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Interview

2022 World Cup a good opportunity for Iran: expert

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Iranian football expert, Amir Haj Rezaei, believes that Iran must seize the opportunity of playing in the 2022 World Cup.

Iran got the better of bitter rivals Iraq in Tehran to become the first Asian confederation side to book their place at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar later this year.

On Thursday, the 'Persian Leopards' defeated Iraq 1-0 in front of 10,000 fans in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Mehdi Taremi scored in the 48th minute to lead Iran's national team to a 1-0 victory over Iraq and seal Iran's third straight World cup berth and sixth in total.

"We had an excellent run of the games with Dragan Skocic on the bench. It was a fast and strong qualification that made all of us happy and created a national joy," said Haj Rezaei in his interview with Tehran Times.

"But the more important point, in my opinion, is that the past five editions that we qualified for the World Cups we didn't make good use of the opportunities offered by the great and prestigious tournament such as World Cup.

"I believe that the World Cup is a global university and exhibition, at the same time. Countries who qualify for this tournament learn a lot of lessons in this university and bring them to their own countries," the expert said. ▶ Page 3

Iran, Qatar step up diplomatic contacts

TEHRAN - The Iranian and Qatari officials held several meetings and phone conversations over the last few days, marking a significant increase in diplomatic contacts at a time of increased tensions in the region and uncertainty in the Vienna talks between Iran and major world powers.

The contacts began on Tuesday when Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani held two phone conversations on a single night.

In the phone talks, the two countries' foreign ministers exchanged views on regional issues and the need to promote diplomacy and dialogue to resolve the issues, besides some other significant issues of bilateral interest, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said.

In the same framework, the foreign ministers of Iran and Qatar focused and exchanged views on the issues and developments unfolding in the region as well as the continuation of consultations between the two countries on the path of establishing and protecting peace and stability.

The foreign ministers of Iran and Qatar also discussed expansion of Tehran-Doha relations in different areas, including politics, economy and culture. ▶ Page 3

Report

Venezuela launches "truth commission" on European colonialism

The Venezuelan government has set up a "commission to clarify the historical truth, justice, and reparation regarding colonial rule and its consequences".

President Nicolas Maduro, approving the 20 members investigation panel, says "it is a commission to delve into the truth of European colonialism, here, on this earth: its crimes, its genocide, the looting that took place, and to demand justice and reparation from Spain, Portugal and all of Europe for Latin America".

Maduro pointed out that the "historical commission" was an initiative planned back on October 12, the day on which, every year, the Latin American nation commemorates "indigenous resistance". ▶ Page 5

Iran Qualify for 2022 FIFA World Cup

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Trade between Iran, EAEU rises 33% in 9 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - The value of trade between Iran and the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached \$2.2 billion in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 - December 21, 2021), to register 33 percent growth compared to the previous year's same period, according to the data released by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA).

The TCCIMA report put the weight of Iran-EAEU trade in the mentioned nine months at over 4.9 million tons, the TCCI-

MA portal reported.

According to the mentioned data, Iran exported 2.1 million tons of products worth \$878 million to the EAEU members in the period under review, with a 6.7 percent rise in value, and a three-percent increase in weight.

Iran's imports from the block exceeded 2.9 million tons worth \$1.3 billion in the mentioned period, to register a 44.7 percent rise in value, and a 12 percent growth in weight, compared to the same period in the previous year.



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Worshippers in Tehran march in support of Yemen

TEHRAN — Worshippers in Tehran marched in support of Yemen after saying their Friday prayers. They shouted in support of Yemen at a time when the oppressed people of the country were calling for the right to speak to the world.

Ilkhanid, Timurid coins undergo restoration

TEHRAN - A selection of 2,000 coins, dating from the Ilkhanid and Timurid eras, has undergone restoration at the Zolfaghari Museum of Zanjan in west-central Iran.

The coins have been unearthed during several seasons of excavation conducted in and near the UNESCO-designated Soltaniyeh (the mausoleum of Oljaytu) in Zanjan province, the provincial tourism chief announced on

Thursday.

Meaning "Town of the Sultans", Soltaniyeh was briefly the capital of Persia's Ilkhanid dynasty (a branch of the Mongol dynasty) during the 14th century. According to UNESCO, the Mausoleum of Oljaytu is an essential link and key monument in the development of Islamic architecture in central and western Asia.

Iran's trade balance with all Eurasian countries except Russia was positive in the mentioned period and compared to the same period last year, Iran's trade balance with Russia, Armenia, and Belarus weakened while with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan the balance improved.

Iran's top exported item to the EAEU union was pistachio with \$99 million worth of exports, and the top imported commodity was Vegetable products. ▶ Page 4

"Persian Medicine" included in Medical Subject Headings

TEHRAN - The Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) has included the term "Persian Medicine" in its vocabulary used to index, catalogue, and search journal articles, books, and other biomedical and health related information.

The inclusion of "Persian Medicine" in the Medical Subject Headings is an important achievement in the global consolidation of this medicine, Arman Zargar, an official with the Ministry of Health has announced.

The Medical Subject Headings is a comprehensive controlled vocabulary for the purpose of indexing journal articles and books in the life sciences. It serves as a thesaurus that facilitates searching.

Created and updated by the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM), it is used by the MEDLINE/PubMed article database and by NLM's catalog of book holdings. MeSH is also used by the ClinicalTrials.gov registry to classify which diseases are studied by trials registered in ClinicalTrials. ▶ Page 7

Detecting diverse layers of corrosion, removing extra layers, and receiving chemical and mechanical treatments are parts of the restoration operation being performed on the coins by experts at the laboratory of the museum, Amir Arjmand said.

Furthermore, it includes surface cleaning, dust removal, documentation progress as well, the official said. ▶ Page 6

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Interview

The West continues to arm S. Arabia in Yemen war: ICG expert

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - The MENA Program Director at the International Crisis Group says that Western powers talk about an end to war on Yemen while they are continuing to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia.

"Western powers say they want a negotiated end to the war, but at the same time some of them, especially the U.S., UK and France, continue to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia and the UAE," Joost R. Hiltermann tells the Tehran Times.

The seven-year-old war in Yemen intensified again on Friday when airstrikes by the Saudi-led military coalition on northern Yemen killed at least 70 people and knocked out the entire country's internet, according to international aid groups and the rebels who control the area.

Capping a week in which Ansarollah drones struck as far away as Abu Dhabi and Saudi bombs rained down across Houthi-held northern Yemen, the hostilities were fresh proof of the conflict's obstinacy a year after President Biden took office vowing to bring the war - and one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters - to an end.

"The problem in many armed conflicts is that, apart from the conflict's origins, they are fuelled by external actors. We have seen in the Libyan war that outside actors must take a step back before local actors can move toward a political process to settle their differences," Hiltermann notes.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you see attacks by the Saudi-led coalition on Yemeni people? Apparently, the coalition tends to target civilians and infrastructure.

In this conflict, as in so many others, all fighting sides have engaged in attacks on civilians. International human rights organizations have well documented ▶ Page 5

Fajr Music Festival prepared for in-person performances

TEHRAN - The 37th edition of the Fajr Music Festival will totally be held in person as some Persian news websites are warning about a new wave of COVID-19 in the country, the organizers announced last Wednesday.

Several groups from neighboring countries will give performances at the festival, which will be organized from February 11 to 15.

Performances in the pop category will begin two days sooner and winners will be honored on February 18.

The 2020 and 2021 editions of the festival were held online due to the pandemic.

"After a two-year hiatus, I would like the festival to provide an excuse for the musicians to dust off their instruments," the secretary of the festival, Hassan Riahi, said after unveiling a poster for the festival. ▶ Page 8

Ambassador: Iran, Saudi Arabia to resume talks in Baghdad soon

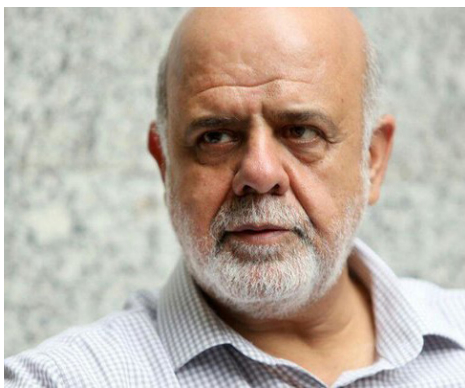
TEHRAN — Iraj Masjedi, Iran's ambassador to Iraq, announced on Friday that the fifth round of Iran-Saudi talks would be held in Baghdad soon.

He did not elaborate on the timing or agenda of the talks.

Last week, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian 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," the foreign minister told a national conference on Iran and neighbors.

Noting that the ball is in Riyadh's court, the foreign minister added, "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 nor-



mal 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."

Last month, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fouad Hussein announced during a visit to Tehran that talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad would resume soon.

Top officials congratulate Team Melli

TEHRAN — Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Friday sent separate messages congratulating Team Melli's qualification to the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

In his message, Raisi said the national football team "brought a wave of joy and happiness for the Iranian people."

The president's message is as follows:

"The consecutive and authoritative victories of our national football team in the qualifying round of the World Cup and qualifying for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, brought a wave of joy and happiness for the proud nation of Iran.

Congratulating this great success to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the proud people of Iran, which is the manifestation of the dynamism and glory of a nation, I sincerely thank all the valuable efforts of all officials, coaches, and especially the capable players of the national football team."

Writing on his Twitter account, Amir Abdollahian also said, "Congratulations to all the dear Iranians around the world on their fastest ascent #Iran to the FIFA World Cup. God bless the dear athletes."

On Thursday, Iran edged past Iraq 1-0 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium, thanks to Mehdi Taremi's second-half goal to become the 14th team to qualify for 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Amir Abdollahian visit to India postponed

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian's visit to India has been postponed as his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has contracted coronavirus, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh broke the story on Friday.

Khatibzadeh wished good health for the Indian foreign minister and announced that the visit of the top Iranian diplomat to India will remain on the agenda.

Amir Abdollahian told reporters on the sidelines of a national conference on Iran and neighbors last week that he will travel to India and Sri Lanka next week.

"In this trip, we will pursue several goals. First, my counterpart has traveled to Iran twice in the last four months, and we have political and economic relations with India, and various political, economic and technological cooperation issues are underway between the two countries," he stated.

FM: No direct talks have taken place between Iran and U.S. to date

TEHRAN — Iran's foreign minister on Wednesday attended a parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee meeting to provide explanations about the ongoing Vienna talks intended to revitalize the 2015 nuclear agreement.

While explaining the latest status of the talks in Vienna, Hossein Amir Abdollahian answered questions by the MPs sitting on the committee.

Amir Abdollahian presented a report on the negotiation process in the four areas of lifting sanctions, nuclear commitments, obtaining guarantees and verification mechanisms.

And while answering the questions, he received the views of the members of the parliamentary committee present at the meeting.

Explaining about the serious efforts of chief negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani and the initiatives proposed by the Iranian negotiating team, the foreign minister said Tehran's will to reach a good, stable and reliable agreement is "definite".

Vienna negotiators return to capitals

TEHRAN — According to European Union coordinator Enrique Mora, the diplomatic delegations engaged in talks in Vienna to lift the sanctions imposed on Iran will return to their capitals for a short recess and further consultations.

"The 8th round of the #ViennaTalks #JCPOA, which started 27 December, so far the longest, takes a break. Participants will go back to capital for consultations and instructions to come back next week. Political decisions are needed now. Safe travels to all participants," Mora tweeted on Friday.

In line with the development, the Russian ambassador to international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, said that his assessment is that the eighth round will resume next week.

"The participants in the #ViennaTalks on #JCPOA will take a break, not very long, for consultations in the capitals. The negotiations have reached advanced stage when political decisions are needed. The 8th round is expected to resume next week," Ulyanov tweeted late on Friday.

Iran calls for cessation of military operations in Yemen

TEHRAN — A senior advisor to the Iranian foreign minister for special political affairs sent a message on Thursday to Hans Grundberg, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General for Yemen, calling on the UN and all international humanitarian agencies to take urgent action to stop the heinous crimes going on in Yemen.

In the message, Ali Asghar Khaji condemned the killing of the defenseless Yemeni people and the massive bombardment of Yemeni cities, civilian areas and infrastructure by the anti-Yemen coalition.

In another part of the message, the senior advisor said these atrocities are in violation of recognized international law.

"Certainly, as the experience of the past seven years has shown, sanctions, military conflicts and the killing of people cannot lead to a solution to the Yemeni crisis and a way to liberation, and the solution to end the siege of the oppressed people of Yemen is the cessation of military operations and respect for independence of Yemen," Khaji said.

According to the senior advisor, as in the past Iran is ready to cooperate and work in this direction.

In April 2015, Iran presented a four-point plan to the UN in a bid to end the conflict in Yemen. The four-point called for the cessation of hostilities and an immediate end to all foreign military attacks, direct delivery of medical and humanitarian aid, the resumption of political talks and the creation of a broad Yemeni unity government.

The escalation of tensions between Yemen's Houthi rebels and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) prompted humanitarian organizations on the ground to sound the alarm, as the UN forecasts January will "almost certainly" be a record-shattering month for civilian casualties in the country.

Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, or MSF) warned the recent air raids launched by the Saudi-led coalition following drone and missile attacks on the Emirati capital mark a dramatic escalation in violence.

"We expect another wave of internally displaced people, increased number of casualties, access constraints due to air strikes ... these are some of the things we expect at the moment," Ahmed Mahat, MSF's head of mission in Yemen, told Al Jazeera.

Grundberg and humanitarian co-



ordinator David Gressley warned on Tuesday that January will likely record the highest monthly death toll in the conflict after air raids and missile attacks hit hospitals, telecommunication infrastructure, airports, a water facility and a school.

According to a joint statement by Grundberg and Gressley, the escalation is exacerbating an already severe humanitarian crisis, complicating efforts to provide relief, threatening regional security, and undermining efforts to bring an end to the conflict.

Since the beginning of January, eight million Yemenis have received reduced assistance, the UN said, because of the spike in violence.

On the ground in the capital Sanaa, Mahat confirmed the UN's assessment. "The front line is really active, more than ever," the MSF head of the mission said. "This year we thought the situation would be calmer, that there would be negotiations, and the Yemenis would be spared more agony. Instead, we have seen an escalation."

Yemen is in the throes of a fourth wave of COVID and has seen a resurgence of preventable diseases, including polio, measles and diphtheria. Additionally, a fuel blockade by the Saudi-led coalition is causing acute shortages and crippling Yemen's already frail health system.

"We use generators to power our hospitals, so fuel is a big issue," Mahat said. "No fuel in the tanks also

means less people in need of medical assistance can reach the hospitals in the first place."

MSF said it fears a surge in the number of internally displaced people in the Marib region in dire need of humanitarian assistance, as funds and resources dwindle.

The World Food Programme (WFP) warned more than five million people in Yemen are on the brink of famine, and 50,000 others were living in famine-like conditions. In December, the UN agency said it was running out of funds to continue to provide food assistance to 13 million people.

"We call on all parties to the war to refrain from escalating the conflict and to respect international law," Mahat said.

MSF has been vocal in denouncing a Saudi-led air attack on Saada City Remand Prison in the early hours of January 21 that killed 91 people and wounded more than 200, according to Yemen's Health Ministry.

A coalition statement called reports the prison had been hit and detainees hurt "baseless and unfounded".

MSF staff based in Saada who witnessed the attack said the raid was "undeniable".

"At around 2:30am we heard the first strike, then five minutes later the second air strike and a big explosion," an MSF staff member, who declined to be named for security reasons, told Al Jazeera.

Then a third air raid hit Saada city.

Amnesty International has said the Saudi-led coalition used a precision-guided munition made in the U.S. to hit Saada prison and "that could amount to war crimes."

Iranian, Azeri foreign ministers exchange views

TEHRAN— The foreign ministers of Iran and Azerbaijan exchanged views over the phone on Friday, discussing cooperation between the two countries and the developments in the region.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian told his Azeri counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov that the meeting of the presidents of the two countries in Turkmenistan as well as the visit of the Iranian transport minister to Baku and the trip of the Azeri defense minister to Tehran as signs of good relationship between the two neighbors.

Amir Abdollahian also conveyed the greetings of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to the president of Azerbaijan. He also conveyed the invitation of Raisi to Azeri President Ilham Aliyev to visit his Iran.

Iran's chief diplomat also lauded the Azerbaijani government for its cooperation in transfer of a number of Iranians imprisoned in Azerbaijan to Iran and expressed hope that a joint consular committee between the two countries would be held in Baku soon.

Referring to the good relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran's top diplomat also called for facilitating and accelerating

the issuance of visas between the two countries, especially for Iranian students and businessmen.

Amir Abdollahian also referred to the upcoming visit of the Iranian parliamentary friendship group to Baku and expressed hope that the cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries would develop in parallel with other areas.

Referring to the visit of the Iranian president to the northern provinces of the country, the foreign minister stressed the importance of developing cooperation between Iran's border provinces with Azerbaijan.

For his part, Foreign Minister Bayramov expressed satisfaction with the development of cooperation between the two countries in recent months, and called for the establishment of a joint economic committee between the two countries.

He also welcomed the proposal of Amir Abdollahian and announced his readiness to hold a joint consular committee of the two countries in Baku.

Welcoming the invitation of his Iranian counterpart to visit Tehran, Bayramov expressed hope that he would visit Iran in the near future.



He also referred to the meeting of the two presidents in Ashgabat on November and stressed the need to advance and implement the agreements reached between the presidents of the two countries and the implementation of joint projects.

Bayramov called the recent meeting of the two presidents historic and conveyed the greetings of the Azeri president of to Raisi.

WSJ: Differences divide U.S. team in Vienna, pro-sanction officials leave

The American negotiating team in Vienna has been split with internal differences over how best to proceed with the talks intended to revive a landmark 2015 agreement with Iran, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Citing people familiar with the talks, the American daily reported on Monday that members of the American delegation in Vienna are at loggerheads with one another "over how tough to be with Tehran and when to walk away."

The Austrian city has been hosting many rounds of talks between Iran and the P4+1 group of nations, which features the UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany.

The five countries are the remaining members of a 2015 agreement

with Iran known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The U.S. left the deal three years after its conclusion, returning the sanctions that the accord had lifted.

Now, the Vienna negotiations are seeking to have the U.S. remove its anti-Iran sanctions and return to the agreement.

Due to its withdrawal, the U.S. is currently not allowed to directly join the negotiations.

Recounting the internal differences within the U.S. team, the WSJ said the issues included "how firmly to enforce existing sanctions and whether to cut off negotiations."

"Some in the team urged leaving the talks in early December" after the structure of the Iranian negoti-

ating team was overhauled with the change of the Iranian administration, the paper added.

The other moot points "included whether to get the United Nations' atomic agency to censure" Iran over the nuclear countermeasures that the Islamic Republic has been implementing since 2019 in exchange for the U.S. and the European sides' breach of their obligations under the agreement.

Tehran has invariably insisted that the reprisal fits well within the deal that entitles each signatory to take retaliatory measures in case of counterparty non-commitment to the agreement.

Departure of pro-sanction officials
The frictions within the American

"There is no way to deny that this is an air strike, everyone in Saada city heard it," the MSF staff member said. "I live 1 kilometer from the prison and my house was shaking from the explosions."

The local Gumhuriyyeh Hospital was soon overwhelmed with the wounded. MSF's unit in Saada sent emergency supplies to the hospital, but soon another truckload had to be dispatched from the capital.

"The escalation is not something new, it was like this since the beginning," the MSF staffer said, adding Saada has set a grim record for the number of air attacks it has witnessed in the seven-year conflict.

On Wednesday, Amnesty International said the Saudi-led coalition used a precision-guided munition made in the United States to hit the detention center.

"The laser-guided bomb used in the attack, manufactured by U.S. defence company Raytheon, is the latest piece in a wider web of evidence of the use of U.S.-manufactured weapons in incidents that could amount to war crimes," the humanitarian watchdog said.

'Disproportionate attacks'

The UN chief has called for an investigation into the attacks in Saada. "The secretary-general calls for prompt, effective and transparent investigations into these incidents to ensure accountability," Antonio Guterres's spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said.

The International Rescue Committee has also condemned the air attack, saying it was the worst civilian casualty incident in three years. "Additional attacks risk harming more civilians and will further restrict humanitarian organizations' access to those most in need," IRC said in a statement on Wednesday.

Grundberg and Gressley called for restraint.

"We remind the parties that being at war does not absolve them of their obligations under international humanitarian law, which strictly prohibits disproportionate attacks and requires that all feasible precautions be taken to avoid civilian harm," the UN officials said, adding they had been in contact with all sides to rekindle dialogue and reach a political settlement.

"We urge all parties to engage with these efforts immediately and without preconditions."

delegation, The Journal reported, have caused several pro-sanction officials to leave the negotiating team.

"U.S. officials confirmed over the weekend that Richard Nephew, the deputy special envoy for Iran, has left the team," it said.

Nephew has played a key role in designing the web of illegal and inhumane sanctions that have been targeting Iran.

Two other members of the team, which is led by the U.S.'s point man on Iran Robert Malley, have also stepped back from the talks "because they also wanted a harder negotiating stance," noted the paper.

Iran, Qatar step up diplomatic contacts

From Page 1 ► The Qatari Foreign Ministry, for its part, said the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways of developing them in various fields, in addition to the latest regional developments and issues of mutual concern.

Also, spokesperson for Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater met on Wednesday with the Iranian Ambassador to Doha Hamidreza Dehghani. The meeting reviewed aspects of cooperation between Qatar and Iran. The meeting also discussed the agenda of the incoming Doha Forum and the participation of officials from Iran in its activities.

The sides also discussed the latest developments surrounding Afghanistan, and issues of mutual concern, according to the Qatari Foreign Ministry.

On Thursday, the Qatari foreign minister visited Tehran and met with Amir Abdollahian as well as President Ebrahim Raisi.

The chief diplomats from the two countries discussed important regional issues and developments such as Afghanistan and Yemen as well as bilateral ties, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

The Iranian foreign minister referred to the fast pace of regional and international developments, underlining the need for closer consultations between Iran and Qatar and efforts to establish peace and stability in Yemen and Afghanistan.

In regard to regional developments, Amir Abdollahian stressed, "In recent weeks, we have witnessed a surge in military movements with regard to Yemen and such things have only led to a reproduction of war in Yemen that destroy the path to peace."

For his part, the Qatari foreign minister said, "We are also worried about a new escalation of tension in the region and believe that the Yemeni



crisis has no military solution and they must find a solution through dialogue and this situation is not in the interest of any parties."

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said Amir Abdollahian and Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani reviewed cooperation between the two countries and means of developing them, as well as discussing the latest regional developments.

It added that they also exchanged views on a number of issues of common concern.

The Qatari foreign minister affirmed Doha's firm position that calm, diplomacy, dialogue, building relations on good neighborliness and mutual respect are the best ways to achieve and find stability in the region, the ministry added.

Raisi invited to attend gas exporting countries summit in Doha

During his meeting with the Iranian president, the Qatari foreign minister presented an official invitation from the Emir of Qatar to Raisi to attend the Gas Exporting Countries Forum Summit.

Speaking at the meeting with the Qatari foreign minister, Ayatollah Raisi emphasized the importance of regional cooperation, saying, "Deepening relations and further synergy between neighboring countries can provide security."

Emphasizing the importance of multilateral mechanisms in ensuring security, especially in the field of energy, Raisi stated, "It is necessary to maintain and strengthen coordination and synergy in the policies of energy producing countries."

Raisi went on to say that his government's foreign policy in the new era is developing and deepening relations and cooperation with regional and neighboring countries.

"Tehran recognizes and welcomes regional cooperation for the benefit of peace, security and development of the region," Raisi emphasized.

Referring to the capacities of Tehran-Doha cooperation in various

"Tehran recognizes and welcomes regional cooperation for the benefit of peace, security and development of the region," President Raisi emphasize in meeting with the Qatari foreign minister.

political, economic and cultural sectors, the president said, "We are ready to activate all areas for the development of bilateral and regional cooperation for the benefit of the two nations."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president said the presence of outsiders in West Asia increases insecurity. "The outsiders do not respect the identity and dignity of regional nations and governments, and think that they are the sheriff of the world, whereas they must put aside their spirit of supremacy and arrogance and recognize the identity and culture of nations."

Raisi added, "The Iranian nation has always emphasized its key positions and is moving forward strongly regardless of the wish of the enemies, in a way that the Americans have officially stated that their maximum pressure has not worked."

At the same meeting, the Qatari foreign minister delivered the official invitation of his country's Emir to President Raisi to attend the Summit of Gas Exporting Countries Forum.

He said, "Qatar is determined to make all efforts to develop the level of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in various political and economic fields, and the Emir of Qatar personally follows the development of relations between the two countries."

The Qatari foreign minister also said, "Qatar also agrees with Iran that the presence of foreign forces in the region has negative effects, and we believe that the countries of the region should take the path of peace and progress by relying on regional cooperation."

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said that during the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations, developments in the region and ways to maintain the region's security and stability.

Iran FM, UN chief hold phone talks

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Thursday exchanged views with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the developments in the West Asia region, including the latest situation in Yemen and Afghanistan, as well as the process of the Vienna talks.

In the talks, Iran's foreign minister pointed to the situation in Yemen and an escalation of attacks on civilian areas and reiterated Iran's ongoing approach on supporting a political solution to the Yemen war, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said.

Referring to the UN's approach on terminating the blockade as well as bringing about a ceasefire and holding political talks in Yemen, Amir Abdollahian called on the secretary-general to play a more active role in efforts to lift the siege on Yemen and put an end to the large-scale bombardment of civilian regions.

Amir Abdollahian on Thursday lamented the recent increase in military attacks against Yemen in a meeting with his Qatari counterpart Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, saying such moves will "destroy the path to peace."

"In recent weeks, we have witnessed an increase in military movements regarding Yemen, and such moves will lead to outbreak of further wars in Yemen and the region, and destroy the path to peace," Press TV quoted the Iranian foreign minister as saying.

Earlier on Tuesday, Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior advisor to the Iranian foreign minister for special political affairs, met with Peter Semneby, Sweden's special envoy for Yemen. The two diplomats discussed latest developments in

Yemen via a video conference.

During the video discussion, the two sides exchanged views over potential areas of cooperation between Iran and Sweden for the purpose of helping resolve the Yemeni crisis and end the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the country.

The conversation came against a backdrop of heightened tensions between Yemen and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Sanaa-based government has launched two drone and missile attacks on the UAE in recent days.

Iran has expressed concern over the situation in Yemen. On January 24, Amir Abdollahian said the Islamic Republic has already tabled its four-point political plan to end the conflict.

In April 2015, Iran presented a four-point plan to the UN in a bid to end the conflict in Yemen. The four-point called for the cessation of hostilities and an immediate end to all foreign military attacks, direct delivery of medical and humanitarian aid, the resumption of political talks and the creation of a broad Yemeni unity government.

800,000 newly-displaced Afghans have entered Iran

During his conversation with the UN chief, Iran's foreign minister also stressed the necessity of paying special attention to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the situation of the displaced people. "Over the past months, the Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted about 800,000 newly-displaced people, something that demands serious international cooperation and efforts."

Amir Abdollahian once again stressed the need

for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and voiced the Islamic Republic's preparedness to facilitate the dispatch of humanitarian aid by other countries and international bodies via Iran.

The foreign minister also pointed to the talks in Vienna aimed at removing sanctions on Iran, describing the process as positive and reiterating the Islamic Republic's serious determination to reach a good agreement in the shortest time possible.

Amir Abdollahian reaffirmed lack of trust in the White House's rulers and emphasized the need for America and the Western side to adopt practical, tangible and verifiable measures in order to prove the possibility of achieving a lasting, reliable deal.

During the talks, Guterres, for his part, welcomed and praised Iran's constructive positions in efforts to achieve peace and end military attacks as well as its attention to humanitarian issues and the start of political negotiations to resolve Yemen's problems.

The UN secretary-general also stressed the necessity of continued efforts to establish an inclusive government comprised of various groups and ethnicities in Afghanistan and preparing the ground for all Afghan citizens, particularly women and children, to enjoy human rights and have access to education.

Guterres, in the end, welcomed any progress in the process of nuclear negotiations on the removal of sanctions in Vienna and said the United Nations has constantly supported the achievement of the nuclear deal and international peace with all its resources and capabilities.

a lasting, reliable deal.

Amir Abdollahian on Wednesday briefed the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament on the latest developments in the Vienna talks. He told the lawmakers sitting on the committee that the will of the Islamic Republic of Iran to reach a good, stable and reliable agreement is definite.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

SPORTS

2022 World Cup a good opportunity for Iran: expert

From Page 1 ► "Things like infrastructure, transportation development, technologies regarding the refereeing and stadiums, courses held by great coaches, and many other issues are what matter the most in World Cups. However, we did not see the effects of this presence in our country because those who ran the country's football in the past, put all their managerial shortcomings behind the presence of the national team in the World Cup," added the former coach of Iran national team.

"The managers of Iranian football considered the World Cup as the ultimate and ideal goal of the Iranian football and did not make any effort to improve the football situation in the country. I hope we do not see such an attitude in this edition of the World Cup. Our sixth appearance in the tournament must be accompanied by great achievements in terms of technology and football science for the Iranian football," Haj Rezaei concluded.

Iran qualify for 2022 FIFA World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran football team became the 14th team to book their place in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Iran edged past Iraq 1-0 on Thursday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium, thanks to Mehdi Taremi's second-half goal.

Iran top Group A with 19 points, two points ahead of South Korea.

The 'Persian Leopards' have become the first Asian team to book their place in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Iran are also the 14th team to seal their berth in the prestigious campaign.

Including Qatar as host nation, a total of 14 teams have qualified for the 2022 FIFA World Cup so far and the remaining 18 spots are going to fill up over the coming months.

The qualified teams are: Qatar, Iran, Germany, Denmark, Brazil, France, Belgium, Croatia, Spain, Serbia, England, Switzerland, Netherlands and Argentina.

Iran crowned CAFA Women's Futsal champions

TEHRAN – Iran claimed the title of the CAFA Women's Futsal Championship 2022 on Friday.

Iran defeated Tajikistan 9-0 and won the inaugural edition of the tournament.



Fereshteh Karimi (three goals), Sara Shirbeigi (two goals), Nastaran Moghim, Sahar Papi, Nesa Ahadi and Mahsa Alimadadi scored for the Iranian team.

Iran won the competition, grabbing 16 points out of six matches.

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

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

The teams played each other twice.

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

Many underestimated me but I proved myself: Skocic

TEHRAN – Iran football team Dragan Skocic says that many underestimated him during the past two years but he proved himself with hard work.

Under guidance of the Croatian coach, Iran became the first Asian team to book their place in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Iran defeated Iraq 1-0 on Thursday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in Group A.

Iran will participate in the prestigious event for the sixth time.

"First, I would like to congratulate my players since they showed an excellent performance against Iraq. I am very happy since I could make the Iranian people happy. It's our pleasure," Skocic said after the match.

"It took 15 minutes to find our tempo and then we were the dominant team and created so many chances. We could have scored more than one goal," he added.

"We had some difficulties prior to the match since we missed some players after they got infected with COVID-19 and also our European-based players joined us late.

Skocic replaced Mark Wilmots in February 2020 but was under heavy pressure from the critics. He registered an excellent record of 13 wins out of 14 matches.

"I believed in my work from first but many underestimated me and didn't respect me but I'm very happy because I've proved myself," Skocic added.

"I am under contract with Iran football federation until 2023 and my plan is to lead Iran football team in the 2022 FIFA World Cup," he concluded.

Ex-Iran wrestler Farrokhan passes away

TEHRAN – Former Iran freestyle wrestler Mohammadali Farrokhan passed away on Thursday.

Farrokhan died at the age of 86.

He represented Iran in two Olympic Games in 1952 and 1956.

Farrokhan won two silver medals in the 57kg division at the 1965 World Wrestling Championships and 1966 Asian Games.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to the Farrokhan's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Sayyadmanesh poised for Hull City medical: Report

TEHRAN – Fenerbahce striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh is edging closer to a move to Hull City, reports the72.co.uk.

The youngster will apparently have a medical ahead of his move to the MKM Stadium.

Sayyadmanesh, 20, has recently returned to Fenerbahce following a loan spell at Zorya.

The young attacker is an Iran international who has been on the books at Fenerbahce since 2019.

He joined the Turkish Super Lig giant from Esteghal and has since played three times for the first-team.

Sayyadmanesh has spent the past 12 months out on loan in Ukraine at Zorya and scored 15 goals in 50 games in all competitions.

Hull have announced the appointment of former Ajax and Rangers striker Arveladze as their new manager to replace Grant McCann.

TSE's main index drops 4% in a week



TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 50,000 points (four percent) to 1.229 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, Iran Khodro Company, Saipa Company, and National Iranian Copper Company were the most widely followed ones.

Government Economic Coordination Headquarters in its latest meeting has approved five new resolutions for supporting the country's stock market, and the directives in this regard have been sent to relative ministries, First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber announced on Wednesday.

The mentioned resolutions include the reduction of petrochemical feed prices, the reduction of interbank interest rates, the restriction of the sale of securities, preventing the increase of government mining salaries, and the increase of the exchange rate of banks.

According to Mokhber, the decisions made in the meeting of the Government Economic Coordination Headquarters have been communicated with Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Reza Fatemi-Amin, Oil Minister Javad Oji, Head of Planning and Budget Organization (PMO) Masoud Mir-Kazemi, and Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Ali Saleh-Abadi.

Speaking about the positive impacts of the mentioned decisions on the capital market, Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said on Tuesday that the mentioned resolutions carry the message of government's serious support for industries and indicate stable economic activity, predictability of variables, and ultimately a positive outlook for the economy in the coming months.

Earlier on Tuesday, President Raisi had called on all related authorities to take the necessary measures for resolving the stock market problems.

Following the president's remarks, his cabinet held a meeting with the presence of the PBO head, the first vice president, the vice president for economic affairs, and the head of the country's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) to discuss ways for resolving the

mentioned issues and to support the market.

Mentioning the decision regarding the reduction of petrochemical feed prices, Khandouzi noted that the government has approved a ceiling of 50,000 rials (about \$0.18) for the feed prices and a ceiling of 20,000 rials (about \$0.07) for the fuel rate to support the mentioned industries which have a great role in the stock market.

Meanwhile on January 22, Head of Iran's Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund Amir-Mahdi Sabaei said 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.

The allocation of financial resources from NDF to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund is one of the measures that the government has been taking since the stock market started a downward trend.

Following the 13th government's new strategies to improve the stock market, the Government Economic Coordination Headquarters convened a meeting on November 2, 2021, chaired by President Ebrahim Raisi, during which a decision was made to inject new resources from NDF into the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund.

Based on the statute of Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund, the resources of this fund can be provided from three main sources, the first is the government investment which should be foreseen in the national budget bill, the second is the allocation of one percent of the NDF resources for this fund, and the third source would be the allocation of a part of the trades commission received by the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO).

According to Sabaei, currently, 30 percent of the SEO commissions are deposited directly to the account of this fund on a daily basis.

The Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund's mission is to support the Iranian stock market. The money loaned from NDF should be repaid over a specified period and the maturity can be extended. The Capital Market Stabilization Fund is responsible for paying the principal amount plus interest.

CBI, Industry, Mining, Trade Ministry hold meeting to discuss forex, trade policies

TEHRAN - The fourth meeting of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry's joint working group on forex and trade coordination was held on Thursday to discuss related issues including the ways for directing export revenues into productive sectors.

The meeting was attended by senior officials including CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi and Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin, IRNA reported.

Pointing to the importance of an export-oriented view in the country's economy, Saleh-Abadi said, in the meeting, that an export-oriented view is a progressive economic view and those countries that follow such a view will be successful.

"In this regard, ministries and organizations must take steps towards policies and programs that lead to the inflow of foreign currency into the country," Saleh-Abadi said.

The governor of the central bank also expressed hope for an increase in the country's revenues in the next Iranian calendar year (starts



Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin (L) and CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi

on March 21), saying: "Supporting domestic production and investing in the country's economic infrastructure should be on the agenda and using the country's foreign exchange resources for the import of unnecessary and luxury goods should be prevented."

Mentioning the implementation of a supply chain financing plan by the banking system to provide facilities to production units across the country, Saleh-Abadi said: "In financing production and industrial units, we use the capacities of this plan in coordination with the

Industry Ministry so that we can make the best use of the country's monetary resources."

Further in the meeting, Fatemi-Amin for his part emphasized the need for the coordination of forex and trade policies and stated: "Procedures related to non-oil exports and the guidance of export revenues into the country's trade and production cycle will be facilitated as a result of coordination among related agencies and organizations."

The CBI and Industry, Mining,

Trade between Iran, EAEU rises 33% in 9 months yr/yr

From page 1 ► Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development

of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic's plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.



Iran, Uzbekistan ink railway co-op protocol



TEHRAN – Iran and Uzbekistan have signed a protocol to strengthen cooperation in the field of rail transport and promote the use of international transit corridors passing through the two countries, the portal of the Iranian Transport and Urban Development Ministry announced.

According to Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) Miad Salehi, the Railway Cooperation Protocol was signed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Uzbekistan on Wednesday.

Establishing useful preferential tariff conditions, developing rail corridors, and regulating combined sea-rail transit are among the goals of the mentioned protocol.

The protocol has been signed on the sidelines of an Uzbek delegation's visit to Iran, headed by the country's deputy minister of investments and foreign trade.

The Uzbek delegation met with senior Iranian transport officials including Iranian Deputy

Transport Minister Shahriar Afandizadeh and RAI Head Miad Salehi during their stay in Tehran.

In the meeting with Afandizadeh, which was also attended by managers of major transport organizations and representatives of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the latest status of transport and transit cooperation between the two countries was reviewed and the two sides drew a roadmap for strengthening and developing transport cooperation between the two countries. They also announced readiness to form specialized working groups in various road, rail, maritime, and aviation sectors.

Initial agreements were also reached to define new routes under the framework of the Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) and plan some trial cargo transport projects through these routes.

The two sides furthermore stressed the need to facilitate trade relations between the two countries by utilizing the capacities of the strategic port of Chabahar and its hinterland to develop international and transit transport with each other and with third countries from Central Asia to Southeast Asia.

The Uzbek delegation visited Chabahar port on Thursday to get acquainted with the capacities of Iran's only Oceanic port.

During their visit to the port, they met with

Housing price rises 1.1% in Tehran City

TEHRAN- Average housing price rose 1.1 percent in the capital Tehran during the tenth Iranian calendar month Dey (ended on January 21), compared to its previous month, according to a report by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

Based on the CBI data, the average price for one square meter of a residential unit in Tehran stood at 329.4 million rials (about \$1,135) during the mentioned month, IRIB reported.

The average housing price in the said month also increased 20.3 percent in comparison to the same month in the previous fiscal year.

Although, the number of real estate deals stood at 9,800 in the capital city in the tenth month of this year, rising 0.5 percent and 179.3 percent, from the previous month, and the same month of the past year, respectively.

The housing market in Tehran was the second-highest returning market in Iran among the country's four major markets in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021) with 85 percent annual growth.

The information obtained from Kilid website (which is a major platform for housing trades) indicated that the housing price index in Tehran grew by 85 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year, compared to its preceding year.

The highest monthly price increase of 12.5 percent occurred in the Iranian calendar month of Mordad (July 22-August 21, 2020), while the biggest monthly price decrease occurred in Azar (November 21-December 20, 2020) with a decline of 8.1 percent.

Back in April, 2021, the head of Iran's Property Advisers Union said housing prices in the country should decrease at least 25 percent in order for people to be able to afford to purchase.

Mostafa Gholi Khosravi stressed the need for establishing a market regulation headquarters for the housing sector to monitor the activities of dealers and real estate agencies in order to balance the prices.

Housing prices in Iran have been constantly rising over the past year due to various internal and external factors.

President Raisi visits Gilan in his 15th provincial visit

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi visited northern Gilan Province on top of a high-ranking delegation on Friday, as the 15th provincial visit since he took office in August, IRNA reported.

Accompanied by members of his cabinet and some of their deputies, Raisi arrived at Sardar-e-Jangal Airport in Rasht (capital city of Gilan) on Friday morning.

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

During the trip to Gilan province, Raisi visited some of the province's ongoing infrastructure projects and also went to the province's free zones to discuss and resolve the problems and challenges in the mentioned areas.

As reported, during his one-day trip, President Raisi visited the Rasht-Caspian-Anzali railway project along with Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi.

Rasht-Caspian-Anzali railway is a continuation of the Qazvin-Rasht-Anzali railway project, the executive operation of which was started two years ago.

The 35-kilometer-long railway is being constructed in two sections. The first part of the railway is 17 km long and currently has 91 percent physical progress and the second part is 18 km with 69 percent physical progress.

He also paid a visit to Anzali Free Zone,



President Raisi (1st R) and Transport Minister Rostam Qasemi (2nd R) visit Anzali Free Zone on Friday

during which he stressed the need to speed up the connection of the Caspian port complex and especially Anzali zone to the national railway network, along with the purchase of roll-on/roll-off (RORO or ro-ro) ships in order to expand trade with Eurasian countries.

During this trip, President Raisi visited the facilities and infrastructure in the Anzali Free Zone, especially the special RORO port under construction, the Caspian Port watchtower, and the construction of the railway line in the area.

During this visit, Raisi was accompanied by Secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Zones Saeed Mohammad, Governor-General of Gilan Province Asadollah Abbasi, Transport Minister Rostam Qasemi, Head of Anzal Free Zone Organization Ali Osat-Akbari Moghaddam.

Why the United States is keen to court Honduras' new president

Thursday's inauguration of new Honduran President Xiomara Castro was supposed to inspire hope in a country blighted by economic collapse, massive emigration, and one of the world's highest murder rates, according to [carnegieendowment.org](#).

Castro's November 28 landslide win, followed by a quick concession by the incumbent National Party candidate, had been hailed as proof that democracy in one of Latin America's poorest countries was alive and kicking. But excitement over the country's first female head of state has dampened considerably as she has faced both a severe political crisis within her own party that risks overshadowing her inauguration and the uphill battles of combating corruption and organized crime.

Castro's victory was the first time since the country's democratization in 1982 that a president did not hail from either the Liberal Party or the National Party, which have dominated Honduran politics for forty years. Since 2009, when Castro's husband, Manuel Zelaya, was ousted in a military coup, the governing National Party had undermined democratic institutions so much, and was so deeply mired in massive corruption and dealings with organized crime, that a peaceful transfer of power was far from certain. More than twenty politicians, mostly from the opposition, were assassinated in pre-election violence. Still, young voters turned out in droves to support Castro and her Liberty and Refoundation (Libre) party. Not being part of the two major parties allowed Castro to convincingly call for change and appealed to voters who had lost faith in the political establishment (even though Castro, as a former first lady, is far from an outsider).

But last week, a political crisis broke out when lawmakers from Castro's party opposed her decision to hand the presidency of Congress to Luis Reondo of the Savior of Honduras Party (PSH), an allied centrist outfit that had supported her candidacy. The crisis deepened further when members of the Libre party backed another president of Congress—bringing the country to the brink of



a constitutional crisis. With numerous lawmakers expelled from the Libre party and PSH support uncertain, Castro's capacity to appoint officials or to push through key reforms—be it economic policies or measures to fight corruption or organized crime—will be far more limited.

The fact that Castro suffered such a serious setback even before taking office bodes ill for her four-year presidential term and may paralyze many of the ambitious ideas articulated on the campaign trail. Her goal to summon a Constitutional Assembly—a controversial idea her husband had also pursued when president—will almost certainly be out of reach. Considering the urgency to address Honduras' many problems, voters' patience with the new government is unlikely to last for very long. A recent poll suggested that nearly 45 percent of voters would support a military coup if corruption remained very high.

Castro's premature troubles also pose a challenge for international partners and donors, many of whom identified the incoming president as a potential interlocutor in a region blighted by poverty, corruption, and increasingly powerful transnational crime. In addition, many of the region's democracies are facing their worst crises in decades.

More than two million people are estimated to have left Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—a region known as the Northern Triangle—since 2014, contributing significantly to the situation at the United States' southern border. Last year, half of the people taken

into custody on the migration trail to the United States hailed from Honduras, which turns the small country into a U.S. foreign policy priority. The fact that U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris traveled to Tegucigalpa to attend the inauguration is a clear signal that the United States is keen to establish strong ties with the new Honduran government.

Along with El Salvador, Honduras has also been in the spotlight for its transnational crime and drug trade that deeply pervades state structures. This was perhaps most powerfully symbolized by the March 2021 sentence of Juan Antonio Hernández, brother of Honduras' outgoing president, to life in U.S. federal prison on charges of state-sponsored drug trafficking. And testimonies by drug traffickers have revealed that this isn't unique to the Hernández family: politicians or family members tied to three past Honduran presidents have links to transnational crimes—including Yani Rosenthal, head of the Liberal Party who came in third in November's presidential elections and who spent time in a U.S. prison. These structural realities point to the overwhelming financial firepower of the international drug trade and underline how difficult it will be to bring about meaningful change. While Castro promised reconciliation to avoid alienating key political players whom she may have to work with, she risks creating a climate of impunity by not punishing officials for their past corruption.

In the same way, outside actors' interests may involve difficult trade-offs. After the

2009 military coup, former U.S. president Barack Obama's administration decided to support holding fresh presidential elections and started working with the winner, Porfirio Lobo, whose son is currently serving a twenty-four-year sentence for drug trafficking in the United States. Rather than setting a precedent that military coups were not acceptable, Washington was eager to identify an interlocutor with whom it could work with, while several Latin American governments, such as those in Brazil and Argentina, had called for reinstating Zelaya and did not accept the legitimacy of the Lobo administration. Castro has also signaled that she may re-evaluate her country's relationship with Taiwan, placing Honduras in the ongoing tensions between China and the United States.

While the international community mostly sees Honduras through the context of migration and transnational crime, it is equally important to focus on other aspects of the country's embattled democracy and human rights situation. While on the campaign trail, Castro had vowed to combat violence against women, Indigenous populations, and environmental activists—topics that received little attention by previous governments. (Two well-known Honduran activists have been assassinated this month alone.) Castro also promised to attempt to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape and to improve access to contraceptives, ideas that will generate resistance among conservative Hondurans.

The odds that Castro will move Honduras in the right direction in these numerous issues are slim. More than half of Hondurans are keen to emigrate, and it is unlikely that this reality will change anytime soon. And yet, especially when compared to the previous administration, this new government represents one of the few bright spots in Central America. Castro deserves broad international support as she initiates her presidency.

North Korea flexes military muscle

Nuclear-armed North Korea has confirmed it has test-fired two more rounds of weapons this week, saying the missile launches were successful.

According to North Korean media, the two latest "surface-to-surface tactical guided missiles" were fired from a coastal area on Thursday and were armed with a conventional warhead.

North Korean media said the missiles "precisely hit the target".

"The practical combat performance of the long-range cruise missile system would hold a reliable share in boosting the war deterrence of the country," the media added.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) also confirmed Thursday's launches were two long-range cruise missiles that the North had first tested in September.

"The two missiles flew for more than two hours and 35 minutes and demonstrated an ability to strike targets 1,800 kilometers (1,118 miles) away, a performance that underscored their value in boosting the war deterrence of the country," the news agency said.

Experts say the latest series of launches are the highest number of missiles test-fired by North Korea in a single month as Pyongyang begins 2022 with a display of new and sophisticated weapons.

On Thursday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it had detected the launch of what Seoul said it presumed were two ballistic missiles from near Hamhung, on the east coast of North Korea. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said they had traveled for about 190 km and reached an altitude of 20 km.

The latest launches are the sixth round of tests the North has carried out this month and have drawn condemnation from the United States.

A few weeks ago, Pyongyang said it will be bolstering its defenses against the U.S. and consider resuming "all temporally-suspended activities", in what analysts have said is an apparent reference to a self-imposed moratorium on tests of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.

Earlier in the month, North Korea tested tactical guided missiles, two "hypersonic missiles" capable of high speed and maneuvering after lift-off, and a railway-borne missile system.

Analysts have pointed out that some of the tests are aimed at developing new capabilities, for the most part, to evade missile defenses, while other tests are planned to give an idea of the preparedness and ability to adapt to different scenarios.

Leader Kim Jong Un has called on the North Korean military to counter threats from the United States and its regional allies.

This week, state media said Kim had visited an unidentified "important" munitions factory, underscoring his vow not only to improve capabilities but mass-produce and deploy more weapons.

State media also says Kim has called on the military to boost the country's strategic military forces as he observed the test of a hypersonic missile, officially attending a missile launch for the first time in nearly two years.

The KCNA reported that after watching the test, Kim urged military scientists to "further acceler-

ate the efforts to steadily build up the country's strategic military muscle both in quality and quantity and further modernize the army."

Unlike some other recent tests, the ruling party's newspaper Rodong Sinmun has published photos of Kim attending the launch on its front page.

Analysts say while Kim may have unofficially attended other tests, this appearance and its Page One feature on Rodong Sinmun means he is not concerned about being personally associated with tests of major new technology and does not care how Washington interprets this.

Many analysts say North Korea has every right to advance its military defensive capabilities just like any other country and that the heavy American military presence on its borders are the destabilizing factor.

So far this month, North Korea said it tested a new type of hypersonic missile on January 5 and again on January 11, with Kim Jong Un reported to have attended the second launch.

Hypersonic weapons usually fly towards targets at lower altitudes than ballistic missiles and can achieve more than five times the speed of sound - or about 6,200 km per hour.

Despite their name, analysts say the main feature of hypersonic weapons is not speeding but their maneuverability, which help evade missile defense systems.

On January 14 North Korea launched a pair of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) from a train near the northern border with China, in what state media said was a short-notice drill aimed at boosting the proficiency of the troops operating the missiles.

North Korea first tested the rail-based system in September, saying it was designed as a potential counter-strike to any threatening forces.

According to analysts, rail-mobile missiles are an efficient option to improve the survivability of nuclear forces, making it difficult for enemies to detect and destroy them before being fired.

Experts say the missiles appear to be KN-23 SRBMs, which were first tested in May 2019 and are designed to evade missile defenses by flying on a lower, "depressed" trajectory.

North Korea fired another pair of KN-23 missiles, this time from a wheeled launching vehicle.

State media said the tests confirmed the "explosive power" of its conventional warhead.

On January 17, North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) in a rare test from an airport in its capital Pyongyang.

According to state media, the pair of missiles "precisely hit an island target" off the east coast. Analysts said the missiles appeared to be KN-24 SRBMs which were last tested in March 2020 and appear to have entered mass production and deployment with military units.

Talks aimed at denuclearization have stalled after the United States wanted Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear and missiles program first in exchange for sanctions relief afterward. North Korea says it is open to diplomacy but only if the United States and its allies stop "hostile policies" such as sanctions or military drills.

The West continues to arm S. Arabia in Yemen war: ICG expert

From page 1 ► these practices, which will make negotiating an end to the war more difficult.

In February, President Joe Biden announced that he was ending America's "offensive" support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. Do you think Washington has stopped military aid to Saudi Arabia?

The U.S. has largely halted what it refers to as "offensive" military support to Saudi Arabia in a clear signal that it wants the war to end. Beyond that, it has not taken any meaningful practical steps to find a negotiated solution, mainly because the Yemen war is not near the top of its list of policy priorities at the moment.

The American officials claim U.S. role is limited to "defensive" operations. There's just one problem: The line between "offensive" and "defensive" support is murky. What is your comment?

This is indeed a tricky problem. We find this in many conflicts and attempts to establish

ceasefires, most recently for example in negotiations between the United States and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2019-2020. Detail matters. Definitions matter. Precise commitments are required.

How do you see the role of Western powers when it comes to Yemen? They have a dark record. They helped Saddam Hussein in producing chemical weapons to target Iranian civilians and today prefer to turn a blind eye on crimes committed against Yemeni women and children by the bin Salman government.

Western powers say they want a negotiated end to the war, but at the same time some of them, especially the U.S., UK and France, continue to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Of course, they argue that the Houthis are receiving outside support as well, including from Iran. The problem in many armed conflicts is that, apart from the conflict's origins, they are fuelled by external actors. We have



seen in the Libyan war that outside actors must take a step back before local actors can move toward a political process to settle their differences. The same may well prove true in the Yemeni case.

Is there an international law to force Saudi Arabia and its allies to end the war on Yemen?

No, there isn't. I wish there were, not just in the case of Yemen but in all cases.

Venezuela launches "truth commission" on European colonialism

From page 1 ► The date is also observed as Columbus Day in the United States and elsewhere.

On the occasion last year, the Venezuelan President sent a letter to the King of Spain requesting the people of the Americas receive "forgiveness for the crimes and genocide committed and carry out a process of reparation".

The Venezuelan president points out that, in order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to carry out "historical research" and "a great educational effort."

The commission will be chaired by the Minister of Culture and made up of various politicians, historians, writers, researchers, anthropologists, philosophers, and Venezuelan

cultural movement leaders.

For centuries, the development of European countries came at the expense of the gold, silver, and other riches stolen from the Latin American nations that had been colonized by the West.

In exchange, experts say native Latin Americans were enslaved and forced to work in excruciating conditions. Analysts say this

enslavement and occupation continues in some parts of Latin America and the Caribbean by the West.

Anti-colonization movement leaders say the commission is vital to give a voice to the indigenous people of Latin America and understand what their identity is, what the effects of colonization did to them and what has become of them today.

Burkina Faso coup: New leader Damiba gives first speech

The new military leader of Burkina Faso has promised a return to the normal constitutional order "when the conditions are right".

Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba led a mutiny that ousted President Roch Kaboré on Monday.

He blamed the president for failing to contain violence by Islamist militants.

He made his first national speech since taking power on the eve of an emergency summit of West African leaders, called in response to the coup.

On Friday, the regional bloc, Ecowas, suspended Burkina Faso because of the military takeover, sources say.

Burkina Faso is the third West African country to witness a military takeover in the past year. Guinea and Mali have both had sanctions imposed on them by Ecowas to press them to return to constitutional order.

Wearing a red beret and army fatigues in his national address on Thursday evening, Lt-Col Damiba, 41, said: "When the conditions are right, according to the deadline that our people will define in all sovereignty, I commit to a return to a normal constitutional order."

He said he will meet representatives of various sections of society to agree on a roadmap for reform.

He added that Burkina Faso needed international partners "more than ever", following condemnation of the coup.

"I call on the international community to

support our country so it can exit this crisis as soon as possible."

He did not specify which part of the international community he wanted support from - the coup comes at a time when Russia is competing with France to help West African countries tackle a growing Islamist insurgency.

France has thousands of troops in West Africa helping its former colonies Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger tackle jihadist forces.

But the French presence is proving increasingly unpopular in the region and President Emmanuel Macron has started to reduce French troop numbers. Mali has already turned to Russia to fill the vacuum, sparking a bitter row with France, and a group of Russian mercenaries has offered their services to Burkina Faso's new leaders.

The Burkina Faso military announced that it had seized power on state television on Monday because of the deteriorating security situation.

In his speech, Lt-Col Damiba said the fight against jihadists would be his priority and promised to recapture rural areas, allowing the 1.5 million people who have fled their homes to return.

Before seizing power, he had been at the forefront of the fight against Islamist militants and wrote a book on the topic last year.

Similar troubles in neighbouring Mali led to a military coup in May 2021 - one that was broadly welcomed by the public.

(Source: BBC)

Ilkhanid, Timurid coins undergo restoration

From page 1 ► “Metalworks including coins face critical environmental conditions when they are unearthed.... So that their corrosion process accelerates once again.”

“They may suffer new damage if they are not protected in proper time. So, restoration measures are of very high importance,” the official explained.

The Timurid dynasty, self-designated as Gurkani, was a Sunni Muslim dynasty or clan of Turco-Mongol origin descended from the warlord Timur (also known as Tamerlane). Ilkhanid dynasty, also spelled Il-Khanid, was a Mongol dynasty that ruled in Iran from 1256 to 1335. Il-khan is Persian for “subordinate khan.”

The mausoleum is one of Iran’s must-visit destinations for those interested in traditional Persian and genuine Islamic architecture. It is surmounted by one of the largest brick domes in the globe, though some mistakenly refer to it as “the largest dome in the world.”

The extremely rich interior of the mausoleum displays glorious glazed tiles, brickwork, marquetry, stucco work, frescoes, and vivid illustrations, amongst other decorations.

Hulegu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, was given the task of capturing Iran by the paramount Mongol chieftain Mongke. Hulegu set out in about 1253 with a Mongol army of about 130,000. He founded the Il-Khanid dynasty in 1256, and by 1258 he had captured Baghdad and all of Iran, according to Britannica.

The Il-Khans consolidated their position in Iran and reunited the region as a political and territorial entity after several centuries of fragmented rule by petty dynasties. During the reign of the Il-Khanid Maumud Ghuzun (reigned 1295–1304), the Il-Khans lost all contact with the remaining Mongol chieftains of China. Mahmud Ghuzun himself embraced Sunni Islam, and his reign was a period of Iranian cultural renaissance in which such scholars as Rashid al-Din flourished under his patronage.



Ghazan’s brother Oljeitu (reigned 1304–16) converted to Shia Islam in 1310. Oljeitu’s conversion gave rise to great unrest, and civil war was imminent when he died in 1316. His son and successor, Abu Sa’id (reigned 1317–35), reconverted to Sunni Islam and thus averted war.

In about 220 CE the Sasanian dynasty of Iran introduced the concept of thin flan coins, issues that were struck in relief on both sides. The Muslim conquest of Persia, also known as the Arab conquest of Iran, led to the fall of the Sasanian Empire of Iran (Persia) in ca. 651 and the eventual decline of the Zoroastrian religion. The rise of Muslims coincided with an unprecedented political, social, economic, and military weakness in Persia.

The conquering Muslims at first mimicked the coinage of their predecessors. In the western provinces, they issued gold and copper pieces imitated from contemporary Byzantine coins, modifying the cross on the reverse of the latter somewhat to suit Muslim sensibilities. In the eastern provinces, the Arab governors issued silver dirhams that were copies of late Sasanian coins (mostly of those of Khosrow II; with the addition of short Arabic inscriptions on the margin and often the name of the Arab governor in Pahlavi; even the crude representation of the fire altar was retained.

Passenger flow crossing Iran-Turkey terminal up 113 percent yr/yr

TEHRAN – The number of passengers crossing the Bazargan border terminal, which connects Iran to Turkey, has jumped 113 percent year on year due to the ease of some coronavirus restrictions.

“321, 401 travelers have crossed the border terminal as of the beginning the [current Iranian calendar] year (started March 21, 2021) while we registered 150, 687 passengers for the same period last year,” IRNA quoted the director of the terminal, Jaber Akbarpour, as saying on Wednesday.

“84, 542 foreign nationals arrived in Iran via the border terminal as of the beginning of the year while 56,

792 foreigners left the country from the same border terminal, which marks a 125% and a 211% increase year on year,” Akbarpour explained.

Some 1.47m foreign nationals visited Iran from the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year 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.

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.

Last September, the Islamic Republic restarted the issuance of tourist visas following 19 months of suspension.

Landscape project to trim UNESCO-designated tower

TEHRAN – A landscape project will soon commence on the UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus and its surroundings in northern Iran.

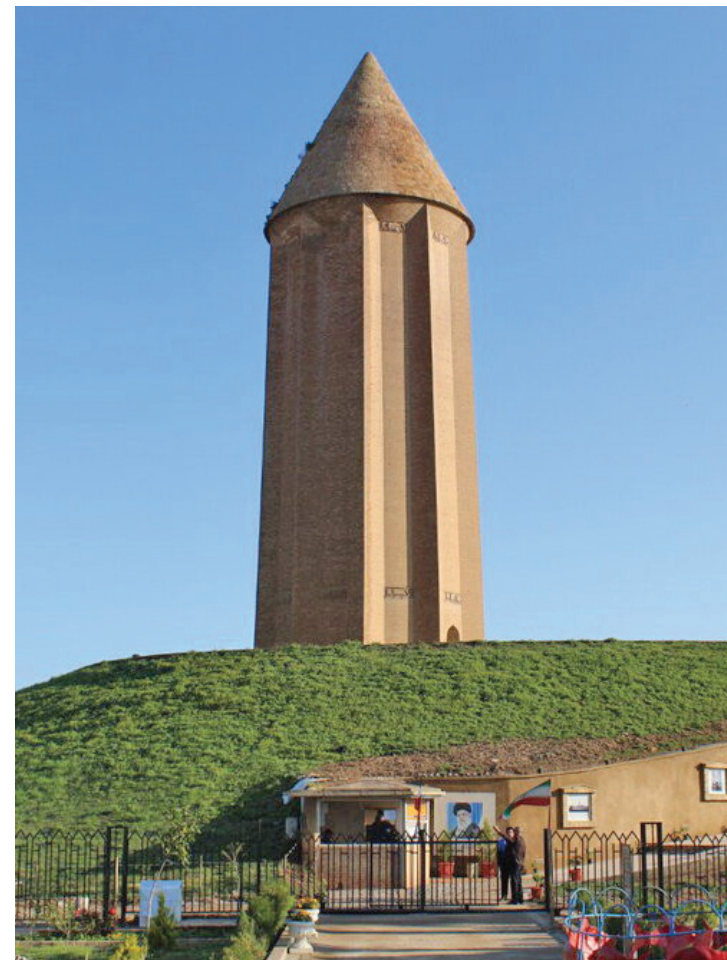
Supervised by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the project is aimed to restore some 8,000 square meters of sceneries surrounding the millennium-old brick tower, and to develop its tourism facilities, according to a local official.

Located in Golestan province, the monument is of high architectural importance as an exemplar and innovative design of the early-Islamic-era architecture.

Visible from great distances in the surrounding lowlands near the ancient Ziyarid capital, Jorjan, the 53-meter high Gonbad-e Qabus dominates a modern town of the same name laid out around its base in the early 20th century.

Its hollow cylindrical shaft of unglazed fired brick tapers up from an intricate geometric plan in the form of a ten-pointed star to a conical roof. Two encircling Kufic inscriptions commemorate Qabus Ibn Voshmgir, Ziyarid ruler and literati as its founder in 1006 CE.

As mentioned by UNESCO, the monument bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the



ancient civilization of Iran.

Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and

beyond. The structure capped by an eye-catching conical roof boasts intricate geometric principles and patterns which embellish parts of its load-bearing brickwork.

UK to scrap COVID test for fully-vaccinated Iranian travelers

TEHRAN – The British government is to scrap COVID-19 testing requirements for travelers from Iran and some other countries arriving in England or Scotland.

The modified procedures will come to take effect at 4 am UK time on February 11, ISNA reported.

The new rules say that fully-vaccinated passengers will no longer be required to undergo testing. Instead, they will be required to fill out a Passenger Locator Form. The form, which the government is set to simplify, will require the traveler’s basic details like travel history and vaccination status, among others. It can be submitted 2-3 days before travel.

Currently, fully-vaccinated travelers arriving in the UK are required to take a rapid lateral flow test (LFT) or polymerase chain reaction



(PCR) test (with an exception for kids aged 4 or below) from private service providers.

Moreover, those who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated will need to take a test before departure. They will also need to take a PCR test on or before day 2 of arrival in the UK. This means that the mandatory quarantine has

been lifted, and will be required only if they test positive.

“If you’re fully vaccinated you will no longer need to take a COVID-19 test either before or after you arrive in the UK. You still need to complete a passenger locator form,” according to British Embassy in Tehran.

“If you are not fully vaccinated you will need to take a pre-departure test. After you arrive, you will need to take a PCR test on or before day 2, but you will only need to quarantine if it’s positive. You still need to complete a passenger locator form.”

Mexico, Algeria, Cape Verde, China, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tonga, and Turkmenistan are among the countries, which are subject to the new guidelines.

Iranian, Italian architects discuss restoration of historical buildings

TEHRAN – On Wednesday, the Italian embassy in Tehran hosted a meeting during which a number of Iranian and Italian architects exchanged views on proper ways to restore historical buildings and structures.

Representatives from Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, and the cities of Isfahan, Shiraz, and Tehran attended the meeting, ISNA reported.

Furthermore, Italian architect, designer, and academic Mario Cucinella was among participants in the event parts of which were held virtually.

In addition, attendees addressed new approaches to contemporary architecture, optimizing resource consumption, reducing the effects of climate change, and choosing building materials.

The meeting was held under the auspices of the internationally acclaimed Italian magazine on architecture and design, “Domus”, the



A view of UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran

report said.

Iran hosts some of the world’s oldest cultural monuments including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, rich natural and rural landscapes, 26 of which are UNESCO World Heritage.

Persian handicrafts: Monjugh Duzi

TEHRAN - Monjugh Douzi is a kind of Iranian embroideries, which its know-how has been passed down from generation to generation from ancient times.

Mojughs are small beads that look like glass and are sewed to clothing and other textiles.

There are some historical documents and evidence that prove this art was quite popular during the Achaemenid and Sassanid eras. Back then tents, carpets, and garments were ornated by Monjughs, however, it was a custom specific to aristocrats.

According to specialists, Monjugh flourished once again in the late 20th century, during the Qajar era. Some of the valuable and elaborate Monjugh Duzi pieces of this era are kept in the Decorative Arts Museum of Iran and can be visited.

Gradually the material for making Monjugh changed from gemstones to glass and they turned into a craft practiced and used by ordinary people.

According to Visit Iran, Monjugh Duzi is the art of sewing Mojugh beads to



fabrics. The first step is to pass the beads through yarn by using a needle and then, sew them to the fabric based on the pattern. There are a lot of patterns and motifs that can be applied in Monjugh Duzi such as “Gol o Morgh” (flower and bird), “Gol o Buteh” (flower and bush), kinds of paisley, birds, animals, hunting grounds, geometric, trees, cypresses, arabesque, “Toranji” and “Sar Toranji”,

“Sar Lachaki”, “Shamsehee”, “Bazubandi”, “Band Rumi”, “Shah Abbasi”, knots, patterns from Kelims, holy names, etc.

Monjughs are most commonly sewed to thick silk, satin, and other shiny fabrics in different colors, and in styles such as “Khati” or linear, “Tupor” where the motif is filled by Monjugh, “Bast Duzi”, “Cobareh Duzi” and “Barjesteh Duzi” or embossed. Sometimes it is used along with other embroideries like “Gheythan Duzi” that is done by thick yarn, or with silk yarn, sequins, pearls, and filigree.

This delicate handicraft can be applied to ornate clothing, head wears, money bags, decorative tableaus, pencil holders, cases of stamps or brushes, bags, covers of boxes or utensils, belts, necklaces, anklets, coasters, and many more objects.

Monjugh Duzi has been practiced in the cities of Urmia and Tabriz for the longest time and is very popular today. Additionally, there are other artists and fans of Monjugh in cities such as Tehran, Isfahan, and south of Iran.

Global contest seeks to alter gastronomy tourism through innovation

TEHRAN – The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in collaboration with Basque Culinary Center has launched the 3rd Global Competition for Gastronomy Tourism Startups.

Their mission is to find challenges and projects and catalyze innovations that can transform the Gastronomy Tourism sector in the near future, according to organizers.

With incessant growth in the last decade, tourism generates approximately one in 10 jobs and accounts for 10.2% of world GDP.

Experts believe that food tourism has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism and, at the same time, has naturally positioned itself as an element of diversification of tourism with a high impact on the promotion of sustainable development at the regional

and local levels.

The event seeks to promote startups with high technological components to provide solutions or new services related to the gastronomic tourism sector.

In 2020, Iran joined an online campaign launched by the UNWTO to promote gastronomy as an essential part of tourism. Iranian cuisine, usually dominated by fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is usually set with sabzi khordan, a basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

COVIRAN vaccine begins global registration process

TEHRAN – The process for global registration of the Iranian-made “COVIRAN Barkat” vaccine for coronavirus started on Thursday by holding a virtual meeting with the World Health Organization officials.

COVIRAN is the first vaccine in West Asia that is in the process of global registration, IRIB reported.

Made by researchers at the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, COVIRAN Barkat was unveiled on December 29, 2020, and received the license for public use on June 14.

After presenting and approving the scientific documentation of the COVIRAN vaccine; the first official meeting with the World Health Organization has been held online on Thursday.

More than 10 Iranian experts prepared the necessary scientific documents within the framework of international law. The submission of these documents for the global registration of the vaccine took place in a process of several months.

Global vaccine registration is a complex process, and COVIRAN is the first vaccine in the West Asian region that is in the process of global registration, which will be ready for export and inclusion in the COVAX facility.

Iran is the sixth country in the



world and the first country in West Asia to gain the ability to produce the Coronavirus vaccine.

More effective than world-known vaccines

According to a new study, the effectiveness of the Iranian-made COVIRAN Barkat vaccine in fighting the coronavirus has been more than foreign rivals, namely Sinopharm, AstraZeneca,

The study was performed on 1.8 million people in Fars province from

the beginning of the vaccination process till October 2021, which considered four vaccines of Sinopharm, AstraZeneca, COVIRAN, and Sputnik, Younes Panahi, the deputy minister of health for research and technology, said on Wednesday.

COVIRAN vaccine was 87 percent effective in protecting against coronavirus infection and 86 percent effective against Covid-related hospitalization, compared with 84 percent and 82 percent, respectively for AstraZeneca;

COVIRAN is the first vaccine in West Asia that is in the process of global registration.

“Persian Medicine” included in Medical Subject Headings

From page 1 ► The Office of Complementary and Persian Medicine of the Ministry of Health started its efforts two years ago to add Persian medicine to the MeSH, he explained.

He also considered this achievement as an important step towards the consolidation of Iranian medicine as a branch of medical knowledge in the international dimension, which is also a major step in the internationalization of Persian medicine and codification of articles.

Pointing to the extensive cooperation with the World Health Organization and the success of many countries in educational and research cooperation, he emphasized the need for national determination to maximize the capacity of Iranian medicine in better medical and health services.

Medicinal plants in Iran

Iranian traditional medicine is one of the most ancient forms of traditional medicine. It is grounded in the concept of four senses of humor: phlegm (Balgham), blood (Dam), yellow bile (Safra), and



black bile (Sauda). The concept of four senses of humor is based on the teachings of Rhazes and Avicenna into an elaborate medical system.

Iranian traditional medicine is one of the most ancient forms of traditional medicine.

Iranian traditional medicine strongly focuses on prioritizing health maintenance and disease prevention over treatment.

So far, about 30,000 plant species are identified in the world, with Iran's share of about 8,000 species that its plant diversity is more than the whole of Europe.

Currently, about 2,300 species of medicinal plants have been identified in the country, accounting for one-third of the medicines used in human societies, the share of world trade in these products is about \$124 billion and Iran's share is \$570 million, which is only 0.5 percent of the total.

The per capita consumption of medicinal plants in Iran is about one kilogram of dried plants, in other words, 83,000 tons of medicinal plants worth 1.2 trillion rials (around \$29 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are consumed in the country, while in Europe this amount is 900 grams and in the United States is 2.5 kilograms.

Future of Winter Olympics and snow sports on thin ice, report warns

Climate change is threatening the future of the Winter Olympics and snow sports by eroding the season and forcing more dangerous, artificial conditions, experts have warned in a report published a week before the 2022 Games.

The Beijing Olympics, which start on 4 February, will be the first Winter Games to use almost 100% artificial snow, relying on more than 100 snow generators and 300 snow-cannons working flat-out to cover the ski slopes.

“This is not only energy and water intensive, frequently using chemicals to slow melt, but also delivers a surface that many competitors say is unpredictable and potentially dangerous,” said the Slippery Slopes report, produced by researchers at Loughborough University and the Protect Our Winters environment group.

Scottish freestyle skier Laura Donaldson warned that if “freestyle super pipes are formed from snow-making machines in a poor [natural snow] season, the walls of the pipe are solid, vertical ice and the pipe floor is solid ice”.

“This is dangerous for athletes,” she added, according to news sky website.

The fears about conditions echo those expressed during last summer's Tokyo Olympics, when athletes fainted and collapsed due to heat in a city that is on average 2.86C hotter than in 1900.

“The risk is clear: manmade warming is threatening the long-term future of winter sports,” the report warned, citing further studies. It added that global heating is also “reducing the number of climatically suitable host venues for the Winter Olympiad”.

It said the snowy slopes outside Beijing mask “an unfortunate truth: they will be the result of an estimated 49 million gallons of chemically-treated water frozen through snow machines”.



The Beijing organising committee has issued a sustainability report saying the Games’ “smart snowmaking system” could use 20% less water than traditional methods.

Four time Olympic snowboarder Zoe Gillings-Brier told Sky News that many competitions “are now being cancelled due to lack of snow - this wasn't the case when I started competing internationally 20 years ago”.

She acknowledged that snow sports like many other things are carbon intensive, but said participants “are in general very interested in the environment because we see the impact of climate change every day, so there is a lot of enthusiasm for solutions in the community”.

Earlier this week Beijing said Chinese authorities would tackle polluters to ensure the Games would be held in a “good environment”, as particularly heavy smog clogged up the capital.

Of the 21 venues used for the Winter Games since the French resort of Chamonix hosted the first in 1924, researchers estimate that, by 2050, only 10 will have the “climate suitability” and natural snowfall levels to host an event.

Chamonix is now rated “high risk” along with venues in Norway, France and Austria, while Vancouver in Canada, Sochi in Russia and Squaw Valley in the United States are deemed “unreliable”.

Shark attacks increased around the world in 2021 after years of decline

Shark attacks increased around the world in 2021 following three years of decline, though beach closures in 2020 caused by the coronavirus pandemic could make the numbers seem more dramatic, officials in the US said on Monday.

Researchers with the International Shark Attack File recorded 73 unprovoked incidents last year compared to 52 in 2020, according to a new report administered by the Florida Museum of Natural History and the American Elasmobranch Society.

The International Shark Attack File manager, Tyler Bowling, pointed out that 52 bites in 2020 were the lowest documented in more than a decade. The 73 bites in 2021 more closely align with the five-year global average of 72.

“Shark bites dropped drastically in 2020 due to the pandemic,” Bowling said. “This past year was much more typical, with average bite numbers from an assortment of species and fatalities from white sharks, bull sharks and tiger sharks.”

Researchers saw 11 shark-related fatal-

ities last year, with nine considered unprovoked. Australia had three unprovoked deaths, followed by New Caledonia with two. The US, Brazil, New Zealand and South Africa each had a single unprovoked fatal shark attack.

Provoked attacks are defined as when humans initiate contact, such as divers trying to touch a shark or fishermen removing a shark from a fishing net, according to the International Shark Attack File.

Florida has led the US and the rest of the world in unprovoked shark bites for decades, and the trend continued in 2021, researchers said.

Florida had 28 unprovoked bites last year, compared to 19 in the rest of the US and 26 total outside the US. This is consistent with Florida's most recent five-year annual average of 25 attacks. Of Florida's 28 unprovoked bites, 17 were in Volusia county, which includes Daytona Beach.

The single fatal unprovoked shark attack in the US in 2021 was in California. A man was killed while boogie boarding in Morro Bay on Christmas Eve.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 27

New cases	16,757
New deaths	23
Total cases	6,310,452
Total deaths	132,356
New hospitalized patients	994
Patients in critical condition	1,323
Total recovered patients	6,095,414
Diagnostic tests conducted	44,516,027
Doses of vaccine injected	130,711,386

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

World’s first ‘subway library’ to open in Tehran

For the first time in the underground transportation system worldwide, a public library will be opened in Tehran subway, Farnoush Nobakht, director of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operations Company, said.

According to the memorandum signed between the Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operations Company and the Tehran public libraries foundation, libraries will be launched in seven selected stations, first of which will be inaugurated on August 12, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

The library, called “Metro Book”, is in line with the cultural programs to promote the culture of reading and increase per capita reading among subway passengers during intra-city trips, the library with a capacity of more than 5,000 books provides services continuously from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., she explained.

افتتاح کتابخانه عمومی در متروی تهران برای اولین بار در جهان

مدیرعامل شرکت بهره برداری متروی تهران و حومه گفت: برای اولین بار در سامانه حمل و نقل متروهای جهان، کتابخانه عمومی در متروی تهران افتتاح می شود.

به گزارش ایسنا، فنروش نوبخت اظهار داشت: قرار است طبق تفاهم نامه منعقد شده بین شرکت بهره برداری متروی تهران و حومه و نهاد کتابخانه های عمومی استان تهران در هفت ایستگاه منتخب «مترو کتاب» راه اندازی شود.

مدیرعامل شرکت بهره برداری متروی تهران و حومه گفت: این کتابخانه در راستای برنامه های فرهنگی معاونت امور فرهنگی اجتماعی شرکت بهره برداری متروی تهران مبنی بر ترویج فرهنگ کتابخوانی و افزایش سرانه مطالعه در میان مسافران مترو هنگام سفرهای درون شهری این کتابخانه با ظرفیت بیش از ۵۰۰۰ عنوان کتاب به صورت فیزیکی از ساعت ۸ صبح تا ۲۰ به طور مستمر به ارائه خدمات می دهد.

