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Op-ed

Iran endures: The Islamic Revolution at 43

By Yuram Abdullah Weiler

"I state with certainty that Islam shall humiliate the superpowers."

—Imam Khomeini

As the strength, status and significance of the erstwhile mighty United States continues to erode at an ever accelerating pace, the country seems intent upon "locking itself into a three-way struggle with China and Russia" that it cannot win. Against his geopolitical backdrop, the Islamic Republic of Iran has endured and is celebrating the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, making a mockery of the plethora of western predictions of its imminent demise. Understanding this remarkable persistence Iran has displayed against all odds, as well as the endless efforts exerted by the arrogant powers, presents a conundrum for the West.

First of all, allow me to extend my congratulations to the Iranian people on this auspicious occasion commemorating the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Over four decades of independence from U.S. domination is quite an astonishing accomplishment, indeed, and not something that to date has been satisfactorily explained by western pundits. Undoubtedly, there are many factors to consider in any attempt to analyze this achievement: economic, military, social, political, geographic, educational, historical, and cultural, just to name a few. Exceeding all these in significance, however, are the religious or spiritual dimensions, namely those contained within Islam, which, in my opinion, is the weft on the shuttle passing through the warp on the loom of nationhood upon which the resilient national fabric of Iran has been woven. ▸ Page **2**

Report

Fury at UK PM as focus shifts to met police probe

TEHRAN- The former British Prime Minister, Theresa May, has led the chorus of outrage directed at her successor Boris Johnson.

The criticism by members of parliament follows the long-awaited release by a senior civil servant, Sue Gray, of a report probing over a dozen events in which the PM and his inner circle broke the Covid lockdown laws that they themselves introduced for the British public; who were forced to either observe the rules or face punishment.

The outrage reflects the wider public anger which stems from the fact that during a time when tens of thousands of people were dying, their loved ones were prevented from holding their hands to bid them farewell.

When tens of thousands of people were dying, their loved ones were prevented from attending the funeral and burial procession.

When thousands of elderly pensioners were on the verge of death at care homes, their loved ones were prevented from attending to them.

How many people died alone because of the government's covid lockdown rules?

How many people were prevented from seeing their loved ones get married; not being there on the big day because of the government's covid lockdown rules? ▸ Page **5**

Iran's foreign debt falls 0.8%: CBI

TEHRAN – The latest data released by Central Bank of Iran (CBI) show that the country's foreign debt stood at $9.067 billion at the end of the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (November 21, 2021), down 0.8 percent from $9.142 billion at the end of the previous year (March 20, 2021).

From the total foreign debt, $6.619 billion was mid-term and long-term debts while $2.447 billion was short-term debts, the data indicated, IRIB reported.

Iran's external debt stood at $9.031 billion at the end of the sixth Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (September 22, 2021), down 1.2 percent from $9.142 billion at the end of the previous year.

Some $6.574 billion of the total foreign debt in the mentioned period was mid-term and long-term debts while $2.457 billion was short-term debts.

External debt is the portion of a country's debt that is borrowed from foreign lenders including commercial banks, governments, or international financial institutions. These loans, including interest, must usually be paid in the currency in which the loan was made.

Foreign debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the ratio between the debt a country owes to non-resident creditors and its nominal GDP.

Back in January 2021, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi had said the country's foreign debts were very insignificant.

"Currently, the volume of Iran's foreign debt is extremely small due to the existing restrictions," said.

The official noted that using foreign debts could be a positive opportunity, meaning that the government can borrow from abroad and invest inside the country.

According to Dehnavi, most of the government's debts are internal.

Having external debts is important globally, but it is not currently important for Iran since the country has almost no foreign debts.

Iran's external debt has been falling in recent years following a downward trend.

210 natural resources, watershed management projects to come on stream

TEHRAN – A total of 210 projects of natural resources and watershed management will be inaugurated by February 11, the head of the Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization, has announced.

"A sum of 3.9 trillion rials (nearly $14.1 million) has been spent on these projects," ILNA quoted Masoud Mansour as saying on Tuesday.

These projects include watershed management, aquifer, flood control, desertification, forest development, rangeland rehabilitation, conservation, and support projects aimed at conserving water and soil, protecting vegetation, preventing erosion, and reducing drought and nutrition damage, he explained.

The national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1401, ▸ Page **7**

Tehran tourism fair: WCC-designated cities, villages signal off-the-beaten routes

TEHRAN – Natives of 14 Iranian cities and villages, which have been inscribed as handicraft hubs by the World Crafts Council, showed off skills at the four-day Tehran fair to help define novel travel destinations.

The craftspeople put on show top examples to their routines while staging live workshops, performances, and meetings during the 15th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition held simultaneously with the 35th national handicrafts exhibition at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

The majority of visitors welcomed the way they presented their arts as experts believe it would drastically help people to think of lesser-known destinations, IRNA reported.

"It is a good sign that tourism and handicrafts exhibitions are held simultaneously as they are the two branches of the tourism ministry," the deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian said on Sunday.

"This year's exhibitions have been very well received and activists from the tourism industry as well as the handicraft industry are present."

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

For instance, Shiraz is named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts", Malayer is a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture, while Zanjan has gained the title of a "world city of filigree".

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at $120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported $427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1398. Of the figure, some $190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries. ▸ Page **6**

Iranian athletes nominated for Best Male and Female awards by APC

TEHRAN - Tokyo Paralympics medalists Ruhollah Rostami and Hashemiyeh Motaghian Moavi have been nominated for the Best Male and Female Athlete respectively at the Asian Awards 2021.

The upcoming Asian Awards 2021 were organized by the Asian Paralympic Committee (APC).

Powerlifter Rostami won a gold medal in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics by lifting 234kg in his third attempt in the men's -80kg.

He will have to vie with Indian Para athlete Sumit Antil, Chinese wheelchair fencer Yanke Feng and Japanese Para athlete Tomoki Sato.

Motaghian also made history by winning the first ever gold medal in athletic in the Paralympic Games in the women's section.

She claimed a gold in the women's javelin - F55 with a throw of 24.50 meters. She also bettered the world record by 47 centimeters.

Alongside Motaghian, Indian Bhavina Hasmukhbhai Patel (Para table tennis), China's Wen Xiaoyan (Para athlete) and Indonesia's Leani Ratri Oktila (Para badminton) are nominated for the coveted Best Female Athlete of the Year 2021.

"The Unseen" now visible at Iranian art houses

TEHRAN – Acclaimed Iranian animated movie "The Unseen" is on screen at the country's Art and Experience Cinemas, which are dedicated to screening art films.

The cardboard animation directed and produced by Behzad Nalbandi is about homeless women in Iran who are locked away, banished to the outskirts of the city, and made invisible. Nalbandi secretly conducted interviews in the camps and creates a world of his own to make those affected visible again.

The story of the documentary begins when foreign dignitaries are expected in Tehran. Therefore, the local authorities dedicate themselves to an "urban beautification" process that includes the rounding up of unsavory characters - drug addicts and prostitutes - from the streets. The men are released after a few days, but the women are kept as wards of the state in perpetuity. They are sent to holding centers on the outskirts of the city where no records are kept by the social workers.

This animated documentary attempts to give a voice to the homeless women.

It has probably been predicted that the Fajr Film Festival, currently underway in Tehran and several other cities across the country, ▸ Page **8**

Interview

Nobody stands with Iraq in its dark days except Iran: Iraqi expert

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - An Iraqi analyst says that Iraq's history has shown that none of its neighbors would stand with the Iraqi people in its woes but Iran.

"The recent experience in Iraq has proven, beyond a shadow of doubt, that nobody stands with the Iraqi people in its dark days but Iran as a strong neighbor and benevolent country" Ali Fahim tells the Tehran Times.

"The Iraqis felt this stance during the days of the unjust siege, which was imposed by all the neighboring countries that were claiming to be friendly states, and no window was opened for the Iraqis except Iran," Fahim explains.

Following is the text of the interview:

After the fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq and removal of stumbling blocks that had hampered rapprochement between the Iranian and Iraqi peoples, voices have emerged to drive a wedge between the two nations and demonizing the Islamic Republic. Who is behind these efforts?

This propaganda has been practiced widely, clearly and tangibly against the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraqi, Arab, Zionist, American and British media outlets since the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and especially after 2003 with the end of Saddam's Baathist rule. ▸ Page **5**

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Leader and top officials offer condolences over demise of Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani

TEHRAN— In separate messages, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Ebrahim Raisi, and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf offered condolences over the demise of Grand Ayatollah Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani.

Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani passed away on Tuesday morning in Qom. ▸ Page **2**

Iran endures: The Islamic Revolution at 43

From page 1 ▶ The preeminence of Islam among the cohesive forces forming and maintaining the Iranian national identity and its longevity is often overlooked, discounted, downplayed or even denied in the secular-oriented West and, at best, is certainly not well understood. In most studies of the Islamic Revolution by western scholars, the political, social and economic factors are emphasized in order to conform to their cultural tendency towards placing the Islamic Revolution in a secular, socio-economic model of revolution. Some studies stress the "J-curve" of continuously rising expectations followed by a sharp economic decline, and others point to the malaise and disorientation produced by rapid social change. As these approaches yield unsatisfactory results even for understanding the dynamics of the Islamic Revolution itself, they fail all the more so to provide any insight whatsoever into the resiliency and endurance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a consequence, there has been a long list of predictions by western scholars of the imminent demise of the Islamic government. In fact, making such predictions has taken on the character of an annual exercise among western academics, although Iran's longevity should in itself suffice to cause these scholars to rethink their axioms and assumptions.

Of course there are geopolitical factors that have contributed to the coherency of the Islamic Republic as well, such as the 8-year-long imposed war, which, much to the chagrin of the arrogant powers supporting the aggressor, triggered an outburst of national unity, volunteering spirit and self-sacrificing determination on the part of the Iranian people to secure their fledgling Islamic nation against the western-backed onslaught. "It is Saddam Hussein who on behalf of America attacked us," Imam Khomeini noted on the first day of the war, "and if we respond to him, it will never have anything to do with the Iraqi nation, which is our brother." Likewise, the economic sanctions, primarily imposed by the US for over the past 40 years, not only have failed to achieve the perpetrator's nefarious geopolitical goals, but to the contrary, have compelled Iran to become a self-reliant nation, and, as a corollary, a formidable regional power.

Islam is the common thread tying together numerous nations in the West Asian region, and Iran's version of Islamic government and revolution serve as a paradigm for others to follow, thus making Iran a natural for regional leadership. As one scholar noted, "the Revolution brought forth a new system of government, an unprecedented design that struck an instant chord with Muslims worldwide." Among these countries are six of the fifteen nations of the former Soviet Union, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, all of which have substantial Muslim populations that suffered some degree of persecution under the anti-Islamic policies of the communists. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a renaissance of Islam in the 1990s in these countries, and people, including non-Muslims, were drawn to Islam for its teachings of establishing justice and fighting against oppression.

Imam Khomeini had sent a letter to the former Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, in which he pointed out that "the Islamic Republic of Iran as the greatest and most powerful base of the Islamic world can easily fill the vacuum of religious faith in Russia." As a result, Iran has found itself in a religious leadership role in the region for some three decades, propagating the teachings of true Mohammadan Islam to the eager masses. Naturally, the secularized west pushed back against this Islamic awakening with a two-pronged attack: On the one hand there was the godless globalization promulgated by the secular western capitalists, and on the other was the fanatical Wahhabi cult nurtured and funded by the Saudis who at the time were awash in petrodollars. "The consensus seems to be that globalization marks a continuation of the basic dynamic of Western domination and hegemony dating back hundreds of years," states one author.

Today, Iran has advanced far beyond the level of what might have been termed an itinerant nation-state preacher to that of an ascending power, replete with a diversifying economy, sophisticated technological capabilities and military prowess, as well as diplomatic competence second to none in the West Asian region with "the means and focus to realize any policy objective it sets for itself." China, itself rapidly advancing to superpower status and already outpacing the US by several benchmarks, has recognized the benefit of entering into a 25-year strategic cooperative agreement with Iran, effectively confirming the Islamic Republic's ranking as a regional power. Adding to this is Iran's recent admission to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, whose member countries include economic heavyweights China, Russia and India, and constitute one-third of the global land mass and one-quarter of the global GDP. The significance of this diplomatic accomplishment can be inferred by the fact that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi passed on attending the UN General Assembly meeting in New York in September 2021 in favor of attending the SCO meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Iran's courageous resistance against US hegemony is not simply laudable, but inspirational for peoples everywhere who are suffering from what might be termed postmodern, neocolonial oppression by the US and its allies. The devastation caused by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Washington's ongoing support for the Zionist regime, has underscored Iran's regional importance and confirmed the Islamic Republic's leading role in defending the weak against the powerful. The diplomatic successes mentioned previously—admission to the SCO, the 25-year cooperative agreement with China—along with the country's military triumphs in defeating the western-backed, takfiri terrorists in Syria and Iraq, broadcast a strong message of the power of Islamic resistance to the World at large. Furthermore, Iran's unwavering support for both Shi'ah and Sunni Islamic resistance movements, for example Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, sends a loud and clear message of Muslim unity to the arrogant powers, effectively countering and nullifying their efforts to create and exploit sectarian fault lines.

Virtually unmentioned in the western corporate media is that Iran, since the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, has hosted millions of refugees fleeing their homelands due to protracted wars and conflict. As a result of the Iranian government's progressive and inclusive humanitarian policies, which include access to health, education and employment opportunities, over 90 percent of these refugees live in host communities side by side with Iranians. Compare this with the treatment of Afghan refugees in the US where a scant 125,000 are anticipated to be resettled in the fiscal year from October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022 following the September 2021 Kabul withdrawal debacle, joining the approximate 130,000 Afghans currently residing there.

Instead of access to health, education and employment opportunities as in Iran, these new refugees to the US are confronted with demeaning Islamophobic vitriol, and even suspected of being terrorists. One Republican lawmaker from Texas even referred to the Afghan resettlement program as a "Trojan horse" for terrorism; others have suggested that applicants for asylum be required to renounce Islam and Sharia; at least one has demanded a moratorium on resettlement activity. As of late last year, some 20,000 Afghans remained housed at five US military bases with almost 10,000 at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. I have heard from one reliable source involved in resettlement activities that Afghan children are being separated from their families. Such is how the oppressed Afghans, who are victims of Washington's geopolitical machinations, are being welcomed to the US.

"It is critical that we defend the cultural and ideological citadels of Islam with all our hearts and with utmost bravery," wrote Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Rahbar in April 2014, "and these are none other than the spiritual dimensions of the Islamic Revolution." Congratulations once again to Iranians and Muslims worldwide on this momentous occasion, but even as we celebrate this 43rd year of victory, we must remain perpetually prepared to defend the Revolution against the enemies' satanic plots against Islam and Iran.

Leader and top officials offer condolences over demise of Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani

From page 1 ▶ The message of the Leader is as follows:

"Unfortunately, I received the news of the death of the prominent jurist and insightful cleric, Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani. He was one of the pillars of the seminary of Qom and one of the prominent scientific and practical scholars and the most experienced religious scholar in that blessed seminary.

In the time of the late Ayatollah Boroujerdi, he was considered one of the greatest intellectuals of that great master, and in the time of the late Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Reza Golpayegani, his companion and scientific and practical advisor, and during the Revolution, he was trusted by Imam Khomeini (RA).

For many years, he was the main pillar of the Guardian Council, and since then, he has always been compassionate and responsible about the issues of the Revolution and the country, and he has often informed and profited me from his opinions and consultations. Poetic talent, historical memory, dealing with social issues were other dimensions of the personality of this noble cleric.

His demise is unfortunate for the religious scientific community of the country. I offer my condolences to the honorable family and his dear children, as well as to the great authorities and scholars of the (Qom) seminary, his followers and devotees, especially in Qom and Golpayegan, and ask for God's mercy and forgiveness for them.

President: Demise of the ayatollah caused great grief

In his message, President Raisi said the grand ayatollah's lasting works will always be an inspiration and a beacon for scholars and seminaries.

The message of the president reads as follows:

"The demise of the supreme Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Safi

Golpayegani, caused great sorrow and grief.

This prominent scholar, who was one of the protuberant students of the great Ayatollahs Boroujerdi, Hojjat and Golpayegani and after the Islamic Revolution was a member of the first Assembly of Experts and for some time was the secretary of the Guardian Council, with deep religious insight, asceticism and simplicity and a heart full of love for Islam, especially Imam Mahdi (AS), dedicated its precious life to the struggle for the spread of Islamic knowledge and the Islamic system.

This high-ranking jurist, while trying to protect religious values and compose many valuable works and train students, also had an active presence in the stronghold of revolutionary struggles. Certainly, his lasting works and spiritual conduct will always be an inspiration and a beacon for scholars and seminaries.

I offer my condolences for this great loss in the presence of Imam Mahdi (PBUH), the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, seminaries, his family and all his followers, students and lovers, and ask God Almighty for the pure soul of that cleric the exaltation of ranks and proximity to the pure Imams (AS).

Qalibaf: Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani was one of the most prolific Shia writers and thinkers

Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said condoling the passing of the top cleric "caused me great regret and sorrow."

Qalibaf's message reads as follows:

"The news of the demise of the supreme jurist of the Shia world, the ascetic and pious scholar, Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani, caused me great regret and sorrow. This high-profile scholar and jurist spent his youth years studying at the presence of Ayatollah Boroujerdi, Ayatollah Seyyed Jamaloddin Golpayegani and other prominent scholars in the seminaries of Qom and Najaf and became one of the strong pillars of the seminary.

Considering the necessity of expanding the fields of jurisprudence and religious ideas, this cleric set up centers and institutions, including the Dar al-Zahra Islamic Research Center, in the field of theology and training of students and those interested in religious and seminary courses. Throughout his blessed life as one of the most prolific Shia writers and thinkers, he published more than 80 books in various languages of the world and conducted researches in various fields of Islamic and jurisprudential sciences.

Also, this visionary jurist was diligent in expressing various issues of the country, including political, economic, cultural and social during all periods and governments, and before and after the Islamic Revolution, he was always one of the loyal helpers of Imam Khomeini and the wise Leader of the Revolution.

He accepted serious responsibilities and spent his life serving the people. That blessed existence, with the combination of knowledge and practice, became the source of spreading the teachings of the behaviors of the Imams (peace be upon them all).

I offer my condolences to Imam Mahdi (PBUH), the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the prominent authorities of the Islamic world, seminaries, his family, friends and students, for his loss in the Islamic society. I ask for the survivors, patience and great reward."

Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani to be buried in Karbala

A funeral procession will be held on Wednesday for the grand ayatollah and then his body will be flown to the Iraqi shrine city of Karbala for burial.

Karbala is the burial site of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH).

The funeral procession is scheduled to be held at 10: a.m. in Qom.

Qatar: We try to bring Iran, U.S. views closer through diplomatic channels

TEHRAN — Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani called Doha-Washington relations beyond governments and party differences, and said he was using his channels with Washington and Tehran to reconcile views.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, he noted that during a meeting between Tamir bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, and U.S. President Joe Biden, the issue of the Iran nuclear deal was discussed.

The Qatari foreign minister said that Qatar's consultations with Iran and the U.S. are not just to convey a message, and stressed that Qatar sees a return to the nuclear deal as a factor in regional stability.

Qatar's top diplomat further stated that Doha uses its channels of communication with Washington and Tehran to bring views closer

and that it is important for the country that an agreement would be reached in Vienna.

Emphasizing that his country agrees with examining the concerns of all parties, Al Thani noted that Tehran tries to achieve a good neighborliness.

Hamidreza Dehghani, Iran's ambassador to Doha, said on last Tuesday that the Iranian and Qatari foreign ministers talked twice on the phone.

"When relationships are close, developments are fast, and the issues are important, in one night, two phone calls are made," Dehghani tweeted.

According to the Qatari Foreign Ministry, the phone calls focused on the heightened tensions in the region between the UAE and Yemen's Ansarallah movement.

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.

Iran and Australia discuss Afghanistan crisis

TEHRAN— Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne spoke on the phone on Tuesday with her Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahian to discuss deepening of mutual relations, as well as regional and international issues, particularly the situation in Afghanistan.

In the conversation, Iran's top diplomat congratulated the Australian foreign minister, government and people on Australian National Day, calling half a century of friendly relations the common capital of the two countries and the presence of the educated Iranian community in Australia as a cultural bridge between the two nations.

Referring to the capacities of relations, Amir Abdollahian announced the readiness to expand cooperation between the two countries in various fields, including trade, investment and scientific exchanges between the public and private sectors of the two countries and joint planning in this regard. He considered the

Spikogen vaccine a successful example of constructive collaboration between the two countries.

Iran's top diplomat also called the recent visit of the Australian special representative for Afghanistan to Tehran a success and said that new areas of cooperation between the two countries regarding Afghanistan were defined during the visit.

Referring to the situation of displaced people in Afghanistan and the daily arrival of several thousand Afghan men, women and children in the border provinces of Iran, Amir Abdollahian reiterated the need for the formation of an inclusive government with participation of all ethnic groups and the international community's attention to the situation of refugees.

Regarding the JCPOA talks, Amir Abdollahian emphasized that the Islamic Republic welcomes and emphasizes the achievement of a good agreement in the talks.

In the phone call, Amir Abdollahian called on the Canberra government to pay special attention to the rights of Iranians living in Australia, especially the consular status of some Iranian citizens who are facing problems in Australia.

Amir Abdollahian also pointed to the role of Iran in the fight against terrorism, clarifying on the effective role of martyr General Qassem Soleimani as a national and international hero in the fight against terrorism.

The foreign minister then called on Australia to deal responsibly with terrorist groups in the country.

Iran's chief diplomat was openly referring to the presence of some members of the terrorist Mojahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) in Australia.

For her part, the Australian foreign minister thanked Iran for its cooperation and effective consultations during the visit of the Australian special representative for Afghanistan, expressing hope that the two countries would work closely together on Afghanistan to encourage the Taliban to live up to its commitments.

She also hoped that Afghanistan won't become a safe haven for terrorist groups and transnational crimes such as human and drug trafficking.

Welcoming the expansion of bilateral relations in all areas, Payne said that Australia supports the nuclear talks in Vienna.

U.S. shirks responsibility in Vienna talks

TEHRAN – In its latest assessment of the state of things in the Vienna talks, the U.S. has once again sought to portray the ball as being in Iran's court, ignoring Iran's announcement that the conclusion of the Vienna talks hinges on a political decision on the part of Washington.

The heads of the negotiating delegations in Vienna had returned home a few days ago for consultations. Meanwhile, the talks in Vienna are moving ahead at expert level, a further indication that the return of chief negotiators was meant to conduct political consultations in capitals.

European Union coordinator Enrique Mora has confirmed that. "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.

The short hiatus came amid assessments that the talks have reached their final stage. Russian ambassador to international organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov has pointed to such assessments.

"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.

The conclusion that the talks are in the final stage is also shared by the Americans, with the difference that the Americans use the final-stage assessment to force Iran to make concessions.

A senior U.S. State Department official has resorted to such a tactic. In a special briefing on Monday, the U.S. official claimed that the talks are in the final stretch and that Iran needed to make a decision.

"As a matter of timing, we are in the final stretch because, as we've said now for some time, this can't go on forever because of Iran's nuclear advances. This is not a prediction. It's not a threat. It's not an artificial deadline. It's just a requirement that we've conveyed indirectly to Iran and to all our P5+1 partners for some time, which is that given the pace of Iran's advances, its nuclear advances, we only have a handful of weeks left to get a deal, after which point it will unfortunately be no longer possible to return to the JCPOA," the U.S. official said, referring to the Iran nuclear deal by its acronym.

The U.S. official added, "Now is a time for political decisions. Now is the time to decide whether – for Iran to decide whether it's prepared to make those decisions necessary for a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA."

The remarks came at a time when Iran made it clear that it had made all the necessary moves needed to push the talks forward and now the ball is in the U.S.'s court. In other words, Iran believes that it's up to the U.S. to decide whether or not it wants to see the talks conclude in the coming weeks.

In his recent phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi underlined that Iran has done its part to reach a deal in Vienna.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has shown its will and seriousness to reach an agreement in the negotiation process, and any effort by the other side in this regard should include the lifting of sanctions, verification and valid guarantee," he told Macron.

In the call, the French president stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran has the right to distrust the United States because it was the United States that caused the crisis, according to a readout of the call released by the official website of the Iranian presidency.

Iran FM hopes success for China's Winter Olympics

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has once again congratulated China on its New Year and wished it success for holding the Winter Olympics.

In a tweet in Chinese early on Tuesday, the Iranian foreign minister hoped the best for the Chinese people and government.

"Ahead of the Chinese New Year and the Beijing Winter Olympics, I hope the best for the people and government of China," he said.

Amir Abdollahian added, "I hope success for the Winter Olympics and congratulate the New Year to my Chinese friends. This year, with the beginning of the second 50-year period for the diplomatic relations between two countries, the comprehensive cooperation plan will advance better and stronger with additional efforts."

The Iranian foreign minister also posted a photo of Tehran's iconic Azadi Tower lit up with Chinese and Iranian flags.

On Monday, Amir Abdollahian had sent a congratulatory message to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi congratulating him on the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival.

In his message, the Iranian foreign minister wished success and prosperity for China's government and heroic nation, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said.

"I am glad to have had the opportunity to hold a meeting and constructive talks with you, old friend, in the beautiful city of Wuxi ahead of the Spring Festival," the message read.

"I am certain that the agreements reached during the trip will pave the ground for the expansion of comprehensive strategic cooperation between Iran and China in the second 50 years of diplomatic relations," it added.

In his first visit to China since taking over as Iran's top diplomat, Amir Abdollahian visited China in mid-January, a move that was hailed as opening new horizons for deepening ties between Tehran and Beijing.

The Iranian foreign minister ushered in such a horizon in an article published in Chinese media ahead of his visit. Amir Abdollahian said the visit "will be a promising new horizon for our promotion and development of cooperation in various domains."

At the center of this horizon is a strategic comprehensive partnership signed last year between Iran and China. On March 27, 2021, then-Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi signed the plan, raising Tehran-Beijing relations in various fields to a new, strategic level.

The plan, officially known as the "Comprehensive Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China," was extensively hailed by almost all Iranian officials as a "strategic" decision.

In his op-ed for Global Times, Amir Abdollahian said the various cultural and political commonalities between Iran and China have paved the way for the two countries to pursue the development of economic and trade cooperation and implementation of the Comprehensive Cooperation Plan.

"China has been playing a constructive and rational role in the Iran nuclear deal negotiations, especially in the recent talks in Vienna to lift sanctions against our country," Amir Abdollahian told the CGTN before wrapping up his visit to China.

He said, "During the visit, we reached a consensus on some significant issues, including the implementation of a comprehensive cooperation agreement between the two sides. In order to implement this long-term vision proposed by our leaders for the development of Iran-China relations, both sides need a road map, so we've reached a 25-year, long-term strategic comprehensive cooperation agreement. My visit here is to discuss with my Chinese counterpart Mr. Wang Yi how to implement the plan. We also exchanged views on major international and regional issues. For instance, we still face severe crises in Afghanistan and Yemen."

Chief negotiators to return to Vienna on weekend

TEHRAN — According to reports, top negotiators from Iran, E3, and the United States will return to Vienna at the end of the week to resume talks on lifting sanctions on Iran.

Expert work is going on in Vienna, while the top negotiators of Iran, the U.S., France, UK, and Germany returned to their respective capitals to reconvene in Palais Coburg.

The talks have entered a vital stage, with all sides preparing a draft. However, Iran says there are still important differences to be ironed out.

However, a senior U.S. diplomat told reporters on Monday that the parties have made progress in narrowing down the list of differences in the latest round of talks in Vienna on trying to restore the nuclear deal, and that now is the time for political decisions to finalize it.

"We made progress narrowing down the list of differences to just the key priorities on all sides," the senior State Department official, speaking not for attribution, said. "And that's why now is a time for political decisions," Rozen quoted the official as saying.

The U.S. State Department official continued, "If we all don't move with that urgency, that opportunity will very soon disappear."

Iran has also called for speeding up the negotiations, saying that the E3 inactivity has slowed down progress.

"If the day after the delegations return to Vienna, they respond correctly to what has been said to them as the natural rights of Iran and to the texts that Iran has given them, and if they keep their demands within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we can reach a lasting, good and reliable agreement the next day, and there is no need for artificial deadlines," Saeed Khatibzadeh, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters on Monday.

Khatibzadeh added that in the last three weeks, the negotiations have made significant progress in all four key points of lifting sanctions, nuclear commitments, verification and obtaining guarantees, although in some areas they have been more significant and faster, and in others due to the inaction of the other side and lack of necessary decisions or lack of initiative and creativity by the other side, there have been delays.

"We recommend that after returning from their capitals, the delegations return with the necessary decisions so that we can quickly summarize what we have drafted," he stated.

Parliamentary committee members hold talks with chief negotiator Bagheri Kani

Meanwhile, Abbas Moqtadaei, the deputy chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the parliament, announced on Tuesday the holding of an extraordinary meeting of the committee with Ali Bagheri Kani, Iran's senior negotiator, on the latest status of the Vienna talks.

The Isfahan representative stated that in the meeting, Bagheri presented a detailed report and then the committee members expressed their views.

He continued by saying that the parliament and the foreign ministry, in order to maximize cooperation, insisted on the need how to implement the parliamentary ratification to protect the rights of the Iranian people.

"Both sides focused on protection of the rights of the Iranian people and agreed that these rights should be considered at the highest level," he added.

The MP noted that issues related to foreign policy and how to manage them were reviewed in the meeting.

SPORTS

10 – man Iran victorious over UAE: 2022 WCQ

TEHRAN – Iran football team defeated the UAE 1-0 to stay atop of Group A in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

On Tuesday, the 'Persian Leopards', who have already qualified for the Qatar World Cup, earned a home win in Tehran's Azadi Stadium behind the closed doors.

With one minute left until halftime, Iran captain Alireza Jahanbakhsh sent in a perfect cross to the area and Ali Gholizadeh hit the bar with a header. Left-footed Mehdi Taremi took advantage of the rebound, putting the home side ahead.

Four minutes into the second half, Iran were reduced to 10 men after Sadegh Moharrami was shown his second yellow card by Omani referee Ahmed Al-Kaf.

It was Dragan Skocic's 14th win out of 15 matches as Iran coach.

Iran remained top of the group with 22 points, two points ahead of Korea Republic, who defeated Syria 2-0 earlier in the day.

Allahyar Sayyadmanesh signs for Hull City

TEHRAN - Hull City are delighted to announce the signing of Iranian forward Allahyar Sayyadmanesh on loan from Fenerbahce until the end of the season.

Sayyadmanesh signed his first professional contract with Iranian football club Esteghal FC in June 2018.

The exciting forward caught the eye of Fenerbahce and signed for the Turkish giants in May 2019.

Sayyadmanesh made his senior debut for Iran in June 2019 and became his nation's youngest-ever goalscorer after netting in a 5-0 friendly win against Syria.

This will be the 20-year-old's third loan spell away from Fenerbahce, having previously impressed during spells at ?stanbulspor and Zorya Luhansk.

His performances in Ukraine saw him named among the Ukrainian Premier League's best 11 players for 2020/21 and he will now be looking for similar success at the MKM Stadium.

"First of all, I am really happy to be here at a great club with amazing fans," Sayyadmanesh told wearehullcity.co.uk.

"I will try to give my all and help the team because that is the most important thing. I will fight for the team until the end.

"When I was a child, I always followed the English leagues. I am really excited to play here. I want to help the team. We've won the last three matches and we've got good potential and a young team," he added.

"I was in the stadium at the last game and it was a great atmosphere. I really can't wait to play in our stadium in front of the fans and I hope to see you soon."

The U.S. has yet to issue visa to Alireza Dabir

TEHRAN – The U.S. government has not yet issued visa to Iran Wrestling Federation president Alireza Dabir.

The visas of another wrestler and a member of coaching staff have not been issued as well.

The Iranian wrestling team are supposed to take part in an exhibition meet in Arlington, Texas on Feb. 12.

Iran and the U.S. wrestling team are scheduled to compete together in 10 weight categories at Globe Life Field.

Dabir has already said they will take part in the dual meet if the U.S. government issues visa for all members of Iran's wrestling team.

It has raised questions about holding the exhibition match.

Iran invited to Japan for friendly match: report

TEHRAN - The Iranian national football team have been invited to Japan to play a friendly match after they qualified for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The national Iranian men's football team qualified for the 2022 FIFA World Cup after defeating Iraq 1-0 on Thursday, MNA reported.

After reserving the ticket for the 2022 world cup in Qatar, it has been reported that the Iranian side have received several invitations to hold friendly matches from other teams, including the invitation of the Japanese national soccer team for FIFA Day in June 2022.

The Iranian Football Federation and Iran's national team head coach Dragan Sko?i? have not yet officially responded to the Japanese side's invitation.

Iran qualified for the Qatar World Cup after gaining 13 victories and just one draw against South Korea.

500 days to AFC Asian Cup China 2023

TEHRAN - February 1, which also heralds the commencement of the Year of the Tiger, marks the 500-day countdown to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023™ with fans eagerly awaiting the continental showpiece.

Twelve teams, together with hosts China PR, have already qualified for the tournament which is to be played from June 16 to July 16, 2023.

Eleven berths remain up for grabs with 24 teams set to jostle for the available places come June this year.

Defending champions Qatar booked their place in the China 2023 Finals following the conclusion of the second round of the AFC Asian Qualifiers in 2022 while China PR gained automatic qualification by virtue of being the hosts.

Australia, China PR, Iraq, Iran, Japan, Korea Republic, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam have also booked their tickets after qualifying for the final round of the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to Qatar.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final round of qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 will be converted from the conventional home and away format to single round robin ties to be played in centralized venues.

The 24 teams will be divided into six groups with matches to be played on June 8, 11 and 14.

The six group winners and five best second-placed teams will advance to the China 2023 Finals.

The AFC Asian Cup China 2023 will be played in 10 venues, all of which will be football specific stadiums.

With the exception of the fully renovated Tianjin Binhai Football Stadium, the remaining nine stadiums are being built or rebuilt with the Shanghai Pudong Football Stadium and Chengdu Phoenix Hill Stadium the first two venues to have been officially completed and launched.

The other eight stadiums are the Beijing Workers' Stadium, Tianjin Binhai Football Stadium, Chongqing Longxing Football Stadium, Xi'an International Football Center, Dalian Suoyuwan Football Stadium, Qingdao Youth Football Stadium, Xiamen Egret Stadium and Suzhou Kunshan Football Stadium.

210 villages connected to national power grid since last March

TEHRAN – Iranian Energy Ministry has managed to connect 210 villages with 3,000 households to the national electricity network since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021), IRNA reported.

As reported, over 1.5 trillion rials (about $5.3 million) has been invested for the implementation of the mentioned electricity supply projects.

The said electricity supply projects have been implemented by constructing 406 kilometers (km) of medium pressure power transmission lines and 108 km of weak power lines.

Also, 250 transformers with a total capacity of 11,000 kWh have been installed to supply electricity to the mentioned rural areas.

Supplying electricity to rural areas and increasing the country's power generation capacity were among the top priorities of the new Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian when he announced his ministry's major programs during his tenure, back in August 2021.

According to Mehrabian plans, the Energy Ministry is going to add 30,000 megawatts (MW) to the country's power generation capacity within the next four years.

Some 10,000 MW of this capacity will be provided by new thermal power plants and conversion of simple cycle units into combined-cycle ones, another 10,000 MW will be supplied by new power plants constructed by major industries, and finally, 10,000 MW will be supplied by new renewable power plants.

In November 2021, Mehrabian had announced that his ministry was planning to construct and put into operation 21 new power plant units by the next summer's peak consumption period (Iranian calendar's summer begins on June 22).

The minister reiterated that his ministry was following a comprehensive program for adding 30,000 MW to the country's power generation capacity by the end of the current government incumbency.

"Currently, for the next year's summer peak [consumption period], we are taking the necessary measures to bring 21 new [power plant] units on stream; Of course, the exact schedule for the operation of these units is prepared and will be provided in the form of weekly reports," he said.

He further noted that the construction of 10,000 MW capacity of power plants has also been started by various industrial sectors, saying: "four major industries have started their work in the field of power plant construction. Based on the contract concluded with these industries, the said industries will not be provided with electricity from the national grid if they cannot deliver the power plants based on the specified schedule."

Industry minister expresses determination for eliminating shortcomings

TEHRAN – Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin, in a letter to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei, has expressed his ministry's determination for eliminating the recent years' shortcomings, the Industry Ministry's news portal Shata reported.

"Your wise and strategic statements made us at the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade more determined to work harder for reforming our governance and management structures in order to eliminate the shortcomings of recent years."

The official further stressed the need for accelerating the movement toward achieving the goals set in the Vision 1404 (begins in March 2025) document and the realization of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

Transit of goods via Iran rises 75% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN- Transit of goods through Iran rose 75 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-January 20, 2022), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Alireza Moghadasi said that over 10.228 million tons of commodities were transited via Iran in the mentioned 10-month period.

"Based on the policies of the resistance economy and the fifth and sixth national development plans of the country, every year we should have witnessed a 10-percent growth in transit via the country, which unfortunately in recent years, after proper growth, we had a decreasing trend in transit", the official lamented.

"In the Iranian year 1393 (March 2014-March 2015), the transit of goods via Iran reached more than 13 million tons, after which not only did we not have growth in this due, but in 1398 and 1399, this amount reached 7.5 million tons", he added.

"Fortunately, transit has returned to its growth path in 1400 [the present Iranian year], and is expected to reach 12.4 million tons by the end of this year", Moghadasi further stated.

Iran is one of the countries that have a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

In the south of Iran is the Persian Gulf, which is home to the world's major oil-producing countries. This region is considered the energy bottleneck of the world.

In the north of Iran is the Caspian Sea, which is the best bridge between Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan and can play an important role in trade between these countries.

> Annual transit of goods via Iran expected to reach 12.4m tons by late March

The country, on the other hand, borders Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to the west and east.

In other words, it can be said that Iran communicates with 15 countries through land and water borders, and at the same time it can act as a bridge between these countries (with each other and other parts of the world).

These countries have a large population and high income which can be effective as a factor in the development of transit and trade in the region.

The connection of Central Asian countries with the Persian Gulf, as well as the establishment of trade relations between East Asia and European countries through Iran, is very cost-effective so that many of these countries seek to establish such relations through Iran.

This status has provided the country with many opportunities and by optimal use of these opportunities through the expansion of the transportation network and reliable and efficient communication, Iran can achieve foreign currency earnings and economic growth, and make transit revenue a suitable alternative to oil export while improving its strategic position in the region.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due. To take full advantage of its location for transit, the country has many plans underway and, on the agenda, to boost its transit capacity.

Some of these plans include developing Shahid Rajaee Port, Iran's largest and most-equipped container port in the south, and also Chabahar Port in the southeast of the country, connecting the ports to the railway network, development of transit via railway, and also some customs measures such as improving transit procedures in the customs offices.

Over 1,960 water, soil preservation projects to be inaugurated during Ten-Day Dawn

TEHRAN – Iranian Agriculture Ministry plans to inaugurate 1,969 water and soil preservation projects across the country during the Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-11), which marks the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, IRNA reported.

According to Deputy Agriculture Minister Alimorad Akbari, the mentioned projects include the implementation of modern irrigation systems in 21,000 hectares of farmlands, conducting 2,200 hectares of irrigation and drainage sub-networks, reviving and improving over 2,000 hectares of paddy fields, as well as implementing drainage systems on 4,500 hectares of land and excavating 182 kilometers of canals.

Akbari noted that implementing the mentioned projects is going to save 60 million cubic meters of water in the country every year.

He mentioned President Raisi's recent visits to 12 provinces and said during the mentioned visits over 35.34 trillion rials (about $125.76 million) has been allocated for the water and soil preservation projects in these provinces.

According to the official, part of the mentioned funding will be provided to the provinces in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20) and the other part will be supplied in the next fiscal year.

The mentioned allocations will be used in various fields including the development of new irrigation systems, water supply projects, public irrigation canals, improvement and reviving of lands and repairing and reconstruction of existing irrigation canals.

Akbari also noted that 10 trillion rials (about $35.5 million) has been allocated for managing and preventing drought, of which so far 4 trillion rials (about $14.23 million) has been provided.

He further mentioned his ministry's priority projects in the field of water and soil preservation, and said: "We are planning to implement two major projects in the northern provinces (Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan) as well as Ilam and Khuzestan provinces, which will significantly increase agricultural production in these areas."

Qom, Tehran record lowest inflation rate

TEHRAN – A review of the latest statistical data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) shows that Qom province with 38.5 percent and Tehran province with 39.1 percent recorded the lowest inflation rates in the twelve-month period ended on January 20.

The highest 12-month inflation rate is related to Kohgilouyeh-Boyerahmad province with 50 percent, according to the SCI's statistics.

The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on January 20, which marks the end of the tenth Iranian calendar month Dey, at 42.4 percent, falling one percent from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the ninth month.

SCI has put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 35.9 percent in the tenth month of this year, which means families have paid an average of 35.9 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the previous year.

The point-to-point inflation rate has risen 0.7 percent in comparison to the figure for the preceding month.

The point-to-point inflation rate for urban households was reported to be 35.8 percent, which is 0.8 percent more than the figure for the previous month. The figure was 36.5 percent for the rural households, with 0.3 percent rise from the figure for the previous month.

The Statistical Center of Iran had put the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 20, 2021 (the end of the previous Iranian calendar year) at 36.4 percent, rising 2.2 percent from the figure for the twelve-month period ended on the last day of the preceding year.

In late November 2021, the head of Iran's Budget and Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) had said, "Considering the recent data provided by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) the inflation is expected to be curbed in the next Iranian calendar year (begins in March 2022)."

"No money creation has taken place in the last three months, and a recent report by the Statistics Center of Iran shows that inflation is declining, these are indications that the inflation could be curbed by the next year," Masoud Mir-Kazemi said at the time.

Referring to the current economic problems, the PBO head stated: "The problem of people today is livelihood, business situation, household income, and inflation, and solving problems in these areas is one of the tasks of the Planning and Budget Organization. Over the three-month, since the 13th government took office, PBO's priority has been economic stability to restore confidence in the economy."

Iran establishes 6 new trade centers abroad

TEHRAN –Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin said his ministry has established six new trade centers in other countries to facilitate the trade in the designated markets, the ministry's news portal reported on Tuesday.

"We have set up six new business centers, as well as two export terminals, which will resolve many challenges, and we had six commercial attaches in destination markets, to which four have been added," Fatemi-Amin told the national TV.

Mentioning his ministry's programs for promoting exports and foreign trade, Fatemi-Amin said the exports of engineering and technical services has reached $1.8 billion from the previous year's $700 million.

According to the official, the return of export revenues into the country has increased by eight percent and 650 cases of barter trade have also been conducted with other countries.

He finally underlined the positive impact of Industry Ministry's supportive measures on the country's non-oil trade, saying that the value of country's non-oil exports has currently exceeded $40 billion and the figure is expected to reach $45 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

The government's economic coordination headquarters recently approved some resolutions for the elimination of some serious export barriers which have been effective in the country's positive trend of exports, Fatemi-Amin said.

TEDPIX up 6,000 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 6,681 points to 1.301 million on Tuesday.

As reported, over 7.559 billion securities worth 42.542 trillion rials (about $151.39 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 7,050 points, and the second market's index climbed 6,788 points.

TEDPIX 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 January 26.

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 Affair 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.

Nobody stands with Iraq in its dark days except Iran: Iraqi expert

From page 1 ▸ With a simple extrapolation, we find that the word "Iran" is mentioned in the media affiliated with Saudi Arabia and the Emirates more than any other word and at a very large rate per day.

For example, you would not find a daily news program in which Iran is not mentioned as an evil player.

Al-Arabiya, Al-Hadath and Sky News channels, and Al-Sharqiya and Dijla Channels follow the same policy, which target the Shia society in the center and south of Iraq.

There are other channels funded by Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, and even established to fuel the flame of sectarian war, such as the Safa and Wesal channels and the Egyptian Salafi channels.

These parties tried to reap the fruits of war against ISIS in which the great positive role of Iran and its support for the Iraqi people in the face of the takfiri attacks by ISIS and its sisters were clarified.

The enemies of Iraq fathomed out the great strategic depth that Iran represents for Iraq, especially after its support by all material and moral means.

To that end, it was necessary to drive a wedge between Iranian and Iraqi peoples and to ruin the image of Iran as a true ally of Iraq in order to isolate it.

The first step was launching an informational campaign with unprecedented pressure, which was represented in the so-called October revolution. Although it attracted the youth masses with the slogans of fighting corruption, fighting unemployment and demanding services, today none of these slogans are on the table but fighting Iran.

We saw such a clear effort in mobilizing and fueling anti-Iran

sentiments when the football match between Iran and Iraq took place. Websites, channels, and discussions addressed the match as if it was a war.

And we saw how they called for the American, British and Canadian ambassadors to play a role against Iran far from their diplomatic missions.

Iran says that it is upholding the idea of regional resistance which is a comprehensive Islamic project that includes everyone – Sunnis, Shias, Christians - while Arab channels are trying to portray Iran as a country that supports sectarianism that splits the Islamic ummah. What is your view?

All this demonization of the Islamic Republic of Iran is because of its position, its care and the strategic depth of the axis of resistance. If Iran had abandoned the axis of resistance and its ideology or adopted normalization of ties with Israel as most countries in the region did, we would have seen Iran portrayed as an angel in the Arab media, a friend and an ally.

This fierce attack against Iran is due to its rejection of normalization of ties with the Zionist regime, but in order to justify this hostility for the Sunni Arab public, Iran is depicted as a sectarian force.

That is all to laugh at the naïve people and who care about the sectarian differences, otherwise Iran supports Sunni Hamas and Sunni Islamic Jihad in Palestine as it supports all liberation movements against tyranny and arrogance in the world, even from non-Muslim countries.

If Iran were aligned with the American-Zionist policies, sectarianism and hostility against it would have disappeared, and that is why Iran was the police of the (Persian) Gulf in Shah's era.

Do you think the tendencies of some Shia groups in Iraq that want to demonize Iran are in the interest of Iraq and its security and stability?

The recent experience in Iraq has proven, beyond a shadow of doubt, that nobody stands with the Iraqi people in its dark days but Iran as a strong neighbor and benevolent country.

The Iraqis felt this stance during the days of the unjust siege, which was imposed by all the neighboring countries that were claiming to be friendly states, and no window was opened for the Iraqis except Iran.

And after 2003, these states also closed their diplomatic doors and were reticent in dealing with the new political reality in Iraq, while Iran welcomed the new government and political reality in Iraq.

After the rise of ISIS and the collapse of Iraqi Army, Iran took a great stand at the hands of the martyred leader, General Qassem Soleimani; Iran opened its arsenals and supplied Iraq with military equipment, experts and fighters, and the general Soleimani went to Lebanon to bring commanders and field military experts to deal with ISIS, while Iraqis were ignorant of this type of war.

Soleimani led the battlefields with Iraqi leader Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis to close this treacherous page of history. General Soleimani was assassinated in Iraq, and his blood was shed on the soil of Iraq.

All these positions prove that standing with the Arab campaign against the Islamic Republic and aligning with the plots engineered by the hostile media is a loss for Iraq first before it is a loss for Iran.

Iraq is the one that needs Iran, not the opposite, and the anti-Iran groups are the losers. The alignment with the anti-Iran Arab project is in fact in line with the Zionist project and the project of normalization of ties with Israel in the region.

Those in charge of such a policy bet on the ignorance of many of these naive political groups and their emotional and unconscious behaviors.

China-Russia ties: as the West forces them together, Xi and Putin show up for each other

While U.S. President Joe Biden got personal and threatened sanctions on Vladimir Putin if he invaded Ukraine, Chinese President Xi Jinping tendered a warm welcome to the Russian leader as a guest of honour at the grand Winter Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing on Friday.

And while Biden and his allied Western leaders announced a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Games because of human rights concerns, the Russian leader will be among a limited number of foreign VIPs turning up to the "Bird's Nest" stadium in support of the Chinese hosts.

It mirrors the situation in 2014 when Xi made a high-profile appearance at the Winter Olympics in Sochi as Putin was criticised by some Western leaders for Russia's human rights record. In the following years, the two met nearly 30 times and became "best friends to heart", as Xi described their relationship.

Russia and China have clearly built a de facto alliance "without limit, restriction or ceiling", observers said, with frequent in-depth joint military exercises, joint space programs and even potential cooperation in missile defense systems as well as regular exchanges between the presidents. This phase of their ties is so solid it possibly comes only second to the comradeship of the 1950s honeymoon that followed China's fight against the Americans and allied forces in the Korean war.

Over the past seven decades, the two former communist brothers went through an ideological split, border conflicts and years of hostile military confrontation, and China's development of ties with the U.S., until the end of the Cold War.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia initially wanted to establish a fully Western, separation-of-powers democracy, but during the Boris Yeltsin era Russia became disillusioned with "Western democracy" in both its domestic and foreign affairs, said Chen Jun, an associate professor at Mudanjiang Normal University.

"Russia's Westernization did not relieve NATO's expansion and the U.S. economic repression," Chen said. "The U.S. promised political and economic reform assistance during the Soviet era was also not fully realized."

How end of Soviet Union still weighs on Chinese leaders' minds

Chen also said that in the early Yeltsin era, Russia was extremely unstable politically, with numerous rotations of prime ministers and top government officials. The development of a market economy did not have the desired effect, either.

"As a result, in the late Yeltsin era, Russia had begun to gradually centralize power," he said, adding that "with the gradual recovery of Russia's economic strength, Putin's Russia began to see moves to de-Westernize and increase its geopolitical initiative."

Artyom Lukin, an associate professor at Russia's Far Eastern Federal University, said: "If the U.S. continues its current policy of dual containment against both Russia and China, there are no obvious limits to how far and deep the Sino-Russian quasi-alliance could develop in the future."

> In a direct support to Moscow, Chinese FM Wang told Blinken that Russia's security concerns over Ukraine should be respected.

Moscow began to move closer towards Beijing from 1996 with a "strategic partnership" implicitly aimed against U.S. global predominance.

The two neighbors resolved their territorial disputes and signed a friendship treaty in 2001. Based on that they eventually established strategic collaboration mechanisms and projects, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) political, security and economic pact to integrate Central Asia. In September, the SCO also started the procedure of raising Iran's status to a full member state.

The leaders of five Central Asian nations have announced they will show up at the Olympic opening ceremony next week.

The friendship between Putin and Xi - or the trend of the Kremlin and Zhongnanhai teaming up - has become much more pronounced since 2014 in particular.

> The two nations are not only getting closer to each other, but also uniting in their views on Iran, the Middle East and Central Asia.

After the Sochi Olympics, Russia's relations with the West dramatically deteriorated over Crimea. The Trump administration also named China a strategic rival to the U.S. and waged a trade war on them - now escalated into a full-on competition in almost all aspects.

The two nations are not only getting closer to each other, but also uniting in their views on Iran, the Middle East and Central Asia.

On Iran, both China and Russia said they opposed U.S. sanctions towards the Middle East nation. Last week, China, Iran and Russia carried out three days of joint naval drills in the Gulf of Oman, their second such exercise since 2019.

On Central Asia, Beijing supported the deployment of Russian troops to tackle the unrest in Kazakhstan. Xi had said China supported measures taken by Kazakhstan to restore security, and opposed external forces instigating a "colour revolution" in the Central Asian nation.

Now, facing Washington's continuously increasing pressure in Europe and the Indo-Pacific, China and Russia are cornered into a "back-to-back" position in Eurasia.

The uncertainty over U.S. security commitments in the region - reflected by America's withdrawal from a nuclear agreement between major powers and Iran in 2018 and troop pullback from Afghanistan last year - allowed China and Russia a moment to step up engagement.

"For China, Russia is not only a stable strategic rearguard and a reliable supplier of resources, but also can consolidate the struggle against the United States with the help of its own political and military resources," said Wan Qingsong, an associate professor at the Centre for Russian Studies at East China Normal University.

"Especially as the U.S.-China game is entering a stalemate phase, it will inevitably attract more third-party input of political and military resources. Russia's value is obvious," Wan added, referring to U.S. moves to strengthen its alliances with Asia and Europe, which will prompt China to be more eager to build a united front with Russia.

For Russia, China is an indispensable partner in the ongoing diplomatic crisis.

"Russia may want to have an extra gesture of verbal support from China to drive out of political isolation induced by a nearly united flurry of accusation from the Western community," said Danil Bochkov, an expert at the Russian International Affairs Council.

As the second-largest economy, China could give Russia some immunity against possible U.S. sanctions, according to Yang Cheng, executive president of the Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies at Shanghai International Studies University.

"The two sides have been expanding their local currency settlements in recent years which ... even if the United States does impose 'sanctions from hell' on Russia, China will conduct normal economic and trade relations with Russia in a reasonable and compliant manner as far as possible," Yang said.

With Iran, there are discussions on forming an international front against the U.S. sanctions.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Fury at UK PM as focus shifts to met police probe

How many women gave birth without the presence of their closest dearest ones because of the government's covid lockdown rules?

How many people spent months indoors, at home, not allowed to meet with members of another very close family household?

The public followed the government's rules while the government that set the rules were partying not once or twice but on at least a dozen occasions.

The public anger is that there is one rule for a small number of the British elite and another for ordinary British people.

Sue Gray's report can be described as interim. She did not publish the full probe, rather only 12 pages and it will not settle the saga. The met will handle that.

The report identified many issues but also left many questions unanswered, including whether Johnson had misled Parliament by denying parties took place and saying all Covid rules were followed.

As Gray put it herself "It is not possible at present to provide a meaningful report". Instead, the Metropolitan Police is taking over the investigation looking into a dozen events over eight different dates.

But even the preliminary report published is damaging for the Prime Minister. Gray listed 16 gatherings on 12 dates in 2020-21 that she had examined for evidence of rule-breaking, of which 12 are being investigated by police.

The met police have been handed more than 300 photos and more than 500 pieces of paper evidence. And the Prime Minister will be the main focus of that probe.

Sue Gray does attack the gatherings that are "difficult to justify" and the "failure of leadership", and by that she means the PM as there is only one leader.

Four of those events being looked at by the Met Police were reportedly attended by the prime minister himself. One of those events (which he denies took place) is an alleged party in his private Downing Street flat.

The fact that Sue Gray's investigation and the police probe have reached the door of the No 10 flat could be particularly serious.

Gray says evidence of other gatherings won't be shared with PM yet. She notes "the information gathered will be released until such time as it may be required further".

"I will not be circulating the information internally within government".

Analysts say Gray is saying she has more information but isn't going to share it with the PM yet.

Gray adds "unfortunately, this necessarily means that it is not possible at present to provide a meaningful report".

Observers have said that Gray is essentially telling the public, I have lots of things you might want to know but I can't tell you today.

The report said "a number of these gatherings should not have been allowed to take place... these events which must be addressed immediately across government. This does not need to wait for the police investigations to be concluded."

Analysts say this is Gray's first challenge to the Prime Minister to take action in parliament and change course. Essentially throwing the ball in Johnson's hands.

Johnson told MPs in Parliament "I want to say sorry and I'm sorry for the things we simply didn't get right and also sorry for the way this matter has been handled".

That did little to stem the criticism, even from his own party during a public parliamentary session.

Former Prime Minister, now backbench Tory member of Parliament, Theresa May, says the report demonstrates that Number 10 Downing Street "was not observing the regulations they had imposed on members of the public".

May, her tone rising in anger as she spoke, lashed out saying this means her successor "had not read the rules or didn't understand what they meant and others around him, or they didn't think the rules applied to Number 10".

The main opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer told MPs "by routinely breaking the rules he set, the Prime Minister took us all for fools, he held people's sacrifice in contempt, he showed himself unfit for office".

Starmer says "there can be no doubt that the prime minister himself is now subject to criminal investigation". He says Johnson is "debasing the office" of prime minister and has "got to go", describing the partial version of the report as "damning as it could be".

Starmer also says "his desperate denials since he was exposed have only made matters worse. Rather than come clean, every step of the way he's insulted the public's intelligence".

He also insisted that "the prime minister must keep his promise to publish Sue Gray's report in full when it is available, but it is already clear what the report disclosed is the most damning conclusion possible."

Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner says the findings of Gray's initial report is "sickening". She says that Johnson has "lost the confidence of the British public" and should resign.

The opposition Liberal Democrats party leader Ed Davey called on Conservative MPs to do their "patriotic duty" and get rid of Johnson. "He must go before he does our country any more harm," he said.

Ian Blackford, the Scottish National Party's leader in Westminster, says Johnson's position was "completely untenable".

He says "the prime minister is guilty of breaking lockdown rules and misleading parliament. He must resign or be removed from office".

Blackford accused the PM of lying to the Commons, something that led to his removal from the legislature by the Speaker and he was seen being escorted out by security.

This is while MP Aaron Bell (among many to express their frustration) gave an emotionally charged speech accusing Johnson of making him look like a fool after he stuck to the rules during his grandmother's funeral.

MPs say the most damaging allegation was a party held on 13 November 2020 (the same evening the Prime Minister's former top aide Dominic Cummings quit) in Johnson's own flat.

There had been reports of loud music and partying heard in the press office below and the alleged gathering is now under police investigation.

The prime minister refused to confirm or deny to parliament whether he was present in the flat that evening.

Previously he had denied that any party even took place on that date.

So the jury is still out until the Metropolitan Police investigation is in.

But there is no doubt that the Conservatives are now a deeply-divided party, split over the future of their leader.

One MP said Johnson's determination to keep fighting to stay means removing him from office would be "extremely painful" and cause huge damage to the party.

Another says its clear Tory MPs at some point would need to "get the screwdrivers out to unscrew his hands off the doors of Downing Street".

Tehran tourism fair: WCC-designated cities, villages signal off-the-beaten routes

From page 1 ▶ Currently, an increasing number of travelers are looking for something different such as spending a day in tranquil countryside, picking fresh fruits, watching rice grow, fishing by the seaside, eating traditional dishes, or even staying with locals. To put it in other words, many urban residents tend to choose rural tourism to enjoy a slow-paced lifestyle that resembles something like 'the Internet + countryside'.

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

Last September, Iran initiated preliminary steps for a bounce-back, restarting the issuance of tourist visas following a 20-month hiatus, and easing COVID-19 protocols for fully-vaccinated passengers.

It came when the tourism businesses faced a very complex situation due to COVID restrictions. There was a partial or even total closure of tourist accommodation during the toughest months of the lockdown, so the spring seasons were completely lost. Many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators faced big dilemmas such as bankruptcy, unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level.

Tehran, Yerevan ink MOU to expand tourism

TEHRAN – Iran and Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Monday to expand cooperation in the tourism sector, IRNA reported.

The MOU was signed by Iran's deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalbafian and Armenia's deputy economy minister Narek Teryan on the sidelines of the 15th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition.

Moreover, several Armenian tourism and economic officials, as well as private investors, vitiated Iranian fellows at the four-day exhibit discussing ways to enhance reciprocal bonds.

Earlier this week, Iranian tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami announced that Iran is a fairly safe and beautiful destination for international travelers.

"Foreign tourists should be aware that Iran has the beautiful and safest places for tourism, but negative propaganda by Western media has tainted their minds, whereas those who come here change their view," he said.

Last week, the deputy tourism minister Ali Darabi announced that the Iranian government should get fully prepared for a surge and potential tsunami of tourism when COVID-restrictions are over.

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

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

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

Last month, an official with the tourism ministry announced that the Iranian tourism industry has suffered $233m losses due to COVID restrictions over the past two years.

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

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

Nearly 70 percent of the population has been vaccinated, so these trips may be able to partially compensate for the damage done to tourism facilities over the past two years, he mentioned.

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

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Stone-arched tunnel discovered near Achaemenid dam in southern Iran

TEHRAN – A cultural heritage protection team has recently discovered a stone-arched tunnel located near an Achaemenid embankment dam in southern Iran.

"A stone-arched tunnel, which is 1.5 meters in height, has recently been found adjacent to a historical dam that is named after the Achaemenid king Darius (the Great) in Marvdasht plain of Fars province," a local official said.

So far, 40 meters of the tunnel, which is believed to be once an aqueduct, have been explored, the official added.

"However, a careful study by heritage and cultural experts is expected to reveal the original usage of the tunnel."

Archaeologists believe embankment dams constructed during the Achaemenid era (c. 550 – 330 BC) and their role in water management is still a source of inspiration for modern architects and engineers.

"Achaemenid-era embankment dams were built with such knowledge, extent, and durability that after 25 centuries, [modern] earthen dams are still built per the Achaemenid engineering model," Hamia Karami says.

The archaeologist pointed to "Bostan Khani" Dam, which is registered in the National Heritage list, as one of the "engineer masterpieces" the Achaemenids, saying: "Excavations and surveys on Bostan Khani Dam, as one of the engineering masterpieces of the Achaemenid period... can increase our knowledge and understanding of the methods and techniques of dam construction and architectural structure that is currently being practiced."

Located on a branch of the Pulwar River, near the UNESCO-registered Pasargadae, the dam is designed to contain floods and store large amounts of water for public use as well as use in agriculture and horticulture.

The Achaemenid [Persian] Empire was the largest and most durable empire of its time. The empire stretched from Ethiopia, through Egypt, to Greece, to Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia, and to India.

Building activity was extensive during the height of the empire, and of the several Achaemenian capitals, the ruins at Pasargadae and Persepolis are probably the most outstanding. Achaemenian sculptured reliefs and a great number of smaller art objects present a remarkably unified style for the period. Metalwork, especially in gold, was highly developed, and a variety of carefully executed examples survive.

Shiraz-Najaf flights resume after two years halt

TEHRAN – Early on Tuesday, flights between Iran's Shiraz and Iraq's Najaf restarted following a two-year suspension due to COVID restrictions.

Last month, flights between Kerman and the Iraqi holy city were resumed following two years of hiatus.

Over the past couple of weeks, groups of Iraqi tour operators and travel insiders visited several Iranian provinces on farm tours.

Moreover, the two neighboring have agreed to abolish visa requirements for air travelers. It came after Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi met in Tehran last year, discussing various issues including the visa waiver program.

Qajar-era newspapers on show at Tehran museum

TEHRAN – A selection of Qajar-era (1789–1925) newspapers, draft reports, letters, and other related documents has been put on show at the Post and Communications Museum in downtown Tehran.

The four-day exhibition was launched early on Tuesday to celebrate the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, IRIB reported.

The process of gathering, writing and presenting articles for newspapers gradually emerged and developed in the second half of the rule of the Qajar dynasty, as newspapers began to appear increasingly, and a changing journalistic culture took shape.

However, for much of the Qajar period, journalism was a state-run domain. By the mid-1860s, the number of official state-owned newspapers that were published in the capital city had increased to four.

Despite their ostensible aim to educate and inform the public, these newspapers did not distinguish themselves much from the official publications that had come before.

It was following the Constitutional Revolution that the journalistic culture underwent a major transformation in several ways. For instance, newspapers proliferated in an unprecedented way at this time.

Visiting Post and Communications Museum takes you back through history and gets you acquainted with ways of exchanging information and thoughts. Before social networks and transmission tools took Iran by storm, communication was very different.

The museum displays numerous items from horse-drawn carts, scales, stamps, and post boxes to the oldest stationery, the first telephones, and radios.

Furthermore, it presents the progress of communication and information technology tools throughout history. The building of the museum is also as important as the museum collections, because of the architecture of the building and its background history.

The structure was initially constructed in 1928 and the architect, Nikolai Markov was a prominent Iranian- Georgian architect. The architecture style of both Achaemenes and Islamic eras are visible in different parts of the building. The columns of outer corners with two heads of cows and brick dome-shaped facades all around the courtyard respectively prove this fact.

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Ash Content:	0.2 % Max.
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Young's Modules:	7.8 – 11.8 GPa
Co-efficient Of Thermal expansion:	0.3 – 1 10^{-6} /°C

Graphite Electrode Dimensions:

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Electrode Length:	2400 mm

Nipple Specification:

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Thread Type:	Tapered Thread

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Guterres lauds Iran's generosity for hosting Afghan refugees

TEHRAN – António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has praised Iran's generosity which – for decades – have hosted millions of Afghans in need.

"At this moment, we need the global community to put their hands on the wheel of progress, provide resources, and prevent Afghanistan from spiraling any further.

I will never forget the generosity of countries like Pakistan and Iran, which – for decades – have hosted millions of Afghans in need," Guterres said in a statement released on January 26 to the Security Council on Afghanistan.

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

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

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

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

> Based on the latest statistics, over 3 million Afghans are living in Iran.

Iran, Lebanon ready to expand medical, health relations

TEHRAN – Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi and Lebanese Ambassador to Tehran Hassan Abbas expressed readiness to enhance cooperation in the medical and health sector, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

During a meeting held in Tehran on Tuesday, the two officials discussed holding joint conferences in various fields of medicine in Lebanon or Iran, in addition to academic cooperation.

Einollahi stated that joint conferences in the fields of medicine can help domestic scientists to exchange views with their colleagues in Lebanon.

At present, 97 percent of the medicine needed by Iran is produced domestically, and in the field of medicine and medical equipment, Iran has made very good progress, he said, expressing hope to strengthen the exchange of medicine and medical equipment between the two countries and accelerate the registration of Iranian medicines in Lebanon.

Expressing readiness to establish university branches in Lebanon, he said that Iranian medical universities are already cooperating with Lebanese universities, however, we can expand the exchange of professors and students.

There is a need to form working groups between the Ministry of Health of Iran and the Lebanese Embassy to identify the needs and fields of joint cooperation to take action in this regard, he also stated.

Mohammad Abbas also for his part said that we are aware of Iran's progress, especially in the fields of science and medicine and all social, health, and economic levels.

The Lebanese Embassy in Iran is ready to have more interaction with the Iranian Ministry of Health in order to examine the areas for the development of relations between the two countries, he said, noting, Iran-Lebanon cooperation has existed for many years in the field of medical education.

Many Lebanese students in Iran have studied medicine and returned to Lebanon and have a high level of literacy, knowledge, and skills, which indicates the high level of medical education in Iran, he stated.

Iran's progress in pharmaceutical and medical equipment

The import of pharmaceuticals has declined in Iran by 91 percent, which shows the capability of the country's pharmaceutical industry, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, former head of the Food and Drug Administration, said on October 11.

With the support of the domestic pharmaceutical industry, we were able to reduce the total of preferred currencies and other currencies used in the country from $4.2 billion to $2.84 billion from 2017 to 2020, he emphasized.

Shanehsaz went on to say that the consumption of foreign exchange in raw materials increased by 2 percent, while medicine import decreased by 31 percent in value.

In 2018, the National Medical Device Directorate reported that the Iranian medical equipment market was worth $2.5 billion, 30 percent of which belonged to over 1,000 domestic firms.

On a global scale, 56 percent of 500,000 medical equipment items available in the world market have Iranian versions. In pharmaceuticals, around 70 percent of Iran's $4.5 billion markets are domestic products and, in 2018, 97 percent of pharmaceuticals consumed in the country were manufactured locally.

A total of 227 knowledge-based firms are supplying medical equipment for health centers across the country, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

Over 7,000 involuntary crime prisoners released

TEHRAN – A total of 7,257 inmates of involuntary crimes have been released during the first ten months of the current [Iranian calendar] year which began March 21, 2021, according to the Blood Money Organization.

Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes is done in three ways. The first way is granting prisoners leave and the second way is providing a number of them with loans to be paid inside the prison.

The third way of assistance is the release of unintentional convicts by paying their debt.

Some 252 of these released prisoners were female convicts and the rest were male debtors who were incarcerated due to inability to pay financial debts or inability to pay dues (workshop accidents and traffic accidents), he said.

A total of 2.2 trillion rials (nearly $8 million) has been paid for the debt of the released prisoners, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Since 1990, more than 150,000 unintentional crime doers who had debts have been freed. Currently, there are 10,680 prisoners of unintentional crimes in the country, of whom 4,673 are eligible for assistance.

14,600 inmates freed last year

Iranian benefactors helped release a total of 14,681 inmates of unintentional crimes across the country over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), Hadi Sadeghi, an official with the Judiciary, has said.

Last year, a total of 35 trillion rials (nearly $130 million) was donated to pay the debt of the released prisoners.

As an annual tradition, benefactors come together in a ceremony to raise funds for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes during the holy month of Ramadan (which started on April 13 this year), through which, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei donated 5 billion rials (about $18,000).

Last year, heads of the three branches of the government and the private sector donated 6.5 billion rials (nearly $24,000) to release prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

Former President Hassan Rouhani, former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and former Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi made a total of 3.9 billion rials (around $14,000) in contributions to free prisoners of unintentional crimes.

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Iranian zoos to be monitored online

The Department of Environment (DOE) will launch an online monitoring system in zoos across the country, the Department of Environment's director general for hunting and fishing has said.

"Putting in place the necessary infrastructure for this plan is underway; newly constructed zoos are supposed to have an online monitoring system, and the old ones must launch the system as soon as possible," IRNA quoted Ali Teymouri as saying on Saturday.

Teymouri stated that all provincial departments of environment must supervise the zoo online systems to register all animal species entering or leaving the zoo, casualties and causes.

The necessary infrastructure has been prepared to some extent in two zoos, and the rest of the zoos will launch the in the near future gradually, he added.

There are about 80 zoos, animal rehabilitation centers and bird gardens in the country, he said, adding that according to a memorandum of understanding signed between the DOE and the Veterinary Organization, the organization is tasked with monitoring animal's health and diseases in all centers.

باغ وحش های کشور آنلاین پایش می شوند

مدیرکل حفاظت و مدیریت شکار و صید سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: پایش آنلاین باغ وحش های کشور جزو برنامه های سازمان است و در حال تهیه زیر ساخت برای اجرای آن هستیم.

علی تیموری روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا افزود: باغ وحش هایی که جدید احداث می شوند باید حتما سیستم پایش آنلاین داشته باشند، مجموعه های قدیمی نیز باید هر چه سریعتر این سیستم را راه اندازی کنند.

وی اظهار داشت: باید تمام ادارات کل استان ها آدرس سیستم آنلاین باغ وحش ها را دریافت کنند تا ورود و خروج گونه ها از باغ وحش، ورود گونه های جدید، تلفات و دلایل آن را ثبت و به صورت آنلاین در جریان قرار گیرند.

تیموری گفت: زیر ساخت های این کار تا حدودی آغاز شده و دو مجموعه کار زیر ساخت را شروع کرده اند و بقیه باغ حش ها هم به مرور انجام خواهند داد.

مدیرکل حفاظت و مدیریت شکار و صید اظهار داشت: حدود ۸۰ باغ وحش، مراکز نگهداری و باغ پرندگان در کشور وجود دارد که براساس تفاهم نامه ای میان سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست و سازمان دامپزشکی، این سازمان باید بر بهداشت و بیماری ها در این مراکز نظارت داشته باشد و این مساله برای سازمان محیط زیست بسیار مهم است .

210 natural resources, watershed management projects to come on stream

From page 1 ▸ which starts on March 21, has allocated 16 trillion rials (about $53 million) for watershed management, which is nearly fourfold of the budget for the current year.

With the implementation of watershed management projects, 9 tons per hectare of water erosion has been reduced annually, and in mountainous areas, 570 cubic meters of water have been extracted per hectare.

Moreover, some 1000 cubic meters of water per hectare is stored in underground aquifers and prevents the entry of 4 cubic meters of sediment behind the dams.

Iran to be among countries with over 10% of forest

Mansour further expressed hope that with public participation in the implementation of these projects, a big step to be taken towards improving the level of natural resources and watershed management, stating that 500 million saplings were planted within 14 years with the participation of people and 70 institutions in the form of a campaign called "green and strong Iran".

According to the campaign, 6,700 hectares of land throughout the country will undergo vegetation planting this year based on the ecological potential of the regions.

Iran is one of the countries with low forest coverage, however, the country will be among the countries that are covered by forest by more than 10 percent, by the end of the campaign, he also said.

Ali Banagar, head of the forestry scientific association affiliated with the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands, said in December 2021 that the trend of deforestation in Iran is worrisome.

"Apart from natural factors, villa and road construction, development projects, dam construction, wood smuggling, encroachment on forests and land grabbing, forest fires, coal mining, livelihood activities including agriculture, providing fuel and excessive livestock grazing, social and economic problems, and exploitation of natural resources, pests, environmental pollution and landfills, and many other factors have reduced the quantity and quality of forests.

Each of these variables has increased or decreased in recent years, but the result is alarming," he explained.

Between 2015 and 2020, approximately 12,000 hectares of forests across the country were wiped out annually, Reza Bayani an official with Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization, said.

He went on to say that the country's forests are estimated at 14.3 million hectares, the country's northern forests have been estimated at 2,080,000 million hectares about 60 years ago, and today it is stretching to 2,004,000 hectares taking replanted areas into account.

Over 9,000 rare tree species yet to be discovered, major study finds

Over 9,000 of the world's tree species are yet to be discovered, according to a major international study involving more than 100 scientists and the largest forest database ever created.

The research, which scientists compared to a jigsaw puzzle "with pieces spread all over the world", estimates that there are around 73,000 tree species on the planet in total.

This is around 14 per cent higher than the current number of known tree species.

The study suggests most of the undiscovered tree species are rare, with very low populations and limited distribution. This makes them particularly vulnerable to human-caused disruptions such as deforestation and mounting greenhouse gas emissions causing the global climate crisis.

Around 40 per cent of the undiscovered species are likely to be in South America, the research team said, highlighting the importance of preventing illegal logging and unregulated clearances for agricultural purposes.

The findings will help inform forest conservation efforts, the authors of the study said.

"These results highlight the vulnerability of global forest biodiversity to anthropogenic changes, particularly land use and climate, because the survival of rare taxa is disproportionately threatened by these pressures," said University of Michigan forest ecologist Peter Reich, who was one of the senior authors on the paper.

"By establishing a quantitative benchmark, this study could contribute to tree and forest conservation efforts and the future discovery of new trees and associated species in certain parts of the world," he said.

In order to come up with the estimates the researchers combined tree abundance and occurrence data from two global datasets. Together these databases yielded a total of 64,100 documented tree species worldwide, a total similar to a previous study that found about 60,000 tree species on the planet.

"We combined individual datasets into one massive global dataset of tree-level data," said the study's other senior author, Jingjing Liang of Purdue University, and coordinator of the Global Forest Biodiversity Initiative.

"Each set comes from someone going out to a forest stand and measuring every single tree – collecting information about the tree species, sizes and other characteristics. Counting the number of tree species worldwide is like a puzzle with pieces spread all over the world."

COVID-19 UPDATES ON FEBRUARY 1

New cases	35,070
New deaths	50
Total cases	6,408,244
Total deaths	132,504
New hospitalized patients	1,740
Patients in critical condition	1,703
Total recovered patients	6,110,615
Diagnostic tests conducted	44,886,634
Doses of vaccine injected	132,725,305

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FEBRUARY 2, 2022

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:18 Evening: 17:49 Dawn: 5:39 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:05 (tomorrow)

Picture Tree Intl. buys rights to Iranian drama "Without Her"

Shadi Karamrudi and Tannaz Tabatabai act in a scene from "Without Her" directed by Arian Vazirdaftari.

TEHRAN – Picture Tree International (PTI), a Berlin-based world sales company, has acquired rights for Iranian director Arian Vazirdaftari's drama "Without Her".

The company is scheduled to offer the film during the upcoming European Film Market at its Marriot Hotel in Berlin, Variety announced on Monday.

Just two weeks before emigrating from Iran to Denmark, Roya encounters a quiet young girl who appears lost and doesn't remember anything. She takes her in, providing her with a home and introducing her to her husband, family and friends, all the while blissfully unaware that this girl has come to replace her.

The storyline of a woman losing her identity dives into the genre tradition of Hitchcock, Polanski and De Palma, while connecting it with the tradition of social realism in Iranian cinema, Picture Tree Intl. said in a statement.

"Someone actually losing her identity may seem surreal at first glance, but I guess coming from a background where you're usually blamed for who you are, it's as vivid and realistic as it can get, especially if the society is determined to define you in its own preferred way," Vazirdaftari has said in his recent comments.

"Our main protagonist Roya learns a simple, tragic lesson: either you alter yourself and adapt or you will be eliminated and replaced by those who do," he added.

Vazirdaftari's most recent short film "Like a Good Kid" premiered in the Cinéfondation competition at the 70th Cannes Film Festival in 2018. He was a participant at the Berlinale Script Station in 2021.

Starring Tannaz Tabatabai, Saber Abar and Shadi Karamrudi, the film is competing at the 40th Fajr Film Festival, which is currently underway in Tehran.

"The Unseen" now visible at Iranian art houses

"The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi.

would overshadow the animation box office receipts, therefore Nalbandi has joked with the festival and filmgoers in a poster for his film.

The poster carries a statement that reads "The Paper Simorgh goes to...". The festival is awarded winners every year with Crystal Simorghs.

Nalbandi was named best director for "The Unseen" at the 12th Independent Celebration of Iranian Documentary Cinema in 2021.

"The Unseen" was nominated for the award for best animated feature film at the 13th edition of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) in 2019, however, it failed to win the award.

It was also reviewed in Luminous, a non-competitive section at the 2019 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA).

Kellert's book about modern life's dependence on nature published in Persian

TEHRAN – "Birthright: People and Nature in the Modern World", a book by American social ecologist Stephen Kellert, has been published in Persian by Now Publications in Tehran.

Originally published in 2012, the book has been translated by Abdolhossein Vahabzadeh, Seyyed Mostafa Cheshmi and Roshanak Shahriari.

The research gives an eloquent explanation of why human beings need to connect with nature and what is lost when they are disconnected from the natural world.

Human health and well-being are inextricably linked to nature; our connection to the natural world is part of our biological inheritance.

In this engaging book, a pioneer in the field of biophilia, the study of human beings' inherent affinity for nature, sets forth the first full account of nature's powerful influence on the quality of our lives.

Kellert asserts that our capacities to think, feel, communicate, create and find meaning in life all depend upon our relationship to nature. And yet our increasing disconnection and alienation from the natural world reflect how seriously we have undervalued its important role in our lives.

Weaving scientific findings together with personal experiences and perspectives, Kellert explores how our humanity in the most fundamental sense, including our physical health, and capacities for affection, aversion, intellect, control, aesthetics, exploitation, spirituality, and communication are deeply contingent on the quality of our connections to the natural world.

Because of this dependency, the human species has developed over the course of its evolution an inherent need to affiliate with nature. But, like much of what it means to be human, this inborn tendency must be learned to become fully functional. In other words, it is a birthright that must be earned.

He discusses how we can restore this balance to nature by means of changes in how we raise children, educate ourselves, use land and resources, develop building and community design, practice our ethics, and conduct our everyday lives.

Kellert's moving book provides exactly what is needed now: a fresh understanding of how much our essential humanity relies on being a part of the natural world.

Hafez and music

Part 7

For some composers the notion of the exotic Orient seems more important than the poetry of Hafez: Sir Granville Bantock (1868-1946) composed "Five Ghazals of Hafiz" based on Edwin Arnold's translations, as well as pseudo-eastern pieces such as "Lalla Rookh" and "Omar Khayyam."

In 1926, the Viennese-born, Edinburgh-based Hans Gal, who also set pieces by Goethe, Ruckert and Tagore, included Hafez in his "Herbstlieder," Op. 25, for an a capella women's choir.

The American Bertram Shapleigh (1871-1940) composed a "Hafiz Serenade: Funf Lieder," Op. 32 (1901), in addition to pieces such as "Dance of the Dervishes" (1905), "Ramayana" (1908), and "Vedic Hymn" (1910).

Meanwhile, Mrs. Shapleigh provided English words for the German text of the "Hafis Lieder" of Theodor Streicher (1874-1940), sheet music published in Germany and New York in 1907.

Various European renderings of Hafez continued to inspire Western composers well into the 20th century. American-born, Paris-based Blair Fairchild (1877-1933) contributed seven songs in 1914 based on the renderings of Paul de Stoecklin, "Les amours de Hafiz," Op. 38, and ten years later the Danish composer Poul Schierbeck (1888-1949) composed a song for piano titled "Le Tombeau du poète Hafiz."

Richard Le Gallienne's jaunty translations of Hafez appeared in both "Before the Dawn, a Persian Idyll," a 1913 musical setting for a chorus of men's voices by W. Franke Harling (1887-1958), and "A Caravan from China Comes," a 1920 score by the American composer Elliott Griffis (1893-1967).

Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) used the John Hindley translations in 1938 for his "Seven Love Songs of Hafez," Op. 33. In 1926 Anatolii Aleksandrov (1888-1977) set A. Fet's Rus-sian adaptation of Hafez to music as "Tri stikhotvoreniia Gafiza," Op. 2 (Rimsky-Korsakov may also have composed for a Fet version of Hafez).

In the same year, Dirk Foch (1886-1973) did a cycle of three Hafez song settings as "Drei Stimmungen" (op. 20). Viktor Ullman, the Austro-Hungarian composer who died at Auschwitz in about 1944, likewise has a "Liederbuch des Hafis," Op. 30 (recorded 1999), while the Austrian anti-Nazi, Gottfried von Einem set eight Hafez poems to music in his Opus 5 of 1945.

Franz Alphons Wolpert (1917-78) set "Vier Lieder nach Gedichten des Hafis" to music in 1948. More recently, the Hafez tradition has been kept alive by Jón Leifs (1899-1968) and his "Drift Ice" in Icelandic, with text by Einar Benediktsson (Hafís: fyrir blanda an kór & hljómsveit op. 63; recording 1999); Ernst Piffner (b. 1922) with "Ein Hafis-Zyklus" (1983 re-cording); and Franco Donatoni (b. 1927) composed "Arie per voce femminilie e Orchestra," a piece setting poems mostly of Khayyam, but also Hafez, as late as 1989.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

Concluded

Hafez and "rendi"

Part 1

Jami was not sure if Hafez had studied with a Sufi, but he agreed that the Divan of Hafez is one of the best books that a Sufi could read.

Many modern critics (including Motahhari and Purjavadi), while not necessarily seeing Hafez as a member of a Sufi order, do see him as a mystic (aref); as such, his statements about wine, sin, music and pleasure are interpreted in an invariably metaphorical, even relentlessly gnostic way, reading the iconology of sin and physical pleasure as an elaborate code of transcendent symbols.

In this view, Hafez's libertine tone and his railing against figures of religious authority, including Sufis, are the trappings of malamati trends in Sufism.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are critics who take the hedonism more at face value (von Hammer), or even condemn Hafez as an immoral and socially corruptive libertine or as a representative of the idle, mendacious and anti-modern traditions of Sufism.

Others take him at his word when he speaks about love of human beauty, but do not see this as irreligious or immoral. Still others (including Bahar, Braginsky, Lescot, etc.) have seen Hafez as an incipient political activist, protesting the cruelty and hypocrisy of oppression, directing phrases like "the Sufi with the deeds of an Antichrist, in the shape of an infidel – "koja-st sufi-e dajjal-kish-e molhed-shekl (Kh. 237:6; henceforth the poems of Hafez are cited in parenthesis by ghazal and line number, as above, or by page and line number for the other genres, following the Divan-e Hafez, ed. Parviz Natel Khanlari, abbreviated to Kh.) – at the bestial cruelty of Timur/Tamerlane.

Gertrude Bell felt that though "an undercurrent of mysticism" can be discerned throughout Hafez, a rigorously mystical, and therefore reductionist, exegesis excises the poet's humanity.

Annemarie Schimmel, too, warns that one "cannot derive a mystical system out of Persian or Turkish poetry or see in it an expression of experience to be taken at face value."

The view, attributed early on to Shah-Shoja, that the verse of Hafez reflected various motives and meandered from mysticism to bacchanalia, from "serious and spiritual to flippant and worldly" is probably not far from the mark.

He thought this undoubted mixing of the spiritual and the physical in Hafez typical of the "character, psychology and Weltanschauung of the people of Persia," and though such essentialism is out of favor, recent commentators have similarly described the "rend" of Hafez as "the most evocative symbol of the indefinable ambiguity of the Persian character".

Perhaps Hafez deliberately practiced ambiguity as part of his campaign against hypocrisy, as a means of rejecting dogma and ideology in general.

However, the conflicting interpretations of the poet's message may also be due in large part to our lack of information about the life circumstances of Hafez, the conventional insincerity (or courtesy) of the ghazal form, and the need to state political criticism obliquely.

To be continued

Remembrance of a Sunni hero

"I told them that I would rather die in Iran than live abroad because it's my homeland".

The book "Kriskan Evenings" is the late Amir Saeedzadeh's memories from his pre-revolutionary activities, memories from the years of holy defense, and the captivity in Komala and Democratic prisons.it is written by Kianoush Golzar Ragheb and published by Soore Mehr.

Also, Amir Saeedzadeh, the main character of this story, passed away on the morning of Wednesday, January 20, at Sasan Hospital in Tehran.

"Although I have seen and known the Kurdish forces myself, what the book says about their sacrifices is completely new and surprising to me. The courage of the main character, his family, and the role of the mother and wife are distinguished; besides, the cruel behavior of those who lied about Kurdish people is also described very well" said Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

In a chapter, he says that the place where he was imprisoned was called "Kriskan", a wide valley with a seasonal river.

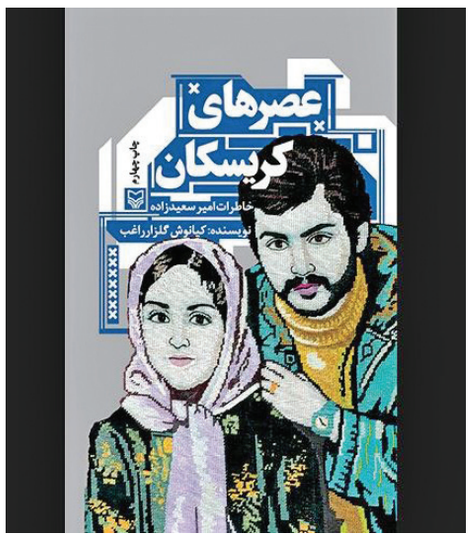
"I got captured by the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party. The reason I chose this name was that in the evenings, they opened the prison's door to call one or more people to execute and I didn't want to forget the name of those people" Amir Saeedzadeh said.

According to him, the first time he got captured was in 1980 by Komala Kurdistan's Organization. "They called us betrayers and supporters of the Islamic revolution and took me to their main prison where I met the writer of this book, Kianoush Golzar, for the first time," he said.

"I was sure that my sentence was death, so I made an escape plan and told Mr. Golzar about it but, he wanted to stay and resist because he thought his brother, who also got captured, was still alive however he wasn't" he added.

He continued that the second captivity coincided with the Mursad operation, after the resolution. He said he had no doubt that he would be captured or killed this time, and he got captured by the Democrats of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq.

"It was the last few days of my captivity when they offered me not to return to Iran and keep working with them and they would send me wherever I wanted to so I told them that I would rather die in Iran than live abroad because it's my hometown" Amir Saeedzadeh said.



Worse than the hardships and tortures of captivity was him being separated from his family and not being able to provide their needs, and according to what he said, he realized it when he came back it saw her wife had spent such difficult days, however, in her letters, she had always lied that everything was fine.