that Brazil has always been of special importance to Iran, especially for the supply of basic goods and foodstuff, saying: "Brazil has always been an attractive market for us and although only four years have passed since the establishment of Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce, Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber was the first to establish an office in the destination country."

He went on to say that relations between the two countries have a history of more than 100 years and even during the sanctions the two sides not only maintained their trade relations but also increased them.

Mentioning the establishment of Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce in July



2017, the official said: "In 2020, Iran's direct imports from Brazil reached \$1.15 billion, while exports to this country were only \$116 million. In the first 10 months of 2021, we imported \$1.7 billion of products from Brazil."

According to Shafeie, the top imported items from Brazil include basic goods, corn, soy, oil, sugar, meat, and coffee, and Brazil's mineral and industrial capacities have received less attention.

The official further noted that Iran's imports from Brazil have decreased 55 percent in recent years and exports have increased by 110 percent, but there is still no proper balance between imports and exports.

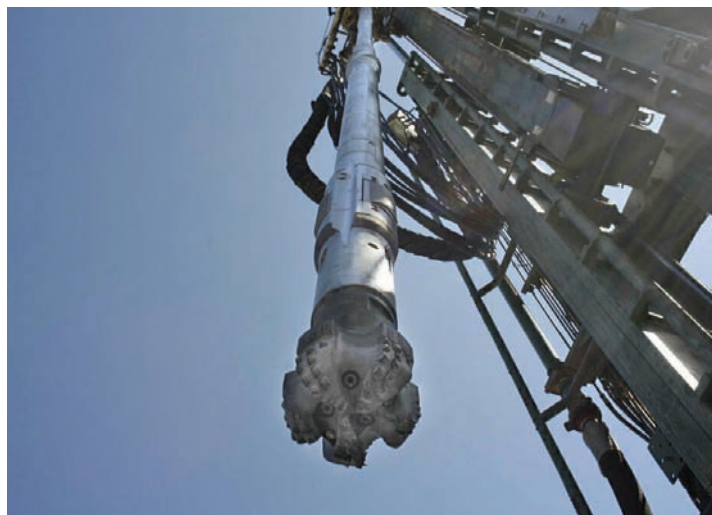
"Trade should be a two-way street. We can cooperate in the fields of petrochemicals, pharmaceutical industry, transportation,

From page 1 ▶ Some 654 meters of core extraction drilling was also conducted in the mentioned period which was a huge achievement for assessing the condition of the country's oil and gas reserves.

In November 2021, an official with the NIDC announced that the company has implemented 2,559 special and technical operations for the applicant companies, which are subsidiaries of the NIDC, and the private sector during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22, 2021).

Mehran Makvandi, the deputy managing director of NIDC for technical and engineering affairs, said that of the mentioned offered services, 2,042 operations were in the field of technical services management, and 517 operations were special services.

Back in July 2021, NIDC's Director of Renovation and Upgrading Shahram Shamipour had announced that the company



had allocated 5.2 trillion rials (about \$18 million) for the renovation and upgrading of its drilling rigs and equipment in the company's operational, technical, specialized, and logistical departments.

According to him, the renovation and upgrading operations are aimed at improving the performance of these rigs which are active in the country's oil and gas field development projects.

Shamipour noted that the equipment going through renovation operations include fluid pumps, draw-works machinery, charting tools, pumps for cementing and acidizing trucks, tow trucks, cranes, piping machines, generators, hydrogen sulfide gas treatment systems, acid-coated storage tanks, and cement transport bunkers.

Considering the National Iranian Oil Company's new

strategies for strengthening the presence of domestic companies in the development of the country's oil fields, NIDC, as a major subsidiary of the company, has been supporting such companies by lending them drilling rigs and other necessary equipment.

After the U.S. reimposition of sanctions against Iran, indigenizing the know-how for the manufacturing of the parts and equipment applied in different industrial sectors is one of the major strategies that the Islamic Republic has been strongly following up to reach self-reliance and nullify the sanctions.

Oil, gas, and petrochemical industries have outstanding performances in this due, with indigenizing the knowledge for manufacturing many parts and equipment that were previously imported.

Among different sectors of the mentioned industries, drilling could be mentioned as a prominent example in this regard.

Uzbekistan suggests to establish logistics center in Chabahar to boost transit via Iran

TEHRAN - Uzbekistan has proposed to establish a logistics center in Iran's southeastern Chabahar port in order to increase the transit of its commodities through Iran, the portal of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) reported.

The proposal was made during a meeting of PMO Head Ali-Akbar Safaei with an Uzbek trade delegation comprised of the country's deputy minister of investments and foreign trade, deputy transport minister, and ambassador to Iran as well as other senior officials on Sunday in Tehran.

During this meeting, Safaei expressed the Iranian government's willingness to connect Uzbekistan to the free waters and also Tehran's readiness to welcome Uzbek companies' investment in the northern and southern ports of the country.

He stressed that the conditions and infrastructure is prepared for the development of trade cooperation with Uzbekistan, especially in the field of transit, saying: "One of Iran's economic approaches for the development of foreign trade is to establish a route to transit goods from western China using Uzbekistan's railway network and maritime transportation through the Caspian Sea."



The official noted that Iran is also ready to develop a transit route for Uzbekistan through the southern Arab neighbors including Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirate (UAE), and India.

Safaei further mentioned Afghanistan's interest in developing trade cooperation with neighboring countries through the port of Chabahar and said: "Currently, every 10 days, a container ship carrying transit goods arrives from India to Chabahar port, and we plan to add other countries to this route."

He stated that Chabahar port with a capacity of 12 million tons is fully prepared for providing the necessary infrastructure for loading and unloading of various cargoes, adding: "The Uzbek government can make good use of the existing capacities in the hinterland of Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar to add value and establish a large trade gateway to Iran's neighboring countries."

Commodities worth over \$2b traded at IME in a month



TEHRAN- Over 7.297 million tons of commodities worth over \$2 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) in the past Iranian calendar month (ended on January 20).

As reported by the IME Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange sold on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor more than 1.529 million tons of commodities worth over \$856 million.

On this floor the exchange traded 415,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 490,000 tons of bitumen, 306,534 tons of polymeric products, 171,000 tons of lube cut, 108,463 tons of chemicals, 26,285 tons of sulfur, 14,653 tons of oil, 450 tons of argon and 225 tons of insulation.

Next was the metals and minerals trading floor with trades of 5.724 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$1 billion.

Commodities changing hands on

this floor included 3.606 million tons of cement, 1.332 million tons of steel, 367,000 tons of iron ore, 241,000 tons of sponge iron, 35,090 tons of aluminum, 133,340 tons of zinc, 26,911 tons of copper, 630 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 500 tons of coke, 500 tons of lead, 42 tons of precious metals concentrate and 23 kg of gold bars.

On its agricultural trading floor the exchange saw offering of 50 kg of saffron strands.

It's worth noting that the IME also played host to trade of 43,899 tons of commodities on its side market.

The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021) rose 108 percent compared to the preceding year.

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of commodities were traded at the mentioned market.

In the past year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

medicine. We hope that a suitable platform will be provided for this to happen," he said.

Referring to the importance of barter trade between the two countries, the ICCIMA head said: "The two countries' authorities should create grounds for barter trade between Iran and Brazil; for instance, we can export petrochemicals and import livestock feed in return."

He further mentioned some of the problems in the way of expanding trade with Brazil, saying: "There are two main obstacles to developing exports to Brazil; The first obstacle is transportation. Unfortunately, exporting through third countries destroys part of the competitive advantage of Iranian goods and increases the cost of exports. In this regard, the launch of a direct shipping line or a Tehran-Sao Paulo airline can largely remove this obstacle."

"The second obstacle is the lack of a basic trade platform, including a preferential or free trade agreement between the two countries. Such agreements are the basis for trade and unfortunately, we do not have any agreements with Brazil, and this issue should be on the agenda of the two countries, which could result in great positive changes in the level of trade," he added.

TCCIMA to host conference on Iran-India trade

TEHRAN - Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) is going to hold an Iran-India trade conference titled "Development of Iran-India trade relations: trade and investment opportunities" on February 2, TCCIMA portal announced.

The conference which is going to focus on exploring ways of developing economic relations between the two countries and solving the existing problems in the way of mutual trade will be held in collaboration with India's PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

As reported, the virtual conference is going to be attended by senior officials from



both sides including the Indian ambassador to Tehran and Iranian Ambassador to India, as well as the heads of TCCIMA and PHD Chamber of Commerce.

The trade between Iran and India has been following an upward trend over the past two years, despite the U.S. sanctions.

According to TCCIMA data, the trade between the two countries increased over 74 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year

(March 21-December 21, 2021) as compared to the same period in the previous year.

Based on the mentioned data, the value of non-oil trade between Iran and India stood at \$2.4 billion in the mentioned nine months, of which \$1.34 billion was the share of exports and about \$1.05 billion was for imports.

Considering the increase in exports and the decrease in imports from India during this period, the trade balance between Iran and India in the said nine months has become about \$296 million positive in favor of Iran.

India stood at sixth place among the Islamic Republic's top export destinations in the mentioned period, while in terms

of imports the country occupied the seventh place among Iran's top sources of imports.

Iran imported about 935,000 tons of commodities from India in the period under review, registering a 47 percent decline year on year.

Rice was the top commodity imported from India with \$220 million, followed by black tea worth \$104.4 million, aluminum oxide worth \$101 million, and fresh or dried green bananas worth \$647 million.

The Islamic Republic exported 4.14 million tons of goods including methanol, ammonia, sponge iron, pistachios, toluene, and urea to India in the said time span.

TEDPIX falls 21,000 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 21,824 points to 1234 million on Monday.

Over 4.506 billion securities worth 27681 trillion rials (about \$95.451 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index fell 18,670 points, and the second market's index dropped 35,644 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.

On Saturday, Head of Iran's Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund Amir-Mahdi Sabaei said on Friday that part of the allocations by the National Development Fund (NDF) has been deposited into the stabilization fund to support the stock market.

Sabaei had previously announced the allocation

of 120 trillion rials (about \$430 million) of NDF resources for the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund.

The official said the rest of the funding will also be paid based on a mutually agreed schedule, adding: "We hope that the rest of the deposits, like the deposits made yesterday, will be made regularly according to the agreed schedule."

Sabaei noted that in addition to the resources received from the NDF, the fund can also be financed through the money and capital markets.

NATO has long made Russia uneasy, Columbia University professor says

“The Europeans will follow Washington’s lead in dealing with Russia”

From page 1 ► On the other hand, Russian intelligence is seriously concerned that the U.S. will clandestinely deploy strike weapons, including hypersonic missiles, to the region and in particular to Ukraine under the cover of so-called “anti-missile systems”.

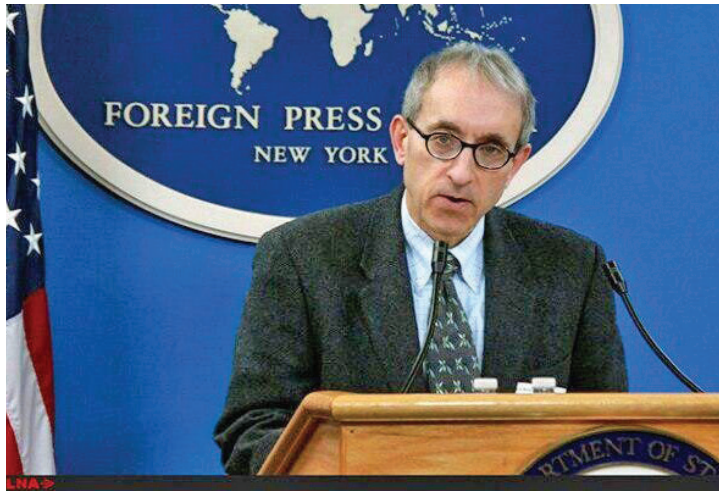
The following is the text of the interview:

Do you predict any military clash between the U.S. and Russia over Ukraine or will it be restricted to sanctions and media hype?

There will be no military clash with the U.S. The U.S. has said it will respond with severe sanctions. The clash to watch for is how much firepower the Russians and Ukrainians will each use, which could turn into a bloody fight.

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

On the main point of using force against the Russians, the Europeans will follow Washington’s lead. But they have pro-



how do you read Russia's concerns and sensitivity about NATO expansion?

Russia has shown similar concerns but NATO has long made Russia uneasy and the expansion has caused much greater tensions as did the end of the Soviet Union and its satellite supporters -- especially greater sources of conflict for Putin. Unlike the Cuban crisis, NATO expansion did involve nuclear weapons in the hands of the new NATO members closer to Russia’s border.

“Afghanistan and sale of nuclear submarines to Australia have raised tensions between the Europeans and the U.S.”

vided Ukraine arms and might possibly provide more of that support than the U.S. would.

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

It is much better than the disastrous relations that Trump had. It returned closer to normal, but Afghanistan and the issue of the sale of nuclear submarines to Australia have raised tensions.

What will be fallout of any possible confrontation between NATO and Russia? Do you predict other anti-Western powers like China to be engaged in such a clash?

This could affect how China deals further with Taiwan, but China won’t be involved in the clash in Europe.

In comparison with the Cuban Missile Crisis, also known as the October Crisis of 1962,

Gun violence epidemic surges in Biden’s first year

From page 1 ► This is while advocates say Biden’s response to the November tragic school shooting in Michigan, when a high school student opened fire and killed four classmates was a missed opportunity, and their confidence fell further when the White House nominee to lead the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) withdrew.

“David Chipman failing to get confirmed was probably the biggest blow that we’ve seen to federal efforts to address the gun violence prevention epidemic,” said Ambler of Giffords, where Chipman is a senior policy adviser.

Chipman, a former ATF agent, said he faced death threats and that the White House didn’t give him enough support when the Senate was considering his nomination.

Leaders of major gun reform groups had predicted that Biden’s first year in office, with Democrats also controlling Congress, would be an unprecedented era of progress on the controversial issue. Now analysts say Democrats are expected to suffer losses in the House and Senate midterm elections and Biden could be running out of time.

Biden has used his time in office to instead just focus on matters such as gun violence research and intervention as well as gun trafficking.

The U.S. President and Congress have failed to pass any major legislation to change the nation’s gun laws. Igor Volsky, the director of Guns Down America, an advocacy group that supports stricter gun laws has asked “is anybody clear on what his legislative agenda is now on this issue? I certainly haven’t heard anything”.

Critics of Trump widely agree that he drew on ideas that Republicans in Congress could embrace without confronting the powerful gun lobbies or restricting any access to weapons which effectively means allowing civilians to remain armed and paving the way for more shootings and mass shootings in the future, and sure enough the past year has seen a record number of firearm purchases and shooting incidents.

But on the campaign trail, his successor Biden pledged to take concrete measures on the issue including measures to ban the online sale of firearms and ammunition, restrict the number of firearms an individual may buy in a month, and repeal a Bush-era law called the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act that protects gun makers from lawsuits.

However, despite efforts to bring change the majority of Republican members of Congress who oppose changes means the legislature has not passed any of the proposals Biden promised to bring into law.

The legislation that Biden backed to expand background checks for firearm sales has stalled, and there’s been no movement on efforts to ban assault-style weapons, which Biden promised in his campaign.

Perhaps the most important priority for gun reform advocates is background checks on potential firearm buyers. This might have had the best chance of advancing in the Democratic-controlled Congress. But again, a House bill remains stalled in the Senate amid opposition from Republicans.



Democrat Senator Chris Murphy, a strong advocate of background checks says “Republicans are betting that the country is going to become so desensitized to mass shootings that they won’t pay a political price.”

It’s not just Republicans who are to blame. Senate Democrats are also complicit as they have been unwilling to reform or abolish the filibuster, a Senate rule that requires a 60-vote supermajority for most legislation to pass.

Critics say Biden hasn’t put enough public pressure on Senate Democrats to take a vote on the proposals or make any reforms on the filibuster that would bring about effective changes.

Alex Barrio, director at the think tank, advocacy at the Center for American Progress insists “unless there is a move toward removing the filibuster, I don’t see [gun reform] happening”.

Murphy, who as a congressman represented Newtown, Connecticut, the scene of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in 2012, before becoming one of the Senate’s most vocal proponents of gun reform, also agrees that Senate Democrats need a more aggressive strategy.

He says “bring the compromise background checks proposal on the floor and force them to decide”.

“But the Senate is clearly not working. I think there’s going to be some very earnest conversations ... about restoring the Senate so that we can have real debates on weighty issues and make sure that people who want to use the filibuster actually have to filibuster.”

Instead of pressing Democrats to change Senate rules, Biden has focused on less divisive proposals. Even there, progress has been tenuous and Biden’s reputation as a bipartisan dealmaker has only gone so far.

When it comes to bipartisan cooperation, Biden has lent his support for the efforts of two Senators trying to pass a law that aims to reduce gun violence at the hands of police, but even that languished as the president was focusing more on infrastructure and his “Build Back Better” agenda.

Marc Levin, the co-founder of Right on Crime and a conservative criminal justice reform advocate thinks “they negotiated in good faith, and it’s unfortunate that it

didn’t yield results”.

Critics say Biden can turn to executive orders to promote his policies in matters where Congress isn’t offering any support. Biden is said to be pursuing the strategy, but with less vigor or non at all. There are questions over whether Biden is using the full might of the executive branch to curb gun violence; which observers view as a lack of leadership.

Analysts also say despite some attempts to work around Congress, the president has not produced a White House environment dedicated to tackling gun violence.

Dr. Joseph Sakran, a gun reform advocate says “having that in the White House would help elevate the issue... and will allow someone to focus on this on a daily basis”.

Nevertheless, many senior American officials in consecutive U.S. administrations are influenced by the powerful lobby group, the National Rifle Association, which advocates for the right to bear arms.

The NRA has seen another record rise in its membership numbers and many politicians on the lobby group’s payroll don’t want to lose those voters.

A statement from M40L, founded by survivors of the 2018 mass shooting at the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida said

“On the president’s anniversary, at the conclusion of one of the deadliest years for gun violence in our nation’s history, we must ask the president bluntly: Mr. President, have you done enough?” the young survivors ask.

Armed with an AR-15-style semi-automatic military assault rifle, former student Nikolas Cruz killed 17 people and injured the same number on a rampage at the Parkland school in 2018.

Such events and many mass shootings prior to it have sparked more widespread calls for restrictions on gun purchasing and ownership, but for many decades now, Congress has failed to do anything.

Even activists acknowledge the political roadblocks means more victims to gun violence in America is inevitable.

Peter Ambler, executive director and co-founder of Giffords, a gun control group says “It is very difficult for any administration to sort of do enough in that context”

Scott Vitkovic: U.S., Zionist regime created Daesh

TEHRAN – Scott Vitkovic, researcher and theologian, says Daesh was created and nurtured by Washington and the Zionist regimes to justify their military presence in West Asia.

Speaking in an interview with Iran’s Fars news agency, Professor Vitkovic said, “The U.S. Global War of Terror [...] over the past 20 years became synonymous with War against Islam, and more recently, with a war against humanity and anyone who may oppose these Zionist U.S. global dictates.”

Ali Scott Vitkovic, PhD, Islamic Studies and Philosophy, is a researched and university lecturer. He teaches comparative theology and philosophy, and political philosophy and theology at the University of Religions in Qom, Iran. He is a Muslim convert from the Czech Republic.

Below is the full text of the interview:

How is martyrdom different from suicide attacks according to Islam?

Martyrdom is a level of perfection of a human soul granted only by God. The question may be better understood if asked, “What happens to a soul when God awards it a martyrdom (shahadah)?”

When individuals’ intentions and acts are solely for God, and their souls reach a high spiritual level, God may grant them martyrdom. Contrary to some popular beliefs commonly found in the U.S. and EU, a person can become a martyr, even if not killed on a battlefield or in war. Shahadah is the capacity of a soul to realize the Complete Reality – God. For a shahid, the Complete Reality is apparent and not hidden, while for many people, the Complete Reality is totally hidden or only partially transparent.

Islam forbids aggression and offensive war and permits only properly declared defense (Jihad) under particular circumstances. In the past, the Prophet of Islam (saw) and Ahl al-Bayt (as), and in the present, only Wali-el Faqih, the Supreme Leader, may legally commence a defense. The current Supreme Leader, Imam Khamenei, is authorized to command defense worldwide. However, his authority as the Supreme Leader must be freely and willingly recognized, accepted, and followed by the people on whose behalf the protection is sought. Only then can he order professional military officers, and if necessary, able volunteers who have been adequately trained and gained the required military expertise, to engage in a defense.

Furthermore, only those combatants who wage war against God may be fought against and taken prisoners, or if impossible, killed in the fighting. Any retaliation against enemy prisoners is forbidden. They must be afforded the same (or better) level of care as the soldiers; And if the defense is possible without killing the enemy combatants, it is obligatory to defend without bloodshed. Killing them is the very last measure. It goes without saying that, it is strictly forbidden to harm or kill civilians, non-combatants, priests, monks or nuns, or enemy soldiers who surrender, run away, or refuse to fight against God, or to destroy natural resources, animals, trees, or city infrastructure (collateral damage), as well as to use weapons of mass destruction. Only the absolute minimum of effective defensive force is permissible, and peace is always preferable.

How are Daesh ideology of killing people and true Jihad distinguished?

Martyrdom is praised by Qur’an, but Qur’an absolutely forbids Suicide (attack). Martyrdom is awarded by God only; however, a suicide attack is perpetrated by humans. Whereas martyrdom is a level of perfection of a human soul and requires a very high spiritual level and knowledge, a suicide attack is marked by a lack of religious knowledge on the part of the suicide attacker and susceptibility to manipulation and brainwashing. While martyrdom may be reached only in the course of defense and also in the absence of armed conflict or war, a suicide attack is almost always carried out in the course of armed fighting.

Defense (Jihad) has been officially declared and legally commenced only on the authority of the Prophet (saw) and Ahl al-Bayt (as). At present, only Wali-el Faqih, the Supreme Leader, has this legal authority; however, suicide attacks are undeclared and devoid of any religious and legal authority. Defense (Jihad) can only be un-



dertaken if the people freely and willingly recognize, accept, and follow Wali-el Faqih, the Supreme Leader; suicide attacks do not have the willing acceptance of the people and are usually carried under duress and against the population’s will, though.

Technically speaking, defense is conducted by professional military officers, and if necessary, able volunteers who are appropriately trained and have the required military expertise; but, suicide attacks may be perpetrated by untrained civilians, even children, used by other combatants. Also, defense is possible only against those combatants who wage war against God; suicide attacks are often perpetrated against civilians and civilian infrastructures, such as markets, schools, churches, public transportation, and hospitals.

Finally, unlike defense which uses the absolute minimum of effective defensive force, suicide attacks seek the most damage and bloodshed.

Why do the U.S. and EU mainstream media call Daesh members Jihad fighters?

The U.S. and EU mainstream media are in the service of the Zionist elites who have been and continue to employ its political propaganda and psychological warfare to brainwash, manipulate, use, and abuse susceptible populations for their own economic, political, and military power grabs. It is no longer a secret that the U.S. and Zionist regimes created, trained, armed, equipped, supported, and used Daesh in unleashing its bloody campaigns in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Iraq, in unsuccessful attempts to:

Isolate and cut the cooperation between Iran and Lebanon;

Fragment existing ME countries, including Iran, into several smaller civil-war consumed regions;

Justify the U.S. perpetual military occupations of the ME in general, and the Zionist military occupation of Palestine in particular;

Thoroughly ethnically cleanse the native population of Palestine by the Zionists;

Institute puppet regimes in the ME under the U.S. dictate;

Gain control of the resources of the ME in the services of the U.S. and the Zionist entity.

Gain strategically important access to launch future attacks against Russia and China.

Since the foundation of the U.S. only 245 years ago, on the genocide of the Native American populations and blood of black slaves, it continues to exist only due to its wars of aggression. After the end of the Cold War, in the 1990s, the U.S., with the assistance of and training by the Zionist entity, invented a theoretically 100% success-proof perpetual military conflict. It hoped that this multi-trillion-dollar racket would allow for a control of both the friendly and enemy forces in the ME by using various armed groups leftover from the Cold War, and precisely, from the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Thus, first, al-Qaida and then Daesh were born, marking the U.S. military transition from the Cold War to the U.S. Global War of Terror, which over the past 20 years became synonymous with War against Islam, and more recently, with a war against humanity and anyone who may oppose these Zionist U.S. global dictates. The U.S. government systematically demonstrated how in the name of “the U.S. national security”, it indiscriminately labels both foreign nationals and U.S. citizens, even newborns, as “terrorists”, to justify its attempted world conquest through extrajudicial drone assassinations and indefinite detentions, tortures, and murders, which now constitute the sole raison d’être of the collapsing U.S. and Zionist regimes.

New traces of Neanderthal sites discovered in northcentral Iran



From page 1 ► Moreover, our initial investigations suggest a large part of the stone tools have been cut from relatively large rocks using hard hammer blow, Hashemi explained.

According to the archaeologist, some of the stone tools are associated with the Pleistocene era, which is often referred to as the Ice Age. It is the geological epoch that lasted from about 2,580,000 to 11,700 years ago, spanning the earth's most recent period of repeated glaciations.

Many of discovered stone artifacts bear a shiny layer of burnt brown to black, which is called "desert polish", he noted.

Of characteristics of the artifacts are their relatively large dimensions (which are expected to be shaped) with the help of hard hammer blows; evidence of the use of The Levallois technique and the existence of tools attributed to the Middle Paleolithic period such as jagged and concave side scrapers on large chips deemed to be used for making fine blades, the researcher explained.

The Levallois technique is a name given by archaeologists to a distinctive type of stone knapping developed around 250,000 to 300,000 years ago during the Middle Paleolithic period. It is part of the Mousterian stone tool industry and was used by the Neanderthals in Europe and by modern humans in other regions such as the Levant. The method provides much greater control over the size and shape of the final flake which would then be employed as a scraper or knife although the technique could also be adapted to produce projectile points known as Levallois points.

Semnan is home to many ancient and prehistorical sites with Tepe Hesar being amongst the most important ones. The site bears cultural periods from the Chalcolithic Age to the Sasanian period. Situated on the southern outskirts of Damghan, Tepe Hesar is reportedly one of the world's five archaeological hills of the Iron Age, and the archaeological hill is considered as of the oldest prehistorical sites in the Iranian plateau as well.

Tepe Hesar was first excavated in 1925 and 1931-1932 when the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway cuts through the main mound. It was one of the first Chalcolithic and Bronze Age excavations in this area, and the stratigraphy has been very important to date similar sites. In 1976, research was briefly resumed and radiocarbon measures were taken.

Its older layer, Hesar I, belongs to the

Copper Age (Chalcolithic; after 3800 BC); it is about as old as Susa and resembles Sialk III, by which it appears to have been influenced, according to livius.org, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering, according to Livius.org; a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Hesar II, which starts in about 3600 BC, is marked by the appearance of burnished grey pottery and the first objects made of bronze. Among the finds are long-shaped bottles. The next phase, Hesar III, began in about 2800 BC and saw nice metal work and grey pottery similar to Turan Tepe, which is on the other side of the Alborz mountain range. Some three centuries later, when Hesar III ended, a part of the town was violently destroyed. The ruin that is now known as the "Burnt Building", situated in the western part of the hill, is the most recognizable remainder of this catastrophe. Archaeologists have found stone arrowheads and charred battle victims.

Later on, the site was abandoned and there was a hiatus for about five or six centuries. After about 1350 BC, people returned and settled on smaller mounds in the neighborhood of the ancient mound. If the main hill was occupied, those recent layers have eroded.

The smaller mounds from the Iron Age and later have not been investigated, although surface finds prove that Tepe Hesar remained inhabited, as one could have expected, because this part of the Silk Road, from Rhagae to Susia, continued to be in use. In the west, the Median kingdom came into being in the second quarter of the first millennium; its armies came along the road and subdued the Parthians. Later, both Media and Parthia were part of the Achaemenid and Seleucid Empires, until the Parthians turned the tables and united Iran. Directly west of Tepe Hesar, Hecatompylos flourished.

A 2019 study available in the Journal of Human Evolution, suggests that Neanderthals were roaming over the Iranian Zagros mountain range between 40 to 70 thousand years ago. Neanderthals lived before and during the last Ice Age of the Pleistocene in some of the most unforgiving environments ever inhabited by humans. They developed a successful culture, with a complex stone tool technology, that was based on hunting, with some scavenging and local plant collection. Their survival during tens of thousands of years of the last glaciation is a remarkable testament to human adaptation.

Centuries-old tombstone unearthed by flash flood

TEHRAN – A centuries-old tombstone, estimated to date from the Safavid era, has recently been unearthed in a southern Iranian village.

The tombstone was initially discovered by the locals and then delivered to the local department of cultural heritage and tourism, CHTN reported on Monday.

Found in one of the villages of Minab county, Hormozgan province, the engraved tombstone dates more than 300 years to the Safavid era (1501-1736) era, the deputy provincial tourism chief said on Monday.

A team of cultural heritage experts was soon dispatched to the area where the object was found to conduct a field investigation, the official said.



The tombstone will soon be transferred to the Anthropological Museum of Bandar Abbas, he added.

The Safavid dynasty was one of the most significant ruling dynasties of the country, often considered the beginning of modern Iranian history.

COVID-19: Some 1.47m foreign nationals visit Iran in nine months

TEHRAN – Some 1.47m foreign nationals visited Iran from the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021) to January 1, a span most of which was subject to severe travel bans due to coronavirus.

Of the number, 635, 862 people arrived in Iran as of mid-October when the Islamic Republic started issuance of tourist visas after a 20-month hiatus, Mehr reported on Monday.

Citizens from Iraq and Afghanistan were the main source of tourism for Iran from October 23 to December 22, 2021.

"226,000 people from Iraq, 103,000 from Afghanistan, 90,000 from Turkey, 22,000 from Azerbaijan, and 18,000 from Bahrain arrived in Iran during the mentioned period," the news agency said.

Furthermore, the Islamic Republic hosted 11,000 travelers from Pakistan, 6,000

from Russia, 2,000 from Germany, and a total of 88,000 people from other countries.

In addition, from December 22, 2021, to January 1, 2022, some 23,000 people from Iraq, 10,000 from Afghanistan, 6,000 people from Turkey, 2,000 from Azerbaijan, 341 from Bahrain, 20,000 from Oman, 3,000 from Pakistan, 703 from Russia, 472 from Germany, and 6,000 from other countries visited Iran, the report said.

Over the past couple of years, neighboring Iraq has been one of Iran's most important markets for tourism and pilgrimage. Earlier this month, the deputy tourism chief Ali-Asghar Shalbafiana announced that Iran had renewed arrangements to facilitate travels for Iraqi nationals. "For Iraqi tourists visiting Iran, a new system has been implemented to ensure their safety and comfort."

Last September, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and



Foreign travelers pose for photo during their journey to Isfahan before the coronavirus pandemic.

Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami announced that by the order of President Ebrahim Raisi the issuance of tourist visas and the flow of foreign tourists from land and air borders will be resumed from the month of Aban (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21) following 19 months of suspension.

Before the resumption, groups of Iranian tourism insiders urged the three ministries of interior, tourism, and foreign affairs to facilitate travel to Iran for foreign tourists from the mentioned countries who have obtained tourist visas and are en route to Iran or about to visit it. Also, some believed that preventing the spread of new variants of the virus and maintaining public health are preferable to the benefits of tourism.

Months of steep recession have taken its toll. Many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators have faced big dilemmas such as bankruptcy,

unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level. The pandemic has taken a huge toll on Iran's civil aviation sector. For instance, airlines reportedly lost hundreds of millions of dollars because of flight cancellations during the busy New Year travel season last March.

Tourism authorities say Iran has the potential to experience a tourism boom after coronavirus is contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

Iran is potentially a booming destination for travelers seeking cultural attractions, breathtaking sceneries, and numerous UNESCO-registered sites. 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.

Tens of specialized meetings scheduled to take place at Tehran tourism fair

TEHRAN – Panels of travel experts, tour operators, and hoteliers have been invited to hold specialized meetings and workshops during the 15th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition.

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ministry has formulated various events for the upcoming Tehran fair, of which 62 professional meetings and workshops have been finalized so far, CHTN reported on Sunday.

Adventure tourism for the disabled, desert excursions, new travel destinations, Involvement of local communities, emerging travel markets, medical and health tourism, ecotourism, agritourism, pilgrimage, and electronic tourism resources are among themes for the events, the news agency said.

Iran considers turning the spotlight on its numerous off-the-beaten tracks. Experts believe that the growth of the local economy is the ultimate goal of the rise and development of the rural tourism industry, but in the long run, to enable the long-term development of the rural tourism industry, the healthy maintenance and growth of environmental capacity is very important.

Currently, an increasing number of



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

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

74 Isfahan handicrafts awarded National Seal of Excellence

TEHRAN – A selection of 74 quality works handcrafted by natives of Isfahan province have been awarded the National Seal of Excellence.

Of the designated objects are enamel works, metalwork decorations, kilim carpets, and handwoven textiles, CHTN quoted Isfahan province's tourism chief as saying on Monday.

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

Selected works have characteristics such as originality, creativity, recyclability, supply in the international market, reasonable pricing, respect

for human rights, progress in everyday life, and product innovation.

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

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

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



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

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

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Handwoven textiles, 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.

Isfahan 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. Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, the city's inner core seeks to preserve its priceless gem.

Iran in contact with international bodies to preserve endangered species

TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) of Iran is in contact with at least 10 international bodies with the aim of preserving endangered species across the country.

The Biodiversity Convention is the most important among the international bodies, IRNA quoted DOE deputy head, Hassan Akbari, as saying on Monday.

“We are exchanging data with these bodies. In some cases, even joint projects have been developed and we have received financial assistance,” he explained.

The Department of Environment is seriously attempting to preserve the national biodiversity through interacting with the world and making the best use of the scientific and technological capacities of other countries in this regard, he stressed.

In December, Akbari said that there are 1,300 species of animals in the country, 130 of which are endangered and threatened.

Asiatic cheetahs, great bustard, Siberian crane, Persian onager, and some reptiles and amphibians are among the endangered and threatened species, he said.

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

The availability of large quantities



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

“Four types of areas, amounting to 309, have been designated for preservation and protection, including, national parks, wildlife refuges, protected areas, and natural national monuments. Currently, the supervised areas reached about 18.5 million hectares.

The strategy and priority of the DOE are to protect endangered species through preservation of natural habitats, but in some cases, it is necessary to pursue species reproduction in captivity or by species displacement,” he noted.

Some species of reptiles and amphibians, became extinct due to the lack of sufficient information about this species, he lamented, IRNA reported.

“Many articles have been published about the country's biodiversity, which is scattered and attempts are being made to compile and use these researches by creating a database.

So, a database has been launched in the field of environmental research in order to improve the quality of nature protection,” he also stated.

Biological diversity protection

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

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

identified in the country.

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

According to the United Nations, three-quarters of the Earth's environment and about 66 percent of the marine environment have been altered by human activities, and the latest report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) states that more than one million species of animals and plants are in danger of extinction.

Therefore, any planning and action in the direction of optimal and principled management of biodiversity protection in the country, interaction and continuous cooperation of responsible bodies, and benefiting from international opportunities and their financial and professional resources can play a very important and key role in maintaining biological diversity alongside sustainable development.

We hope that with the common determination of officials and policymakers, the people, the media, and environmental activists, will preserve and protect this valuable asset for future generations.

Intl. Conference on Persian Gulf Oceanography underway in Tehran

From page 1 ► Emphasizing that climate change is also a very important and sensitive issue in the world that has become a vital issue among governments, she stated that oceanography and related fields are now on the agenda of the United Nations, as well as countries such as Finland, Ukraine, Iraq, Belarus, and Azerbaijan, due to climate change impact increase in recent years.

The two-day conference is attended by representatives from Belarus, Finland, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Ukraine, Pakistan, and Russia, as well as officials related to marine and port development.

“Marine meteorology, physical oceanography, maritime safety”, “climate change of marine ecosystem”, “marine and ocean science, marine resources exploitation”, “economy, maritime trade”, “maritime transportation new technologies, marine engineering, maritime ports and beaches”, “legal system and maritime political geography”, and “cultural tourism, ecotourism, and health” are the topics being discussed during the vent.

Mehdi Rahnama, Scientific Secretary of the 5th International Conference on Persian Gulf Oceanography, stated that the event is held with the cooperation of professors from more than 50 universities in the country.

Over 100 papers have been delivered to the secretariat and about 30 of which are approved to be presented at the conference, he further added.

Precious marine environment

The Persian Gulf is a valuable water body in terms of ecosystem and biodiversity but has been affected severely due to different depleting factors, including oil pollution, extraction, and transportation.

The Persian Gulf has an area of about 241,000



square kilometers. Its length is some 990 km, and its width varies from a maximum of about 340 km to a minimum of 55 km in the Strait of Hormuz.

It has its own environmental characteristics, as it is a semi-closed sea, aging 15,000 years, with an average depth of 35 meters, while being high salty with severe heat fluctuations, and an annual evaporation rate of 140 cm.

There are 2 species of dolphins and whales in the area, in addition to 1,100 species of fish and 5 species of turtles, the Persian Gulf also hosts the second largest population of manatees, 232 seaweed species, and 4 million migratory birds annually, but today 240 important species and many habitats are under threat.

Out of the 21 largest oil spills in the world, 7 cases occurred in this water body, which is threatening the aquatic ecosystem.

Hassan Mohammadi, the coordinator of the Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME), said in December 2019 that studies show that as the current environmental issues continue, by the end of the century, about 20 percent of native species in the Persian Gulf will be extinct and 10 percent of new species that might be invasive will replace them.

Chemical pollution has passed safe limit for humanity, say scientists

The cocktail of chemical pollution that pervades the planet now threatens the stability of global ecosystems upon which humanity depends, scientists have said.

Plastics are of particularly high concern, they said, along with 350,000 synthetic chemicals including pesticides, industrial compounds and antibiotics. Plastic pollution is now found from the summit of Mount Everest to the deepest oceans, and some toxic chemicals, such as PCBs, are long-lasting and widespread.

The study concludes that chemical pollution has crossed a “planetary boundary”, the point at which human-made changes to the Earth push it outside the stable environment of the last 10,000 years, the Guardian reported.

Chemical pollution threatens Earth's systems by damaging the biological and physical processes that underpin all life. For example, pesticides wipe out many non-target insects, which are fundamental to all ecosystems and, therefore, to the provision of clean air, water and food.

“There has been a fiftyfold increase in the production of chemicals since 1950 and this is projected to triple again by 2050,” said Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez, a PhD candidate and

story of how people are changing the planet.”

Some threats have been tackled to a larger extent, the scientists said, such as the CFC chemicals that destroy the ozone layer and its protection from damaging ultraviolet rays.

Determining whether chemical pollution has crossed a planetary boundary is complex because there is no pre-human baseline, unlike with the climate crisis and the pre-industrial level of CO2 in the atmosphere. There are also a huge number of chemical compounds registered for use – about 350,000 – and only a tiny fraction of these have been assessed for safety.

So the research used a combination of measurements to assess the situation. These included the rate of production of chemicals, which is rising rapidly, and their release into the environment, which is happening much faster than the ability of authorities to track or investigate the impacts.

The well-known negative effects of some chemicals, from the extraction of fossil fuels to produce them to their leaking into the environment, were also part of the assessment. The scientists acknowledged the data was limited in many areas, but said the weight of evidence

Iranian, Iraqi red crescent societies to boost co-op

TEHRAN – The red crescent societies of Iran and Iraq have signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to enhance cooperation in different fields.

Pirhossein Kolivand, president of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, and Yassin Ahmed Abbas, president of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, signed the MOU in Baghdad on Sunday.

The agreement emphasizes the need to exchange experience in the areas of education and training, as well as rescue and relief operations.

The Iranian side will hold educational and training courses related to crisis management, establish water and healthcare facilities,



ties, and launch workshops in Iraq.

The Iraqi side will provide the necessary infrastructure for offering medical services during religious events in Iraq and facilitate customs procedures for importing Iranian-made medicine.

IRCS services worldwide

At present, the Iranian Red Crescent Society provides medical services to people in 13 Asian, African, and Latin American countries.

Currently, some 14 medical facilities are offering humanitarian, relief, and health services to the deprived people in 13 countries, including Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates, Bolivia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Congo, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Niger, and Ecuador.

The IRCS polyclinic center includes various departments such as laboratory, pharmacy, radiology and physiotherapy, and general practitioners along with obstetricians, gynecologists, internal medicine, pediatrics, ophthalmologists, and dentists.

More than 620 quakes occur in Iran over month

TEHRAN – Over the past calendar month Dey (December 22, 2021-January 20, 2022), a total of 627 earthquakes have taken place across the country, according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Fourteen earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country by the National Seismological Center, the largest of which occurred on January 15, with a magnitude of 5.1 near Sirach in southeastern

Kerman province.

Statistically, 541 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, and 72 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 to 4 have occurred.

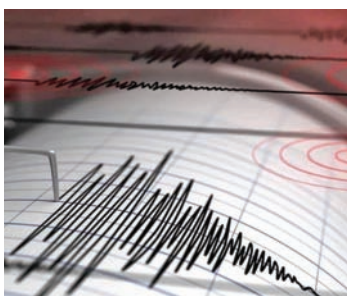
Among the provinces of the country, Khorasan Razavi with 86 earthquakes, Kerman with 73 earthquakes, and Isfahan with 58 earthquakes recorded the highest number of earthquakes in the country.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region

of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes of the world occur in Iran but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world earthquakes, during the 20th century, are reported from Iranian earthquakes. This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Mehdi Zare, a professor of engineering seismology.

Tehran is also one of the most



hazardous metropolises in the world in terms of the risk of different natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, subsidence, drought, landslide, fire following an earthquake, etc.

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Men with obese wives at higher risk of cardiovascular disease: study

The results of a 16-year study at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran showed that men whose wives were obese or overweight had a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.

Farzad Hadaegh, the lead researcher of the study, said that couples share socioeconomic status, dietary patterns, and other environmental and lifestyle factors, but are genetically unrelated.

The results of this study emphasize the role of environmental factors, especially lifestyle behaviors of family members in the incidence of cardiovascular disease, and this may help to identify early at-risk individuals in the community and family to implement prevention programs, he explained.

خطر ابتلا به بیماری های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق هستند بیشتر است

نتیجه یک پژوهش ۱۶ ساله در دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شهید بهشتی تهران نشان داد خطر ابتلا به بیماری های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق یا دارای اضافه وزن بودند، نسبت به مردانی که همسران شان وزن طبیعی داشت، بیشتر است و جالب اینکه این ارتباط مستقل از عوامل خطر مردان است.

دکتر فرزاد حدادق، مدیر مرکز تحقیقات متابولیک دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شهید بهشتی، در این مورد توضیح داد: زوجین در موقعیت های اقتصادی - اجتماعی، الگوهای غذایی و سایر عوامل محیطی و سبک زندگی مشترک اند، اما از نظر ژنتیکی بی ارتباط هستند.

این استاد دانشگاه خاطر نشان کرد: نتایج این مطالعه به نقش عوامل محیطی به ویژه رفتارهای مربوط به سبک زندگی اعضای خانواده در بروز بیماری های قلبی عروقی تاکید می کند و این موضوع ممکن است به شناسایی زودهنگام افراد در معرض خطر در جامعه و خانواده برای اجرای برنامه های پیشگیری کمک موثری کند.

