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Vienna Talks Enter Consequential Stage

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STAY UPDATED #ViennaTalks

Interview

Still unclear many Republicans have learnt from mistakes: Princeton professor

By M.A. Saki

TEHRAN - Frank von Hippel, a nuclear physicist and professor of public and international affairs emeritus with Princeton's Program on Science and Global Security, believes that unfortunately "many Republicans" have not yet learnt "from their mistakes" by defending Donald Trump's decision in quitting the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

Analysts and the Biden administration officials say that Trump made a huge mistake by withdrawing from the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

For example, in an interview published on December 3, 2021, U.S. Secretary Antony Blinken said, "I think the decision to pull out of the agreement was a disastrous mistake."

Blinken added "the JCPOA was a very effective agreement" that resulted in the "most effective and intrusive monitoring" of Iran's nuclear activities.

Negotiations started in April 2021 to revive the nuclear deal after President Joe Biden said his administration is willing to rejoin the agreement. Six rounds of talks were held until June 20. There was a break in talks as Iran was seeing a new presidential election in which a new government came to power. However, talks were resumed on November 29 and now negotiators have made some inroads though some key issues still remain unresolved. **Page 2**

Op-ed

Russian security interests remain key to its activities in Ukraine

By Vaishali Krishna

Once enjoyed the status of a superpower during the Cold War period, Russia of today somehow feels pressure from the U.S.-led West over the Ukraine crisis. Ukraine was part of the Russian empire for centuries before becoming a Soviet republic, and the two neighbours stayed aligned even after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. The turning point, however, came in the 2000s when Ukraine sought deeper integration with Europe that completely soured Russia-Ukraine relationship. One would notice that following the Soviet collapse it has been hard for Russia to reconcile with the new geopolitical situation and hence the Russian leadership, especially Putin, remained busy in seeking to restore Moscow's position in the world.

Agriculturally rich in production, defence industries and military, including the Black Sea Navy and some of the nuclear store, Ukraine was a keystone of the Soviet Union with a status of being the second-most densely inhabited and powerful of the fifteen Soviet republics. In the post-Soviet period, Ukraine's move to shed Russian imperial legacy and come close to the West proved to be a disgrace for Russia. Since the people of the two countries are historically and culturally closely aligned, Russia-Ukraine tensions have always persisted due to psychological and security reasons. **Page 5**



In another major sign of the gun violence crisis in the United States, new research shows school campuses have been the site of 141 shootings so far during the 2021-22 school year; more than at any point in the previous decade.

The figure has been compiled by Everytown for Gun Safety, with experts saying there are signs emerging that the stresses and challenges of the pandemic are worsening gun violence in American schools.

Critics say the blame rests with the administrations of former U.S. President Donald Trump and his successor Joe Biden, both of whom have failed to handle the pandemic leading America to become the worst country in the world in terms of covid deaths and infection cases. **Page 5**

Iran Plast expo running in Tehran

TEHRAN - Iran's 15th International Exhibition of Plastic, Rubber, Machinery, and Equipment (IRAN PLAST) was opened at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground on Monday, Shana reported.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior officials including Oil Minister Javad Oji, Head of National Petrochemical Company

(NPC) Morteza Shah-Mirzaei, as well as some parliament members, and ambassadors of various countries in Tehran.

As reported, more than 430 domestic and foreign companies from various countries including China, Taiwan, and Italy are participating in this four-day exhibition.

The exhibition which is held in full compliance with health and safety protocols covers four major areas including raw materials, machinery and equipment, final and semi-finished products as well as services.

Some 17 specialized meetings and workshops in various fields including downstream petrochemical and polymer **Page 4**



Iran, Finland stress joint cooperation
TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Finnish counterpart Pekka Haavisto held talks in Tehran on Monday. The two chief diplomats discussed bilateral relations. The two said the level of trade between the two countries is unsatisfactory. **Page 2**

Iran developing two vaccines against Omicron

TEHRAN - Two domestic companies have conducted research to develop vaccines against the Omicron strain, ISNA reported on Monday.

Following the relevant protocols of the Food and Drug Administration for the development of vaccines against new strains, two domestic companies have completed their studies for the production of vaccines against the Omicron variant and will enter the clinical phase, after receiving the code of ethics.

Hamidreza Jamaati, Secretary of the National Scientific Committee against Coronavirus, said that Iran has started developing this vaccine at the same time as developed countries and leading vaccine companies in the world.

A knowledge-based company also developed a technological test kit to diagnose the new Omicron strain. **Page 7**

Prime destinations: top 10 places to go in the city of Tabriz

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - Once a buffer between empires, Tabriz is now turned into a bustling metropolis filled with scenic destinations.

For many visitors, its historical heritage and Silk Road pedigree are no more evident than what they feel in its UNESCO-designated marketplace, one of the world's best.

Soaked in rich in Azari culture, Tabriz is famed for delicate carpets, museums and art galleries, teahouse hammams, love of music, excellent transport links, and above all its hospitable people that make it a perfect introduction to Iran for whom arriving the ancient land from the northwest wing.

The city is located in East Azarbaijan province. While the national language in the coun-

try is Farsi (Persian), the language spoken in this province along with West-Azerbaijan and Ardabil provinces, is Azari and Farsi is considered as the second one.

Situated on a high plateau amid Lake Urmia and lofty Mt Sahand, and bounded by stark, eroded hills, Tabriz has milder summers than cities further east, though its winters can be formidable. **Page 6**

Interview

Iranian woman skier Ahmadi motivated by Winter Olympics

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN - Iranian woman skier Atefeh Ahmadi is extremely motivated to participate at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

She will represent Iran in the Alpine Skiing in the Games.

"First of all, I would like to say I am proud of being Iran's flag-bearer in the Opening ceremony. Hoisting your country's flag in the Olympics is a great feeling. It was an incredible ceremony," Ahmadi told in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

"The Winter Olympics have brought the best skiers around the world together in Beijing. I am very happy as a person who wants to compete with the world's best.

Ahmadi says she experiences a different condition in the 2022 Games.

"Snow at the Beijing Winter Olympics is artificially made and we are not used to skiing on icy snow. The Games' downhill are different with downhills of Iran and Turkey and it makes my job difficult," she said.

The 27-year-old is the only Iranian woman to qualify for the Beijing Games.

Four years ago, she wanted to represent Iran in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea but Iran's National Olympic Committee did not select her, saying she was too young.

"I will do my best in the Games however I am well aware that I have a tough task in the competition. I train hard every day to prepare for the competition," Ahmadi went on to say.

Iran is set to make its 12th appearance at the Games since making its debut at Cortina d'Ampezzo 1956. **Page 3**

Director says "The Situation of Mehdi" documents operations Badr, Kheibar

TEHRAN - Actor Hadi Hejazifar calls his directorial debut "The Situation of Mehdi" a film document for Badr and Kheibar, two major operations Iran carried out during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The war drama portraying the life story of Mehdi Bakeri, the chief of IRGC 31st Shura Division that carried out several major operations during the war, was critically acclaimed following its premiere at the 40th Fajr Film Festival on Sunday.

"During the project, I told my crew that I wanted to make a movie that is recognized as a documentary on the operations Badr and Kheibar," Hejazifar said during a press conference organized after a screening of his film.

To make the scenes more credible, Hejazifar even carried out an extensive search into the abandoned storehouses of the Army and the IRGC to find suitable uniforms for his cast members. **Page 8**

Still unclear many Republicans have learnt from mistakes: Princeton professor



From page 1 ► Yet there is a serious concern among the Iranians, officials and the public alike, that the U.S. may renege on the agreement if a hawkish Republican wins the presidency in the future elections.

"Unfortunately, it is not clear today that many Republicans learn from their mistakes," Von Hippel tells the Tehran Times in an email interview.

It is a common sense that a country that first violated the nuclear deal naturally it should be the first one to show flexibility.

Von Hippel says, "I agree about the past. I believe, however, the Biden Administration recently finally did decide not to condition the U.S. rejoining the JCPOA on any other requirement."

Iran is saying it does not seek anything beyond the JCPOA.

"Iran has been making demands that it is impossible for the Biden Administration to agree to, such as binding future U.S. administrations," the professor said when asked why there is so much delay in putting the JCPOA on its right track.

Some analysts and politicians say the demand by Iran that the U.S. should provide guarantees that it will not leave the agreement again is quite understandable. However, they say this entails reconciliation between Iran and the United States.

Certain regional countries are worried about a possible normal relationship between Tehran and Washington. For instance, Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, says, "Israel and its supporters in the U.S. have played key roles in preventing U.S.-Iran reconciliation." She adds, "They have even contributed to the worsening of these relations. For example, in 1996 Israel's supporters played a key role in the passage of the Iran-Libya sanctions act."

In fact, the Trump administration violated international law by revoking the JCPOA because the agreement has been endorsed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.

However, Professor Von Hippel says from the U.S. viewpoint the JCPOA is an executive agreement and it needs the approval of the Senate to become a treaty.

"Unfortunately, on the U.S. side at least, the JCPOA is an executive agreement and not a treaty because President Biden could not get 67 of the 100 members of the Senate to support it. He cannot bind his successors," Von Hippel notes.

"But I hope that any U.S. successor president would think twice before doing what President

Trump did," he adds.

On a view that if Iran sees goodwill by the West, then it might be possible that the sides cooperate with each other to settle other disputes in West Asia as well, the Princeton University professor emeritus says, "I certainly hope so. Both countries are divided, however, into 'hawks and doves'. The doves say 'negotiate!' while the doves say 'fight!' So it will not be easy."

In a letter on January 12, roughly 110 House Republicans called on the Biden administration to withdraw from ongoing negotiations in Vienna intended to revive the nuclear deal. According to the Hill, the lawmakers asked Secretary of State Antony Blinken to instead enforce existing sanctions against Tehran.

Mike Pompeo, who served as secretary of state under Trump in 2018-21 and as CIA director in 2017-18, is a fierce opponent of the Vienna talks. In an interview published on the Argus website on January 31, Pompeo boasted by saying, "We confronted it by starving the regime."

Now the question is that if such Iran hawks, including Pompeo, are really worried about Iran's nuclear program, such a situation won't never favor them.

In a recent tweet, Democratic Senator Christopher Murphy said, "Iran got stronger and their behavior got more dangerous after we left the deal."

When the professor emeritus was asked doesn't he think that such hawks are clandestinely pushing for a war against Iran, he simply said, "Not so clandestinely!"

The nuclear physicist also believes that former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and certain Persian Gulf Arab rulers were instrumental in provoking Trump to quit the hard-won nuclear deal, saying, "Netanyahu certainly played a large role, as did the leaders of some of the Arab states."

Von Hippel, who once worked at the White House during the Bill Clinton presidency, also called on the leaders of the countries involved in the Vienna talks to agree to what their negotiators have agreed on.

"My understanding is that it is now up to the leaders to accept what has been agreed among the negotiators. I hope they will do so quickly and that it will be possible for our two countries and the Arab states to end the wars in Yemen and Syria and begin to make the Persian Gulf region a more peaceful place by creating regional solutions to, for example, prevent a nuclear arms race," he suggested.

Foreign Ministry: Agreement can be reached if Washington makes political decision

TEHRAN — The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said on Monday that the Islamic Republic correctly insists on obtaining assurances from the United States to honor its commitments in the future once the 2015 nuclear deal is restored.

"Iran and the P4+1 rightly insist that the United States must provide the necessary guarantees to fulfill its obligations in the future. We cannot have the United States once again mock the international community by not fulfilling its obligations and use the mechanisms inside the JCPOA to the detriment of the JCPOA, and the companies that want to cooperate and trade with Iran be threatened by the United States," Saeed Khatibzadeh told his weekly press briefing.

However, he added, significant progress has been in various areas in the Vienna negotiations.

The top negotiators who had returned home for consultations with capitals will return to Vienna to resume the talks on Tuesday. While lead negotiators had visited capitals, expert talks were continuing.

On whether the eighth round of talks will be the final one, he said, "In the field of guarantees, ideas have been put forward. The framework of the agreement and the textual perspective of the agreement are clear. Answers to the questions raised in Vienna will clarify when we will reach an agreement."

He noted that if the other side says that this is the last round of talks, it is clear that they must return to Vienna with the "right answers" to fulfill their obligations.

Khatibzadeh emphasized, "If the other parties, especially the Americans, who are in Vienna, announce tomorrow (Tuesday) that they will provide the necessary guarantees and fulfill their obligations, the agreement will be available the next day. But if such statements are for media games in public, Iran will not think about these fake deadlines."

In this regard, the diplomat stressed that the time to reach an agreement is determined by the U.S. response to the questions raised and

fulfillment of its commitments, as well as the speed of the European trio that they must act quickly.

Regarding the recent restoration of sanction waivers, the spokesman said these are the waivers that the Trump administration had canceled in continuation of its anti-JCPOA measures and violation of its obligations.

"These waivers are related to nuclear commitments, and what has been done today has been a very small part of the U.S. responsibilities," he added.

He also noted that Tehran's serious focus is on the economic benefit of the JCPOA for the Iranian people.

So far, he said, no action has been taken in the area of sanctions removal.

"... what is worthwhile is for the United States to return to Vienna with a clear agenda and necessary decisions," the spokesman asserted.

He added that Iran and other JCPOA parties made their tough decisions by remaining in the deal and allowed the agreement to "survive."

"Today, the United States should come to Vienna with a clear agenda and political decisions to remove the sanctions and fulfill its obligations, instead of creating propaganda," Khatibzadeh outlined.

The spokesman added that the Iranian negotiating team has gone to Vienna from the first day with all its necessary authority and competence, and Iran hopes that the decisions will be taken by the other side.

He continued, "It is natural that Iran expects the necessary decisions have been taken by the other parties, especially Washington, on the issue of lifting sanctions and Iran's benefits from the JCPOA."

Khatibzadeh added that Iran expects the delegations, including the Americans, to return to Vienna with clear instructions to fulfill their obligations in line with the 2015 nuclear deal and the lifting of sanctions.

"There are significant issues on the agenda that are unlikely to be resolved except with Washington's political decisions," he concluded.



Iran, Finland stress joint cooperation

From page 1 ► The two countries' foreign ministers had met in late September 2021 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

In a joint press conference, Amir Abdollahian said he and the Finnish foreign minister held talks on different issues, including bilateral relations.

"Iran-Finland relations are stable and on the right track," Amir Abdollahian stressed.

He added that in the Raisi administration the foreign ministry is focusing on a balanced foreign policy, and Iran's new vision is to look at all parts of the world, including Europe.

He said that Europe has provided an important capacity for Iran's foreign policy and that Tehran does not see Europe summarized only in the three countries (Germany, France and Britain) that are party to the 2015 nuclear deal and are now participating in the Vienna talks.

"While welcoming the development of relations with these three countries, paying attention to other European countries, is of interest to Iran," he added.

He also said, "I am very happy that my esteemed colleague recovered from the critical situation of the Coronavirus and that was the reason for the delay in his trip to Tehran. I'm glad we were able to meet today. This is the second meeting after (the meeting in) New York."

Referring to his meeting with the Finnish foreign minister in New York, Amir Abdollahian said the two countries have plans to develop bilateral cooperation, and an agreement was

reached in New York on developing ties.

Iran's top diplomat noted that about 11 cooperation documents were discussed in the Monday meeting, in addition to the development of academic and scientific cooperation, particularly in the fields of science, technology and safe drinking water.

The Iranian chief diplomat also said Tehran is aware of Helsinki's special attention to situation in Afghanistan and hot issues in West Asia.

"We are aware of Finland's attention to developments in the West Asia region and Afghanistan... We continue to emphasize the need for the formation of an inclusive government with the participation of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan."

The foreign minister also referred to the meeting between Finland's foreign minister with Kazemi Qomi, Iran's special envoy for Afghanistan, saying the two sides held detailed talks at the presidential office.

Amir Abdollahian added, "We welcome the return of tranquility to the region and cessation of military attacks against the Yemeni people as well as the cessation of the escalation of the war and focus on lifting the blockade as well as Yemeni-Yemeni ceasefire and talks. We hope these meetings will be the basis for increasing bilateral relations."

Amir Abdollahian says some of Iran's demands for lifting sanctions have not been met yet

On the nuclear talks in Vienna, Amir Abdollahian also said that in reviewing the latest texts obtained from the Vienna talks some of

Iran's demands for lifting sanctions have not been met yet.

"We focused on the latest texts as a result of Iran's negotiations with the P4+1 and the non-papers exchanged through Mr. Mora," he said.

Enrique Mora is deputy secretary-general and political director of the European External Action Service (EEAS) who coordinates the Vienna talks.

After a break in which top negotiators had returned to capitals for consultations, negotiations will be resumed in Vienna on Tuesday.

"(Iran's chief negotiator) Ali Bagheri and senior negotiating experts in the coming days will focus on the document to be agreed on."

The other parties will return to Vienna and show their commitment to the JCPOA commitments," Amir Abdollahian stressed.

He added, "For the past ten days or so, in our intensive meetings with the expert groups in Iran, we have focused on the latest texts that have emerged as a result of Iran's negotiations with the 4+1, as well as the non-papers exchanged through Mr. Mora."

"We hope to reach a final agreement at this stage. Whether we can lead the negotiations to a good agreement in the coming days now depends on the initiative, intentions and behavior of the three European countries and the American side," he said.

He emphasized, "We will continue our efforts to reach a good and even speedy agreement with optimism, good faith and seriousness."

Iran got stronger after 'disastrous maximum pressure' policy: senator

TEHRAN - As negotiators from Iran and the 4+1 nations press on to undo former Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran, an American senator says the only upside of the policy was that it proved unilateral sanctions make things worse, Press TV reported on Saturday.

In a tweet, Senator Chris Murphy strongly criticized Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran deal, which he followed by imposing illegal sanctions against the Islamic Republic with the objective of crippling the Iranian economy.

Negotiations were launched in April 2021 under the Joe Biden administration to have the U.S. return to the deal - formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - and lift U.S. sanctions in exchange for Iran returning to its nuclear obligations.

"The only upside of Trump's disastrous 'maximum pressure' Iran policy was that it definitively proved that unilateral sanctions make things



worse, not better," Murphy said.

However, the Democratic lawmaker resorted to fear-mongering about Iran's nuclear activities and its regional influence so as to attack the Republican president.

"Iran got stronger and their behavior got more dangerous after we left the deal," he asserted

Following the U.S. withdrawal, Iran initially refused to take reciprocal actions as stipulated under the JCPOA, giving diplomacy a chance.

But after an entire year of "strategic patience," it finally began to advance its nuclear program beyond the caps set by the deal, describing its decision as "reversible" and "remedial."

"There is nothing about the last four years that tells us America or the world is safer with no nuclear deal between the U.S. and Iran," Murphy said in another tweet.

He claimed that once Trump exited the deal, "Iran began shooting at our troops, sped up nuclear research,

and increased support for dangerous regional proxies."

Murphy has been a vocal critic of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and his maximum pressure sanctions on Iran. He has also slammed the move as "one of the dumbest, most dangerous foreign policy decisions of the last fifty years."

Iranian officials also dismiss the so-called maximum pressure campaign as a humiliating failure, stressing that the Iranian nation's "maximum resistance" defeated the aggressive policy.

"When the Americans officially acknowledge that they have failed in their maximum pressure [policy], an ignominious failure, this is a victory for the Iranian nation," President Ebrahim Raisi said on Wednesday.

"Today, the nation's maximum resistance to [acts of] sedition and sanctions has borne fruit and the maximum pressure has failed," he added.



Vienna talks enter consequential stage

TEHRAN – As negotiators from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries return to Vienna on Thursday, talks in the Austrian capital are expected to enter a consequential phase that requires political decisions on the part of the West, especially the United States.

After a weeklong break intended to make consultations in capitals, the heads of the negotiating delegations will be descending on Vienna on Thursday and are expected to oversee meetings at the expert level.

Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, briefed Iranian lawmakers on the outcome of the talks during the hiatus. During the meeting, Bagheri Kani viewed the talks as "forward-moving" and "positive," according to lawmakers who attended the briefing.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh echoed the same assessment at his weekly presser on Monday. He said the talks have made significant progress.

The spokesman said, "We had remarkable progress in various spheres including the issue of guarantees on which some ideas have been raised and written."

According to Khatibzadeh, the framework of a deal has been laid out



and its prospect is very clear.

At issue are a number of important points such as the guarantees Iran is demanding the U.S. to provide and verification measures Iran says it needs to undertake in case a deal is reached in Vienna. Iran has said it needs guarantees from the U.S. that it won't renege on its commitments again after it reenters the 2015 nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran also seeks to obtain a right to verify the lifting of U.S. sanctions. During the past rounds of talks, significant progress was made on guarantees and verifications, though still, some work remains to be done.

As regards sanctions and nuclear measures, some issues remain

unresolved and that's because there is a need for political decisions. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said Monday that some of Iran's demands regarding sanctions have not yet been addressed. But he said Iran will continue to work optimistically and in good faith to reach a good and swift agreement.

Also, Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said Iran has "carefully" set the agenda of Iran's negotiating team ahead of its return to Vienna.

"The agenda for the Iranian negotiators to continue the eighth round of Vienna Talks has been carefully defined," he said on Twitter. The top Iranian security official also hinted that the U.S. needs to make

a decision regarding the lifting of sanctions.

"An agreement in which the sanctions that form the maximum pressure are not lifted will condition the country's economy and cannot be the basis of a Good Deal."

In addition to the sanctions issue, the U.S. also seems intransigent in terms of pursuing a hard line toward Iran's nuclear achievements and capabilities.

As things stand, the conclusion of the talks depends, to large extent, on the U.S. ability to make political decisions on lifting sanctions and relinquish its unrealistic demands about Iran's nuclear achievements. Therefore, if the U.S. makes decisions during this hiatus, the talks will most likely come to a swift conclusion over the current round.

Iran's Foreign Ministry reiterated that in a statement on Monday. It said the Wester side faces a test in Vienna. "They can choose a different path with different results. By recognizing the realities of Iran and effectively abandoning the Maximum Failure approach, the U.S. can open up new possibilities. The ball is in their court," the statement noted.

Iran says ball in U.S. court at Vienna talks

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry has issued a statement underlining that the United States needs to step up to the plate and change course in terms of reviving a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major world powers.

"Regretfully, 43 years after the Islamic Revolution, some Western states, the United States in particular, still refuse to accept the fact that the rights and interests of Iranian nation should be respected," the statement said, adding, "By insisting on the failed policies of the past four decades, they should not expect different results. The path of pressure and coercion has proven to be a miserable failure. Now in Vienna, they face a test. They can choose a different path with different results. By recognizing the realities of Iran and effectively abandoning the Maximum Failure approach, the U.S. can open up new possibilities. The ball is in their court."

The statement was issued on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. The 43rd anniversary of the revolution rolls around on February 11. But Iran commemorates the period from February 1 to February 11 every year to mark the consequential ten days from the arrival of Imam Khomeini to the country to the total overthrow of the Shah regime

ten days later in 1979. This period is known as the Ten-Day Dawn.

The statement noted, "43 years ago, a decades-long national struggle for self-determination; for a modern (but nationally decided) system of governance; and for an independent foreign policy, came into fruition in the form of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The Foreign Ministry's statement added, "In an era that was characterized by fierce rivalry between two superpowers, their respective ideologies, and their spheres of influence, the Islamic Revolution of the Iranian nation presented a new model- a third way, best encapsulated in the historic and ever-lasting mottoes of the Revolution: Independence, freedom and Islamic Republic & Neither East, Nor West."

It continued, "Inside the country, for the first time in our history, our people were able to attain a right to determine their destiny in a system that created a delicate and meaningful synthesis of our national identity and Islamic values. Also, in the international arena, the Islamic Revolution was a voice of reason, independence, and rejection of foreign interference and dominance. And from the outset, the newly born

Islamic Republic stood with the oppressed people, whether they were under occupation in Palestine or under an apartheid regime in South Africa."

The statement further noted, "More than four decades on, those values continue to guide us. As a result of that and thanks to the resilience of our nation, today the Islamic Republic as a mature system is in its most powerful state ever, and has become an indispensable and responsible actor, a force of good, and an anchor of stability in the region and beyond."

It said, "To reach here, Iranian nation has paved a long way, full of obstacles and barriers, mostly manufactured and set up by those foreign powers who have been refusing to come along with and grasp the new realities of the NEW Iran. From imposing a deadly war, to launching unending campaigns of economic terrorism, sabotage, and psychological warfare, those powers who were opposed to our revolution, our independence, and our self-reliance, did all they could to stop our popular movement. But the will and resilience of the great and proud nation of Iran was and is, stronger than their schemes. Despite all hardships and ups and downs, grassroots support remains the main source of the power of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Iran congratulates Armenia on anniversary of diplomatic ties

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has sent a message to his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan congratulating him on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In the message, Amir Abdollahian reminded Iran was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the Republic of Armenia and to establish official diplomatic relations with the country.

He added that during the past year, relations between Iran and Armenia have been expanded and boosted in various fields, and with the signing of numerous documents, the legal basis for cooperation has also been strengthened, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

The Iranian foreign minister stressed the determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to further bolster bilateral and regional cooperation with the Republic of Armenia.

Iran officially recognized the independence of Armenia on the 25th of December, 1991. A declaration on establishing diplomatic relations between Armenia and Iran was signed in Tehran on the 9th of February, 1992, according to the Armenian foreign ministry.

On the same day "The Declaration on Principles and Aims of Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran" was signed to assure the Parties' intention to establish friendly relations.

The solemn opening ceremony of the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran took place in Yerevan in April 1992.

In December 1992, the embassy of the Republic of Armenia was opened in Tehran.

In late November last year, Mirzoyan held a phone conversation with Amir Abdollahian. The foreign ministers of Armenia and Iran discussed issues of mutual interest related to regional security. They also discussed the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

In this call, Mirzoyan highly appreciated Iran's position on territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of Armenia, according to the Armenian foreign ministry.

Amir Abdollahian and Mirzoyan also exchanged views on expanding the contacts in the fields of trade, economy, infrastructure and energy.

Implementation of directed work aimed at the multilateral agreement on the establishment of the "Persian Gulf-Black Sea" international transport corridor was also emphasized.

During the 2020 war in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Iran actively worked to ensure peace in the region and presented a peace initiative. Iranian officials paid visits to Baku and Yerevan in a bid to put an end to the war.

Iran underlined the need to refrain from changing the internationally recognized borders in the region.

SPORTS

Iranian woman skier Ahmadi motivated by Winter Olympics

From Page 1 ▶ The 27-year-old is the only Iranian woman to qualify for the Beijing Games.

Four years ago, she wanted to represent Iran in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea but Iran's National Olympic Committee did not select her, saying she was too young.

"I will do my best in the Games however I am well aware that I have a tough task in the competition. I train hard every day to prepare for the competition," Ahmadi went on to say.

Iran is set to make its 12th appearance at the Games since making its debut at Cortina d'Ampezzo 1956.

"As the other skiers have said, steep downhill slopes present challenge here. And as I've said before to ski in the course is very hard since snowmaking machines have produced the snow."

The Asian nation has yet to register a single medal at the Winter Olympics.

"To win a medal is hard for the Iranian skiers since the European and North American countries are geographically different with Iran. As you know, the environment is closely related to sports and sports culture. They also have the better equipment than us," she stated.

She hopes to set an example for other young women in Iran.

"The Iranian women have great potential in sports but they need to be allowed to do what they are capable of," Ahmadi concluded.

Foolad beat Persepolis to win Iran's Super Cup

TEHRAN – Foolad Khuzestan football team defeated Persepolis 1-0 to win Iran's Super Cup on Monday.

In the match held in Sirjan, Kerman Provinces, Malian defender Moussa Coulibaly scored the solitary goal of the match with a header in the 18th minute.

Persepolis were reduced to 10 men in the 63rd minute after Mehdi Shiri received his second yellow card.

Shortly after, Foolad dominated the match and created several chances but failed to score.

In the 81st minute, Foolad midfielder Hamid Bouhamdan was sent off due the second yellow card.

The Iranian Super Cup is an Iranian association football trophy awarded to the winner of a match between the Persian Gulf Pro League's season champions and the winners of the Hazfi Cup. It is similar to numerous other Super Cup tournaments held in other countries.

Persepolis are the most decorated team in Super Cup, winning the title four times.

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

The next edition of the Iranian Super Cup was planned to be played on 10 August 2007 between the 2006-07 league champions Saipa and the Hazfi Cup winners Sepahan but the match was cancelled. After Mehdi Taj was elected as Federation president in 2016, the Iranian Super Cup was restarted. Zob Ahan won the first Super Cup after its restart, beating 2015-16 Persian Gulf Pro League winners Esteghlal Khuzestan 4-2 after extra time. Next year Persepolis crowned Super Cup by beating Naft Tehran in Azadi Stadium.

Momeni Moghddam takes charge of Iran U20 volleyball team

TEHRAN – Iran volleyball federation appointed Gholamreza Momeni Moghddam as new head coach of the U20 volleyball team on Monday.

Momeni Moghddam has worked in Iran's volleyball for more than a decade. He was Mohammad Vakili's assistant in the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Boys' U19 World Championship in Tunisia.

Momeni Moghddam will lead Iran in the 21st edition of the Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship. The competition, which is slated for Aug. 22 to 29 in Riffa, Bahrain, will serve as the Qualification Tournament for the 2023 FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship.

He replaced Behrouz Ataei in the Iranian U20 volleyball team.

The 2020 Asian Men's U20 Volleyball Championship was originally scheduled to be held in Iran but was canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Iran are the competition's defending champions.

Spanish futsal coach Moreno linked with Iran

TEHRAN – Iran football federation has reportedly reached an agreement with Spanish futsal coach Miguel Andrés Moreno.

Moreno, who has already worked in Barcelona, will be added to the Iran national team coaching staff.

Newly-appointed coach Vahid Shamsaei has confirmed the negotiation with the Spaniard.

Iran prepare for the 2022 AFC Futsal Asian Cup which will be held in Kuwait in September.

Iran sports minister Sajadi to meet IOC President Bach

TEHRAN – Iranian Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Hamid Sajadi will meet International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The exact time of the meeting has not been announced.

Sajadi, who has traveled to Beijing for the Olympic Winter Games, has been welcomed by the Chinese sports officials.

Iran has sent three skiers to the Games.

Atefeh Ahmadi and Hossein Saveh Shemshaki will compete in Alpine skiing and Danial Saveh Shemshaki participate in cross-country.

Mohebi scores as Santa Clara draw with Gil Vicente

TEHRAN – Gil Vicente FC hosted Santa Clara at Estádio Cidade de Barcelos.

The 21st round match of the Portuguese Bwin League ended in a draw with a score of 2-2.

In the 30th minute, Santa Clara opened the scoring. Lincoln crossed over the right side of the field and fed Cryzan who made it 0-1.

CD Santa Clara's lead didn't last long and, three minutes after the opener, Gil Vicente FC equalized. After a foul by Rafael Ramos, Samuel Lino converted from the spot.

In the 66th minute, the visiting team suffered a setback, when Lincoln was sent off with the second yellow card.

Even with one less player on the field, CD Santa Clara did not give up and in the 78th minute, the Azoreans took the lead to make it 1-2. Rafael Ramos crossed into the penalty area and met Mohammad Mohebi who headed it in to give his side the unexpected lead.

Two minutes later, Santa Clara were reduced to nine players after Cryzan was also sent off.

Gil Vicente FC cemented themselves in the midfield and in the 83rd minute managed to tie up the game. Following a corner kick from Pedrinho, Rúben Fernandes scored the equalizer making the final score 2-2.

Nuclear sanctions waiver a propaganda hoax: MP

TEHRAN – An Iranian lawmaker has reacted to a U.S. move to restore a nuclear sanctions waiver, saying the move is a "propaganda hoax".

Fereydoun Abbasi insisted that Iran's negotiators must focus on removal of the main sanctions in the Vienna talks.

In an exclusive interview with the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA), Abbasi, a nuclear physicist, said that using the phrase "civilian nuclear activity" is a deception because Iran didn't and doesn't have nuclear activity of military nature.

He made the remarks in response to the recent sanctions waiver related to Iran's peaceful nuclear activity by the administration of Joe Biden.

"The sanctions related to the Bushehr reactor are unclear. Why should this reactor have been sanctioned? Iran and Russia had a contract for this reactor. Western countries, particularly Germany, didn't fulfill their commitments toward the Bushehr reactor in line with the will of the U.S. while there wasn't any unclear point in the contract between Iran and Russia," MP stated.

He also said that the Arak reactor was a heavy water one that has been transformed in accordance with the Americans' demand. The lawmaker wondered why the Americans didn't remove sanctions on this reactor in 2016 while it had been modified according to their demand.

The MP, who was the chief the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) from 2011 to 2013, added, "The Tehran research reactor had been built by Americans and after the Islamic revolution of Iran they prevented other countries from delivering fuel to the reactor. Now what has happened that they removed the sanctions on the Tehran reactor?"

The member of the parliament's Energy Committee said such a waiver is of no value. "Our negotiating team must focus on lifting the main sanctions, all sanctions must be lifted in accordance with what they promised in the JCPOA. Exemption from sanctions on civilian nuclear activity is more of a propaganda hoax," the lawmaker said.

Iran Plast expo running in Tehran



From page 1 ► industries are planned to be held on the sidelines of this exhibition, while an online exhibition is also being held concurrently with the physical event and will continue for a month.

Over 300 foreign businessmen and company representatives from 15 different countries are also scheduled to visit the international event.

Petchem industry a major source of revenue for Iran

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the exhibition, Oji underlined the significant role of the petrochemical industry in the country's economy and said: "In difficult conditions of the country [the sanctions], petrochemical complexes were bringing in as much as revenue as the crude oil and gas condensate sales so that in the first 10 months of [the current fiscal] year (March 21, 2021-January 20, 2022), \$10 billion in foreign currency revenues was injected [by petrochemical complexes] into the Nima system."

"The petrochemical industry is less vulnerable to sanctions and has played an important role in meeting the country's foreign exchange needs," the minister stressed.

He noted that there is no field more profitable than the petrochemical industry, saying: "In the 13th government, we plan to make a huge change in the country's petrochemical industry and increase the production capacity of petrochemical products to 140 million tons by [the Iranian calendar year] 1404 (starts in March 2025)."

Petchem production capacity to reach 200m tons by 2032

Further in the mentioned ceremony, NPC Head Morteza Shah-Mirzaei also mentioned some of the Oil Ministry's plans for the development of the petrochemical industry in the future and said the country's petrochemical production capacity is planned to be increased to 200 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1411 (begins in March 2032).

He put the current capacity of the country's petrochemical production at 90 million tons.

Shah-Mirzaei further stressed the need for the diversification of the country's petrochemical products basket in the future and noted that petrochemical complexes should move towards producing products with more added value.

Transport, Urban Development Ministry inaugurates 500 projects across country

TEHRAN - Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi inaugurated 500 projects in the fields of ports and navigation, road and road transport, rail, airport, construction and development as well as meteorology across the country through video conferencing.

As reported by the portal of the ministry, the mentioned projects were put into operation on Monday in a ceremony on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The mentioned ceremony was attended by senior transport officials including Head of Iran Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Ali-Akbar Safaei, Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister Kheirollah Khademi, Head of Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO) Darioush Amani, Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) Seyed Miad Salehi, Head of Iran Airports Company Siavash Amirmokri, as well as Director of Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) Sahar Tajbakhsh.

The inaugurated projects include 30 port development projects in Imam Khomeini, Bushehr, Genaveh, Chabahar, Shahid Rajaei, and Anzali ports with a total investment of 6.6 trillion rials (about \$269.4 million).

Also, 388 projects including smartening of transport equipment, development of border terminal, building traffic police stations, improvement of asphalt roads, as well as the



construction of welfare service complexes were also among the projects inaugurated by the transport minister.

Over 19.33 trillion rials (about \$78.930 million) was invested in the above-mentioned projects.

Some 53 projects worth 26.72 trillion rials (about \$109.105 million) were also put into operation in the railway sector, including fleet development and modernization, education and technology, railway improvement, modernization of railway signs and stations.

Also, 15 transportation infrastructure projects worth 11.66 trillion rials (about \$47.6 million) were among the inaugurate projects.

Eight projects worth 3.01 trillion rials (about \$12.2 million) were also put into operation in the aviation sector, including the development and improvement of flight levels and airports of Bandar Abbas, Zahedan, Saravan, and Khorramabad.

Six meteorological projects valued at 750 billion rials (about \$3.06 million) were also inaugurated and put into operation in Gilan province.

new projects, purchase of shares of existing companies, as well as foreign investment in the form of contractual arrangements.

The ministry had approved 74 foreign investment projects valued at about \$2.227 billion in the first six half of the present year (March 21-September 22, 2021).

A total of 113 foreign investment projects valued at \$2.614 billion were approved in the country during the mentioned period, of which the share of the industry, mining, and trade sector was 65 percent and 85 percent in terms of number and value, respectively.

Iran planning major steps for developing intl. railway corridors

TEHRAN - Iran is planning to implement major railway projects for completing North-South and East-West international transport corridors which pass through the country, the deputy head of the country's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC) has announced.

According to Abbas Khatibi, the Iranian Transport and Urban Development Ministry's main priorities in the railway transportation sector are the development of the North-South corridor, the development of the East-West corridor, and the development of transit infrastructure in the country, Mehr News Agency reported.

Khatibi noted that the Chabahar-Zahedan railway is the major project underway in the East-West corridor, while Rasht-Caspian and Rasht-Astara railways are the major projects underway in the North-South corridor in Iran.

He said that the North-South corridor is 13,000 kilometers expanding from the Indian port of



Mumbai to Finland's capital Helsinki.

A significant section of this corridor, stretching from Bandar Abbas in southern Iran to the northern city of Astara, is located in the Islamic Republic. So far, this railway has been constructed from Bandar Abbas to Rasht in northern Iran and from Rasht, it is divided into two branches, one of which goes to the Caspian Sea

coastal region including Caspian and Anzali ports and the other branch

goes to Astara to be connected to the railway network of Azerbaijan, according to Khatibi.

He put the physical progress of the Rasht-Caspian railway which is 35 kilometers at 70 percent, saying: "We hope this railway will be operational in the first six months of the next [Iranian calendar] year (begins on March 20)."

The official further mentioned the complexity of the Rasht-

Astara project, saying that it is a megaproject that requires over \$20 billion of investment to be completed.

"The Rasht-Astara railway project is going to be financed through three methods of domestic financing, foreign investment, and bartering, and we are negotiating to finalize the resources through these methods," Khatibi explained.

Mentioning the Chabahar-Zahedan railway project, the official said the resources needed for the implementation of this project have been provided from the National Development Fund (NDF), and the project is being implemented on schedule.

"We hope this project will be operational by the end of [the Iranian calendar year] 1402 (March 19, 2024)," he added.

He finally noted that the Transport Ministry is expected to put into operation 1,000 kilometers of new railways in the next Iranian calendar year provided that the necessary funding will be provided by the government.

1,000 kilometers of new railways expected to be put into operation in next Iranian year

Water, electricity supply projects worth over \$102m put into operation

TEHRAN - Nearly 700 water and electricity supply projects were put into operation across Iran through a video conference on Monday, the portal of Energy Ministry known as Paven reported.

The mentioned projects were inaugurated in a ceremony attended by President Ebrahim Raisi and Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The said projects include 211 electricity supply projects valued at two trillion rials (about \$8.16 million) as well as water supply to 480 villages with a total population of 250,000 people.

Providing portable solar power stations for 10,630 nomadic households with a total investment of one trillion rials (about \$4.08 million) and developing and improving the electricity networks of 4,500 villages under the framework of Baharestan project with a total

investment of over 17 trillion rials (about \$69.4 million) were also among the projects officially put into operation by President Raisi.

As reported, the mentioned projects were inaugurated in 21 provinces including East Azarbaijan, Kermanshah, Qazvin, Khuzestan and North Khorasan.

Over the last 43 years, every week 24 villages have been connected to the national power grid on average, and the number of villages with access to electricity in the country has increased from 1367 villages before the Islamic Revolution to 13,966 villages.

Currently over 99.7 percent of the Iranian population has access to the national electricity network, while the average electricity access in the world is 85 percent.

Every year, during the Ten-Day Dawn celebrations, numerous infrastructure projects are inaugurated or commenced to mark the development of the country after the



revolution.

Earlier in January, Iranian Energy Ministry had announced plans to implement over 10,000 water supply projects in rural areas across the country in the next four years

According to Shahin Pakrouh, the parliament and the government are currently collaborating in order to secure the necessary funding for the implementation of the mentioned projects.

TEDPIX falls 7,000 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 7,561 points to 1.274 million on Monday.

Over 5.561 billion securities worth 34.452 trillion rials (about \$127.6 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index dropped 8,020 points and the second market's index lost 7,554 points.

TEDPIX rose 92,000 points (5.8 percent) to 1.301 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.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The government's second measure, which is also for the profitability of production activities and bourse industries, and a promising market outlook, was approving a 10-article package to support this market in the meeting of the Government's Economic Coordination Headquarters on December 19.

The ten strategic decisions made in the mentioned headquarters are as follows:

1- Next year, the price ceiling of petrochemical units' gas feed will be 50,000 rials (17 cents) per cubic meter, ie the export rate. Also, gas fuel for steel mills will be 40 percent of the price of petrochemical feed, previously this reference was 100 percent, which has now reached 40 percent, ie each cubic meter will be a maximum of 20,000 rials (six cents). And, the rate for the cement industry's feed is equal to 10 percent of the feed rate of the petrochemical industry. Of course, all this requires the approval of the budget bill.

2- The production units' tax will be reduced by five percent next year.

3- The formula for the government's earning from the mines will not change next year.

4- Equivalent to the stock market transfer tax is allocated to strengthen Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund.

5- In addition to the previous securities, 300 trillion rials (about \$1.034 billion) will be allocated for Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund, provided that the market situation is suitable.

6- 10 percent of the state-owned shares in the initial

public offering market will be used for the stock marketing of the same shares.

7- The issuance of government bonds in the market is done by observing 50 percent of the inflow of resources to the capital market. That is, government bonds are issued in the months when the cash flow is higher

8- Central Bank of Iran (CBI) is required to announce the forex rate of government assets equal to 90 percent of the rate of the Nima system (Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA) in the last six months, which has been demanded by those active in the banking and stock exchange sectors.

9- The head of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) is invited to the meetings of Economic Headquarters and the committee of "V" of paragraph 5.

10- CBI sets an interbank interest rate of 20 percent to intervene in the secondary securities market.

Foreign investment approved in industry, mining, trade sectors up nearly 90%

TEHRAN - The Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has approved 102 foreign investment projects valued at about \$2.804 billion in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), which indicates 89.8 percent rise as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The data released by the ministry say that 104 foreign investment projects valued at about \$1.477 billion had been approved in the first nine months of the past year.

Approved foreign investment includes all applications, including investment to create

From page 1 ► Many experts and advocates say the U.S. was simply built on a culture of gun violence and it was inevitable the gun epidemic in America would reach such levels and beyond in schools.

This is while researchers who are studying gun violence in American schools are deeply concerned by what they describe as a phenomenon that will only get worse.

A week ago in Beloit, Wisconsin a 19-year-old former student was shot and killed after a high school basketball game and on Monday, a shooting outside Chaparral High School

in Las Vegas left three teens hospitalized.

On Tuesday, five teenage girls were shot and injured outside Rufus King High School in Milwaukee. Also Tuesday, a student was killed and another shot outside the South Education Center in Minneapolis, the only one of these cases in which suspects were arrested. Two students from the school have been charged.

But the pandemic isn't the only reason for the increase in school shootings.

Problems that predated the pandemic such as inequality, inadequate resources and the easy access to guns among other issues are said to have grown worse.

COVID-19 has introduced new challenges for authorities to deal with. according to recent surveys by the National Education Association. These include matters like the level of stress being created in American schools that half of teachers say they want to quit or retire early.

There are fear that there are now and will continue to be fewer

U.S. school shootings a “tsunami” this term



adults connected to students who can see warning signs that a child may be heading toward deadly behavior.

Ron Astor, a school violence expert at the University of California, Los Angeles believes “kids are walking into a system that has been massively weakened, we're going to see a variety of different forms of gun violence and violence in general. We're in a situation where things are going to get worse.”

Astor argues there are scores of different factors behind the violence, among which he cites the pandemic along with increases in overall community violence and breakdowns in family structures.

He says all these issues have created a “tsunami of mental health needs” in schools. And the problems are reaching the top of the hill as teachers and administrators are ill-equipped by the authorities to deal with the challenges because of burnout,

lack of staff and illness.

Analysts say successive administration's have failed to address these issues that should have been a priority because they deal with the heart of the problems in the community, especially considering the issues are one of a lethal nature.

Astor says the problem is not necessarily too little funding, but also the missing human capital such as teachers, specialists and staff who could help tackle the crisis of gun violence.

Other experts have cited another key factor in gun violence at schools as being the erratic schedules of parent during the pandemic. With rising unemployment and inequality rates there has been less oversight and less predictable routines for kids, making it even more difficult for parents, teachers and others to see warning signs.

Many experts blame the easy access and availability of guns as

another major factor. The past year has seen consistent monthly record firearm sales. Experts say far too many of those guns are not even properly secured in homes, allowing students access to firearms.

Advocates of gun control are calling on authorities to take immediate measures to tackle the school epidemic but many believe little action will be seen.

Meanwhile, in yet another worrying sign of gun violence, research by The Violence Project has shed new light on the upward trend of mass shootings in the U.S., finding that the number of Americans dying from mass shooters is on the rise.

The Violence Project examined 172 mass shootings which it defines as shooters killing four or more people - dating back more than 50 years.

It found that of all the mass shootings that took place between 1966 and 2019, more than half took place since 2000, with 20% of them occurring between 2010 and 2019. In the last five years of the study period, an average of 51 people died from mass shootings per year, compared with only eight people in the 1970s.

Amy Solomon, the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs says “this study, one of the most extensive assessments of mass violence to date, reveals a deeply unsettling trend: more Americans are dying at the hands of mass shooters than at any point in recent history”.

Researchers analyzed data on mass shootings using a publicly-available database, which draws from open source material such as news reports and social media.

Russian security interests remain key to its activities in Ukraine

From page 1 ► Russia's top distresses is the welfare of the approximately eight million ethnic Russians living in Ukraine according to 2001 census, mostly in the south and east where they form the largest single Russian diaspora. Protecting these people remains to be what Moscow claims as its duty. Yet, the split between Russia and Ukraine is seen by Russian analysts as a blunder of history and a major blow to Russia's international stature.

Russia relied on Ukrainian pipelines to propel its gas to businesses in Central and Eastern Europe for years, and it even paid billions of dollars per year as transport fees. In mid-2021, Russia accomplished building of its Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is the second natural gas pipeline after Nord Stream 1 and runs under the Baltic Sea from western Russia to

holds the most powerful financial weapon against Russia by blocking the access to the US dollar which still dominates financial transactions around the world. This rough attitude of the world towards Russia without knowing the real intention is both apprehensive and also impulsive. The West should not forget that this can backfire because Russia is a great source of energy supplies. A few Western scholars disagree somewhat on the motivations behind Russia's policy towards Ukraine. Some highlight NATO's post-Cold War expansion, which Russia has viewed with growing anxiety. For many analysts, the conflict marks a clear shift in the global security environment from a unipolar period of U.S. dominance to one defined by transformed competition between great powers.



Ukraine tells U.S. to calm down over “Russian invasion”

Kiev has disagreed with Washington's “apocalyptic predictions” over a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine after U.S. officials claimed that Moscow has stepped up its preparations for a major incursion.

The public disagreement between the two allies backs up arguments that the West is trying to find a pretext to expand NATO's eastward military expansion near Russia's border.

Writing on social media Ukraine's Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, says “Do not believe the apocalyptic predictions. Different capitals have different scenarios, but Ukraine is ready for any development”.

This is while the President's advisor Mykhailo Podolyak has insisted that the chances of finding a diplomatic solution to the crisis remained “substantially higher than the threat of further escalation”.

Kiev, backed up by some European allies, has recently sought to play down claims of an imminent attack saying those beating the drums of war are only harming the country's struggling economy.

U.S. officials have alleged that the Kremlin has assembled 110,000 troops along the border with its pro-Western neighbor and could invade Ukraine within days. This is despite the fact that Western intelligence assessments cannot determine whether Russia has any intention of invading it's neighbor.

Russia says it has every right to station troops within its own borders as it has done many times before without the need for “hysteria” [by the west].

Moscow has sought security guarantees in the face of NATO's eastward expansion, something it has proposed in a bid to help ease the tensions but

has yet to receive.

Nevertheless, the Kremlin has repeatedly denied it is planning an incursion into Ukraine and has called on the U.S. and NATO to stop stirring trouble by deploying more troops and military hardware near Russia's border with Ukraine.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister also further dismisses talks of a conflict saying “today, Ukraine has a strong army, unprecedented international support and the faith of Ukrainians in their country. It is the enemy who should fear us”.

On Monday, French President Emmanuel Macron is expected in Moscow and will then head to Kiev on Tuesday seeking to de-escalate the crisis. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will also visit the region for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky next week in a bid to further the diplomatic efforts.

northeastern Germany. Although Russia has contracted to keep moving gas through Ukraine for several more years, the United States and Europe caution that Nord Stream 2 will help Russia exercise its greater geopolitical power in the region. On the other hand, Putin has made it clear that he will never allow Ukraine to become “anti-Russian” and will thrive to push back the expansion of Western influence in Ukraine. Ukraine was never considered as a separate country by many Russians but several Ukrainians disagree and that is why leaders there have increased their dependence on the West.

What exactly is happening in Ukraine points to the fact that Moscow's activities are indispensable for its vital security interests rather than for destabilizing the region's safety. Evidently, Moscow has strongly condemned the U.S. and its NATO partners for supplying Ukraine with weapons and holding joint trainings, saying that interchanges inspire Ukrainian aggressors to try to recover the rebel-held regions by force. Moreover, Putin has persistently assumed Ukraine's desire to join NATO which is a danger mark for Russia. He voiced apprehensions about plans by some NATO members to set up military exercise centres in Ukraine which will deliver them a military base even without Ukraine joining NATO.

So, the main focus is concentrated on what Russia does not want rather than what Russia wishes to do so far as Ukraine is concerned? In fact, Russia does not want the presence of NATO in Ukraine in any form which Putin emphasises will hamper the security in the Eastern Europe in the close neighbourhood to Russian landscape. Russia altogether rejects the allegations of occupying Ukraine and blames the West for irritating the situation. Moreover, instead of looking into Russian fundamental issues the world is divided either in support or against Russia. However, in recent times, Western nations have shown their support for Ukraine. The U.S. and UK have supplied weapons, while Germany has sent medical facility, avoiding military equipment. Basically, bricks are collected on the borders of Russia not for constructing a protection wall near Ukraine but to border around Russia to limit it. Sanctions too are aimed by the U.S., UK and other European allies to punish Moscow.

Such moves can cut Russia from most international financial transactions including international profits from oil and gas production. Moreover, the U.S.

On the other side, responses of Central Asian countries indicate that the probability of angering Russia with a strictly pro-Western attitude is off the table because they know that Russia also seeks cooperation, as it needs to find new markets, new sources of food deliveries from non-Western countries, new supporters or loyal allies. These considerations have led to practical and balanced behaviour on both sides. Yet, it is hard to conclude whether the Ukraine crisis will mark a sharp turning point in the Central Asian countries' insight towards Russia or it will provide an opportunity for all of them to seek to balance Russia's influence by dealing with the West and China. There are strong signs that China will take benefit of Central Asia's balancing act by promoting itself as a less hostile partner than the West or Russia. India too has broken its silence on the Ukraine crisis and urged for “peaceful resolution” of the situation through “sustained diplomatic efforts” for “long-term peace” in the region and beyond.

In all such crises, like the Ukrainian one, the media plays a crucial role since each of them give their view with their own perceptions and also with their own prerequisite. Western media have blamed both Russia and Ukraine of throwing information wars in an attempt to influence public opinion in their favour. Russian state media have been accused of resorting not only to half-truths and misrepresentations but also to direct lies in their portrayal of Ukrainian authorities and protesters. While Western media has described the crisis in Ukraine as a Russian-manufactured provocation to defend military involvement, a few Russian media painted a picture of the Ukraine government to be fascist involved in suppressing the rights of the Russian speaking residents in eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

Whether the Ukraine crisis is an indicative of the beginning of a “new cold war” is something that needs to be watched carefully in the coming days and months. Nevertheless, the Russia-Ukraine stalemate will remain at the centre stage given the security concerns of Russia in the region. As of now the fate of Ukraine appears to be uncertain but it is certainly not going to tell the story of an annexation.

Dr. Vaishali Krishna is assistant professor at Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India).

West Asia to be under U.S. hegemonic control without Iran's resistance: Richard Falk

TEHRAN— Richard Falk says that without the resistance and steadfastness of Iran, the entire West Asia region would be under the hegemonic control of the U.S., with regional junior partners of Israel and Saudi Arabia/UAE.

Between January 1978 and February 11, 1979, the Muslim revolutionary people of Iran, under the wise leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Founder of the Islamic Revolution, voiced their oppositions against the secular and U.S.-backed rule of Mohamad Reza Shah.

Today, after 43 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the leadership of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei is at the forefront of the fight against global arrogance and oppressive powers like the United States and the Zionist Regime.

All these years, Iran has been under maximum political pressure and economic sanctions. The victory of the Iranian revolution as a new equation in various fields was able to change the political geography, political and geopolitical situation of the region. Part of this change was due to the nature of the Islamic Revolution discourse, which was defined as a strategic roadmap even before the Revolution.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Richard Anderson Falk, an American professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University and former UN official shared his views on the reasons for putting maximum political pressure and imposing economic sanctions on Iran for more than 4 decades after Islamic Revolution.

Following is the text of our interview with him:

What has been the role of the Iranian revolution in your opinion in changing regional equations and as an obstacle in the new world order?

The Iranian Revolution overturned Pahlavi dynastic rule more than a decade before the end of the Cold War. Its immediate effect was widely regarded as a major strategic setback for the United States with important negative geopolitical and economic implications. One consequence was to offset the setback by upgrading the U.S. to the strategic value of its ‘special relationship’ with Israel. A second consequence was to convey to political movements in Islamic countries the historical potential of Islamic populism. The impact of Iran's revolution was especially strong throughout the Arab world, especially the [Persian] Gulf monarchies and North Africa, whose regimes were threatened by this dramatic indication that politics-from-below could mount an effective challenge to a repressive political order.

United States interpreted the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon as acts of war, which produced the Global War on Terror, culminating in the 2003 U.S./U.K. aggression against Iraq and the subsequent military occupation of Iraq. A principal justification for this undertaking in defiance of international law was the containment of Iranian influence in the region. With the Cold War over, the regional alignments were increasingly shaped by tensions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arab world, often depicted as a Sunni reaction to the spread

of Shi'a influence. In other words, for the secular West political Islam was cast as international enemy #1 after the demise of the Soviet Union.

It is doubtful that the uprisings comprising the Arab Spring Of 2010-11 would have occurred without the precedent of the Iranian Revolution. In the aftermath, the strength of Islamic sentiments in several countries rose to the surface, perhaps most spectacularly in the 2012 presidential elections in Egypt won by the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohammed Morsi. This outcome alarmed secular and reactionary forces in the region, especially among the [Persian] Gulf monarchies, Israel, and national political elites, generating a counterrevolutionary backlash in several countries and Western intervention in others.

Looking back at the Iranian Revolution it is notable that it has endured despite U.S./Israeli coercive diplomacy consisting of threats, covert acts of assassination, destabilizing violence, and a variety of sanctions. In contrast, the democratizing movements in the Arab world were quickly reversed or resulted in prolonged civil strife or prolonged crises of ungovernability. In this atmosphere, Iran has opposed regional and global intervention in its own internal affairs, and still had the energy and commitment to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza. This durability of the Iranian Revolution is a remarkable organizational achievement considering the plight being experienced by the rest of the Middle East (West Asia).

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Rarely-seen Safavid game cards on show at Tehran museum



TEHRAN – Sets of rarely-seen game cards, which date from the Safavid era (1501-1736) have been put on show at the Reza Abbasi Museum in north-central Tehran.

Being kept at the treasure trove of the prestigious museum, the game cards are made of ivory and precious stones, and they were played in royal courts of Safavid monarchs, ISNA reported on Monday.

Moreover, the cards bear miniature paintings of kings, viziers, and other courtiers and individuals as well as objects such as crowns and swords.

In the early sixteenth century, Iran was united under the rule of the Safavid reign, the greatest dynasty to emerge from Iran in the Islamic period. The Safavids descended from a long line of Sufi shaikhs who maintained their headquarters at Ardabil, in northwestern Iran. In their rise to power, they were supported by Turkmen tribesmen known as the Qizilbash, or redheads, on account of their distinctive red caps.

Police seize haul of relics from antique dealers

TEHRAN- Iranian authorities have confiscated more than 300 historical objects from four antique dealers in Lenjan county of Isfahan province, where they reside.

"Over 300 historical relics were discovered and seized from the dealers after police were informed of their illegal activities," CHTN quoted Abdolreza Bafrani, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage, as saying on Monday.

In the form of buyers of historical relics and with the permission of the judiciary, a team of police officers caught them red-handed and seized significant quantities of historical objects, the official explained.

The relics include pottery, gold, silver, and copper coins, as well as a number of sculptures, he noted.

These objects are the first significant historical discoveries made in the Central Plateau of Iran in the last two months, he added.

To determine their age and originality, the relics are handed over to the county's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department for further examination and evaluation by experts, he said.

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

Prime destinations: top 10 places to go in the city of Tabriz

From page 1 ▶ Here is a selection of the top 10 places to visit in the historical city and its surroundings:

Masjed-e Kabud

Constructed in the 14th century, Masjed-e Kabud (the Blue Mosque of Tabriz) is known as the Turquoise of Islam due to its lavishly-decorative blue tiles.

An earthquake in 1772 severely damaged the place of worship, which was once one of the most magnificent mosques in the world. Restoration work is going on to this day, and some of the mosaics are still incredible. The mosque is a bit away from the center, but all taxi drivers will know how to get there.

Bazaar of Tabriz

One of the oldest surviving bazaars in the world, the UNESCO-registered Bazaar of Tabriz comprises labyrinthine vaulted passages full of old shops.

Moreover, the vast bazaar includes many mosques, caravanserais, museums, madrasas (schools), and bathhouses. The importance of Tabriz Bazaar was increased due to being on the Silk Road and it became the most important trade center in the world in the 19th century.

Shahgoli Park

A meeting point of nature and culture, the Shahgoli park is a bit away from the historical core but definitely worth the trek.

There are several food stalls around the park and outside the park's perimeter, and an upscale restaurant in the center of it. An artificial lake rings the park walkway, making it particularly pretty in the evening.



From left to right, a photo combination depicts the rocky village of Kandovan, the UNESCO-registered Bazaar of Tabriz, and Shahgoli Park as some gorgeous travel destinations of Tabriz, northwest Iran.

The park is a Tabrizian favorite come evening time, and a great way to meet locals. Better yet, head there with one of the locals that you'll inevitably meet while wandering around Tabriz.

Rocky village of Kandovan

A spot not-to-be-missed, Kandovan is a small village outside of Tabriz. Kandovan is also known as the "Cappadocia of Iran" due to its spiring troglodyte caves. It is an easy day trip away from Tabriz by public transport.

Located on the foothills of the Sahand mountain range and at 2200 meters of altitude, the 3000-year-old village is famous for the houses carved into rocks.

It is one of the two hand-carved villages in the world that are still inhabited. It is also possible to spend a night at the hotel located in this village and experience sleeping inside a hand-carved house.

Constitutional House

Constitutional House is historically significant as being the headquarters

of the Persian Constitutional Revolution that took place between 1905 and 1911.

It laid the ground for the foundation of the first legislature of Iran during the Qajar era. The movement involved many activists from all around the country including Tabriz.

Arg-e Tabriz

Arg-e Tabriz welcomes those who are interested to visit a centuries-old citadel. However, the original use of this impressive structure is still unknown. Narratives say it is estimated to once be a place of worship.

The mudbrick fort was used for defending the city and storing food and ammunition during the wars between Iran and Russia in the Qajar era (1789-1925) and a large part of it was destroyed at that time.

In terms of architecture, the archway of Arg-e Tabriz is wider than the Archway of Ctesiphon and is one of the significant features of this structure.

Azərbaycan Museum

Collections of rare coins, pottery, statues, epigraphs, and traditional clothes have made Azaribaijan Museum one of the most important museums in the country.

It is the best place for learning about the rich history of the Azerbaijan region and its people.

Maqbaratoshora

Located in the Surkhhab district of Tabriz, Maqbaratoshora (or the Mausoleum of Poets) is where classical and contemporary poets, mystics, and other notable people have been laid to rest.

Many Iranian poets chose the Sorkhab neighborhood for living and wished to be buried there after their death.

Qajar Museum

Qajar Museum was originally the house of Hasan Ali Khan Garroosy, one of the most famous politicians in the Qajar era.

In addition to museum objects, the house itself is a source of charm due to its beautiful architecture, colorful windows, stucco, and mirror work.

Masjed-e Jameh

Located in the UNESCO-registered bazaar, Masjed-e Jameh is one of the most important monuments of the ancient city.

The mosque was originally built during the Seljuk era (1037-1194) being restored in later eras. The place of worship is interesting for the large sea of columns on the interior. It is also interesting for the brickwork on the columns and ceiling. Some say it is reminiscent of the mosque in Granada, Spain.

Works by prominent Iranian painter donated to tourism ministry

TEHRAN - A total of 10 paintings by the celebrated Iranian miniaturist and painter Hossein Behzad (1894 - 1968) have recently been donated to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts by an Iranian national living in France.

Iranian mission in Paris received the works days ago before it surrenders them to Tehran's Hossein Behzad Museum, which is affiliated with the ministry of tourism.

The museum received the works under the will of the late art lover (and previous owner) Iraj Mojallal during a special ceremony on Sunday, IRNA reported.

"Undoubtedly, this event highlights the level of trust Iranians living abroad place in the diplomatic apparatus in the Foreign Ministry," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said during the ceremony.

"Having the opportunity to preserve our country's cultural heritage and to collect its parts and pieces of Iranian identity is an honor for us," he added.

Trying to collect cultural and artworks that are sometimes scattered around the world is an important task for the ministry, he noted.



He also mentioned that Iran and Iranians have a right to protect their identity.

For his part, Morteza Adibzadeh, the director of museums and historical properties at the tourism ministry said that Iran's Foreign

Ministry and tourism ministry worked together on the transfer of these 10 paintings to Tehran.

The works will be displayed at Behzad Museum along with his other works for the public as per Mojallal's will, he added.

Behzad Museum was established in 1994 at the Sadabad Cultural-Historical Complex on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Hossein Behzad. Behzad's paintings, donated by his son Parviz, are on display at the museum.

Born in Isfahan, Behzad was interested in the art of painting since he was a child. He is known as one of the most renowned contemporary painters in Iran.

He was the son of Fazlollah Esfahani, a prominent watercolor painter, and pen case maker. He had a very painful childhood after his father died. However, he never gave up painting.

He is mostly famous for his innovations in Persian miniature painting. He created his works in large sizes. He also used shading for subjects in his works for the first time in this genre.

Behzad visited Europe and America several times and his paintings were showcased in several exhibits on the continents.

24 tourism projects ready for inauguration in northern Iran

TEHRAN - A total of 24 tourism-related projects, worth 4.9 trillion rials (\$18.6 million) are scheduled to come on stream in the northern province of Golestan, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The projects will be inaugurated to mark the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, which is known as the Ten-Day Fajr celebrations (this year from February 1 to 11), CHTN quoted Rahman Farmani as saying on Monday.

They include handicrafts workshops, travel agencies, eco-lodge units, traditional restaurants, and tourism complexes, the official added.

The projects are estimated to generate over 750 job opportunities upon their inauguration, he noted.

Back in January, the official announced that some 31 tourism-related projects, worth 209 billion rials (\$741,000) were implemented across the province during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021).

Golestan offers very valuable capabilities and attractions for tourism, cultural heritage, and handicrafts, and has always attracted tourists due to its diverse climate and proximity to Mashhad,

the official added.

The expansion of the infrastructure of areas with tourism potential in the province will lead to more travelers staying in these areas in the coming years, he noted.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus - a one-millennium-old brick tower - amongst its most famous. Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

According to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, over 2,400 tourism-related projects were underway across the country with a total estimated cost of 1,370 trillion rials (around \$32 billion).

Iran 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.

Rock-carved inscription, stairs discovered in southern Iranian plain

TEHRAN - Cultural heritage personnel, during their routine inspections, have discovered a rock-carved inscription and some rock-hewn stairs in Marvdasht plain.

Situated in Fars province, the southern Iranian plain is home to the UNESCO-registered sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae as well as tens of other magnificent structures.

The inscription measuring 100 by 75 centimeters bears Nas'taliq scripts, which is the predominant style of Persian calligraphy during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Experts affiliated with the ministry of cultural heritage and tourism have been dispatched to the region to conduct research, ISNA reported on Monday.

Persian language, also called Farsi, is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian



language family. Old Persian, spoken until approximately the 3rd century BC, is attested by numerous inscriptions written in cuneiform, most notable of which is the great monument of Darius I at Bisotun, western Iran. Middle Persian, spoken from the 3rd century BC to the 9th century CE, is represented by numerous epigraphic texts of Sasanian kings, written in Aramaic script;

there is also varied literature in Middle Persian embracing both the Zoroastrian and the Manichaean religious traditions. Pahlavi was the name of the official Middle Persian language of the Sasanian empire, according to Britannica.

The ancient region, known as Pars (Fars), or Persis, was the heart of the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great and

had its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC. Alexander the Great defeated the Achaemenian army at Arbela in 331 and burned Persepolis apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

Persis became part of the Seleucid kingdom in 312 after Alexander's death. The Parthian empire (247 BC- 224 CE) of the Arsacids (corresponding roughly to the modern Khorasan in Iran) replaced the Seleucids' rule in Persis during 170-138 BC. The Sasanid Empire (224 CE-651) had its capital at Istakhr. Not until the 18th century, under the Zand dynasty (1750-79) of southern Iran, did Fars again become the heart of an empire, with its capital at Shiraz.

Envoy speaks proudly of Iran's technological advancement

TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador to Thailand, Seyed Reza Nobakhti, says the country has made significant progress in the field of technology so that it is ranked fourth in the world in nanotechnology and twelfth in biotechnology.

While Iran is known for its crude oil exports, Tehran has become actively involved in the nanotechnology, pharmaceutical, and health sectors, Nobakhti said in an interview with the Bangkok Post published on February 7.

"Right now, Iran's nanotechnology is ranked fourth in the world -- behind the US, China and India -- and biotechnology is ranked twelfth. Now, we have more than 800 nano- and biotechnology productions," he added.

Iran is known to be a major exporter of oil to Thailand, despite the economic sanctions imposed on it by the West.

Now, Tehran wants to expand the cooperation between the two nations beyond the petrochemical industry, the ambassador said, adding that there are plenty of opportunities to expand cooperation between Iran and Thailand.



"Currently, there are two projects where the experts from Iran and Thailand are working together. We have also signed a biotechnology-center MoU with Thailand," he added, referring to an MoU signed on March 1 last year between the National Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (NIGEB) under the National Science and Technology Development Agency and the National Institute of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (NIGEB) of Iran.

Iran's technological capacity has allowed it to churn out advanced ma-

chinery, such as Sena, a telesurgery system that launched in 2015. Indonesia, the ambassador added, recently purchased two telesurgery robots.

"The quality [of Iranian systems] is comparable to products made by U.S. companies, but ours are three times cheaper," he said.

The ambassador said the fact that Iran has two home-grown Covid-19 vaccines, named Cov-Iran Barekat and SpikoGen, shows Iran has the potential to become the Middle East's hub of medical and wellness tourism -- an aspiration that mirrors

Thailand's goal to become Southeast Asia's health hub.

"Open heart surgery may cost a million baht in Thailand, but in Iran, you would only need to pay around 150,000 baht, even in the most developed hospitals," he said.

He said Iran also has many competent medical professionals, one of the most prominent of whom is Majid Samii, a neurosurgeon living in Germany who is still often asked to perform complex procedures back in Iran.

Beyond the health sector, Iran is seeking Thailand's cooperation in combatting drug trafficking.

Though Thailand's trade with Iran has suffered under the U.S. sanctions regime, Bangkok and Tehran continue to have a good relationship, especially between businesses that continue to trade using proxies and other indirect channels. "We import rice, farm produce, and computer parts from Thailand," he said.

He said the U.S. sanctions have discouraged Thai officials from engaging with their Iranian counterparts, calling the sanctions "unilateral, not universal".

Iran developing two vaccines against Omicron

From page 1 ► Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi has announced the beginning of a new wave of coronavirus pandemic, as the number of infected people with the Omicron variant is surging.

The minister urged more caution against the disease and said getting booster vaccinations could play a major role in preventing a fresh surge in the number of deaths and infections from the virus.

Homegrown vaccines

Einollahi has said five coronavirus vaccines have been so far produced domestically.

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

The second Iranian-made vaccine developed by the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute (Razi Cov Pars) started the clinical trial on February 27.

The Iranian-Australian Spikogen vaccine joined the national vaccination process in November 2021. Developed jointly by the Pasteur Institute of



Iran and Cuba's Finlay Vaccine Institute, the Pastu Covac prevented symptomatic disease in people inoculated with three doses by 65 percent and its effectiveness in the prevention of severe disease and hospitalization was 96.5 percent.

Iran is one of the few countries that has all vaccine production platforms, Mohammad Reza Shamsi, former head of the Iranian Food and Drug Administration, said in June.

Meanwhile, World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran Jaffar Hussain said in September that the Organization was collecting the necessary information for the registration and certification of Iranian-made coronavirus vaccines.

Charity opens up 6,000 jobs by reviving industrial units

TEHRAN - Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, has revived 177 industrial and production units and created jobs for 6,069 individuals.

Many of these production units were affected by the outbreak of coronavirus and went into closure and semi-closure, operating at minimum production capacity, Mohammad Torkamaneh, the CEO of Barekat Foundation said.

"The manufacturing and industrial enterprises revived by this foundation are active in various fields of industry, agriculture, technology and engineering, livestock, conversion industries, and packaging.

Revived production units are located in provinces across the country, including Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Kordestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Zanjan, South Khorasan, and North Khorasan," he explained.



To date, the Barekat Foundation has partnered, invested, provided facilities, and supported 850 medium-sized industrial enterprises across the country, creating business opportunities for more than 211,000 people.

To date, the foundation has launched 120,000 community-based projects with a budget of 115 trillion rials (nearly \$425 million) in deprived areas, which has created employment for 360,000 people.

Recently, the Foundation announced to

open up 9,300 jobs for persons with disabilities.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation- the social arm of the organization- with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

Benefactors propose \$102m for school construction

TEHRAN - Benefactors have proposed 28 trillion rials (nearly \$102 million) to be included in the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (March 2022-March 2023) for building and renovating schools, Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said.

School-building donors allocated more than 30 trillion rials (nearly \$111 million) to construct educational places nationwide in the last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020-March 2021), which has doubled this year.

Since 2017, the government has contributed more than 60 trillion rials (nearly \$218 million) to school-building donors, he

added.

"Brick-by-brick" national plan started early last year (March 2020 - March 2021), aiming to attract public participation for school construction in deprived areas even by buying a brick.

Iran has many school-building benefactors amounting to 650,000 people inside and 1,000 people outside the country.

A total of 36 trillion rials (nearly \$133 million) has been allocated to renovate the schools nationwide over the past 8 years, Seyed Mohammad-Ali Afshani, former head of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said.

According to Nasser Ghofli, the director of the School-Build-



ing Donors Association, 400 school-building charities have been registered in the country so far.

107,000 schools need renovation nationwide

There are some 107,000 schools nationwide with 530,000 classes, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards, accounting for 30 percent of the schools nationwide.

Rakhshanimehr said in August 2020 that some 30 percent of the country's schools have been constructed by school-building benefactors and there are 450 school-building charities in Iran.

Iran has many school-building benefactors amounting to 650,000 people inside and 1,000 people outside the country.

About 10 percent of charitable schools are built with the participation of charities abroad. This is a valuable asset, which should be promoted.

The Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools started operating in the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), which received a budget of 8.5 trillion rials (about \$32 million).

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Special plan prepared to attract overseas Iranian researchers

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

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

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

طرح ویژه برای جذب پژوهشگران ایرانی مقیم خارج

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

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

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

COVID-19 UPDATES ON FEBRUARY 7

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| New cases | 39,819 |
| New deaths | 104 |
| Total cases | 6,619,085 |
| Total deaths | 132,934 |
| New hospitalized patients | 2,706 |
| Patients in critical condition | 2,615 |
| Total recovered patients | 6,171,587 |
| Diagnostic tests conducted | 45,505,835 |
| Doses of vaccine injected | 135,705,646 |



FEBRUARY 8, 2022

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Our affairs are attached to the destiny decreed by Allah, even our best plans may lead us to destruction.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:18 Evening: 17:58 Dawn: 5:33 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:58 (tomorrow)

Hafez and “rendi”

Part 6

Figures of authenticity

The dispossessed: Hafez describes himself more than once as a beggar (gada). He is the beggar who retreats from society to sit alone in a corner (gada-ye gusheh-neshin).

He is the beggar about town (gada-ye shahr), transformed into a host of high society (mir-e majles) and possessor of treasures by the patronage of “the friend” (doost).

On the social scale, beggars occupy the lowest rung, and as such are often contrasted to the king (padeshah, shahan, soltan, khosrovan, etc.), as well as to Korah, proverbial possessor of treasure.

The work of pleasure and drunkenness (aysh o masti) earns the beggar’s way from penury (tangdasti) to riches. He who begs at the Sufi hermitage (khanagah) may find within the Magian monastery (dayr-e moghan) what enriches and empowers the heart.

The beggar of love is in no need of the reward of the eight levels of paradise, so both rend and gada will settle for the Magian monastery, rather than accumulate the good works (padash-e amal) that guarantee entrance into the palace of heaven (qasr-e ferdows).

Once in the tavern (maykada), wine makes the beggar ruler of the celestial spheres, and so, though kings enjoy their treasures of gold, beggars enjoy everlasting contentment.

But the beggar (gada) should not just indiscriminately demand baksheesh. The beggars in the kharabat must not forget God and his blessings in a rush for alms, but must honor true patrons with faithful service (bandagi). True poverty (faqr) is a state of equilibrium and dignity, a freedom from pretension, which Hafez longs to attain.

Others are to be pitied for their poor estate: the faqir, the meskin, the mofles and the lover. The faqir in his poverty lacks not only money, but also social status, and thus is on the opposite end of the social scale from the respected (mohtashem) and wealthy (ghani).

Though he is weak and emaciated, one should not look upon the faqir with contempt, for he holds the position of true power, inasmuch as those covered by the dust of true poverty (faqr) and contentment possess a greater kingdom than all the dust that alchemy could turn to gold.

A peer of the poor faqir is the pitiful meskin. The stranger has no social network to rely upon, and hence is a helpless outsider (meskin gharib). Likewise, if those to whom you turn in appeal do not come to your aid (faryad-ras), you are left lowly and alone (meskin), through no fault or sin of your own; even though sometimes falling in love makes one pitiful asheq-e meskin, lovers have no recourse but to be pitiful.

Frequently, Hafez appeals to our sense of pity by describing his own heart or persona as meskin, though it is only the saqi who takes pity (meskin-navaz) and ministers to the meskin with liquid caresses.

The mofles, on the other hand, is a tragic

figure, done in by venial sin. Frequenting the house of wine (maykada) may reduce one to the sotted rags of a mofles, or unrequited love may reduce one to wretchedness (asheq-e mofles).

Hafez is made poor in his pursuit of the ruby-lipped beauties of Shiraz, like a hobo (mofles) hoping for Korah’s treasure. Of course, it is not simply a failure to attain high estate that mars the lover’s reputation.

The pious blame not only drunkards, but those madly in love, for both types of inebriation threaten the sober stability of the social order.

However, Hafez has a guru in love (morshed-e eshq) who has given him carte blanche to be at the ruins (kharabat), so we should not blame him (malamat ma- kon) for his ruined state (kharabi), whether brought on by wine or a winsome face.

Wine and the characters at the kharabat: Drinking is of course forbidden in Islam, but the prohibition against wine was not always observed by all members of all classes (for the legal and symbolic status of wine in Islamicate societies); the wine banquets of shahs and sultans are celebrated from the earliest period of Persian poetry, and travelers to Iran between the Safavid period and the 19th century, such as Tavernier, confirm that there was no shortage of wine in Persia.

The semiotics of wine was important to poetry composed in Islamic lands at least since the Abbasid period, assuming a special importance in Sufi verse.

Hafez himself bitterly rails against the closing of the wine taverns under Shah-Shoja, so wine would seem to be a politically and mystically charged, as well as illicit, beverage in the poetics of Hafez.

Wine drinking takes place outside the city walls, beyond the pale of the civilized world, in the ruins, kharabat, which house the wine taverns (maykhana, may-kada).

Though in Abbasid poetry (especially Abu Nowas) the ruins were often a Christian space of wine sellers, Hafez associates the ruins primarily with Zoroastrians and/or antinomian Muslim characters.

For Hafez, the ruins are a Magian domain (kharabat-e moghan), and in the Magian cloister (dayr-e moghan) one drinks undiluted wine, enjoys the languid eyes (narges-e mast) and presence of the beloved (yar), and warms the heart with the eternal flame of love.

This dayr-e moghan is a paradisiacal pagan realm where the poet can enjoy good fortune and release, where he surpasses the state of the Sufi in his holy cloister (sawme’a) and in which, ironically, he sees the very light of God.

The proprietor of the convivial atmosphere of the wine tavern is the pir-e moghan, Magian elder, and the one who pours the libations is the mogh-bacheh, the Magian ephebe. Perhaps this reflects a residual memory of soma, the ritual intoxicant of ancient Zoroastrianism, but more directly, it is the paradise on earth, achieved through the pre-Islamic and native national religious tradition which does not outlaw wine.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

To be continued

Director says “The Situation of Mehdi” documents operations Badr, Kheibar

From Page 1 ▶ “In our search, we found numerous uniforms with blood stains and pollution from chemical weapons,” he said

“We conducted extensive research, collecting numerous interviews carried out with the relevant officials and commanders since the 1980s. I was completely faithful to the documents and never altered the information,” Hejazifar noted.

The film also gives details about Bakeri’s brother, Hamid, who was killed during Operation Kheibar. The brothers were born in Miandoab, West Azarbaijan Province, where people speak Azarbaijani, and the 31st Shura Division under Bakeri was from the Azarbaijan region.

Consequently, Hejazifar had a difficult job assembling a cast of actors who spoke Azarbaijani. Hejazifar and his brother, who were born in Khoy in West Azarbaijan, star as Mehdi and Hamid.

“The 31st Shura Division was the division of Azarbaijani volunteers with only two Persian-speaking members... therefore I had to remain faithful to this fact,”



Director/actor Hadi Hejazifar attends a press conference after a screening of his directorial debut “The Situation of Mehdi” in Tehran at the 40th Fajr Film Festival on February 6, 2022. (ISNA/Amir Kholusi)

Hejazifar said.

He noted, “It was necessary to make such a film to awaken officials to issues facing the country.

“The Situation of Mehdi” has been produced at Sima Films, a film production studio affiliated with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), which is scheduled to broadcast a series

adaptation of the film in the public premiere of the film.

The 31st Shura Division conducted numerous operations, including Beit ol-Moqaddas, Wa al-Fajr 1, 2, 3, 4, and Kheibar. Bakeri was ultimately martyred while under siege by Iraqi forces during Operation Badr in 1985.

His brother, Hamid, and some other soldiers were martyred

earlier in the heart of the battlefield during Operation Kheibar. His men informed him of the martyrdom by walkie-talkie, so a group was assigned to bring back Hamid’s body from the area. However, Mehdi asked the group to halt, and then told them, “They all are my brothers; if you can bring them all back then bring Hamid back, too.”

Bulgarian troupe performs story from Persian epic Shahnameh at Fajr



Bulgarian director Elena Panayotova’s troupe for “Shahnameh: A Story of Zal”. (Facebook/Elena Panayotova)

TEHRAN – A Bulgarian troupe performed a story from the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of Persian poet Ferdowsi, in Tehran on Sunday during the 40th Fajr

International Theater Festival.

“Shahnameh: A Story of Zal” was directed by Elena Panayotova at Sangalaj Theater.

The play tells the mythical story of Zal, a son who is born to King Sam but the baby has hair as white as snow. Sam thinks his son is either an old man or a demon and orders the baby to be taken to the foothills of the Alborz Mountains and left there.

Zal is found by the magical Simorgh, the phoenix-like bird with red and gold feathers who has her nest on the summit of the mountain. She carries the baby to her next and brings him up as her own.

Some years later King Sam is reminded in a haunting dream how badly he has behaved towards his son. Sam feels remorse and sets out to the Alborz Mountains to see if his son might still be alive.

He finds his son a grown handsome young man,

well brought up by the bird. Zal doesn’t want to leave the Simorgh, but she gives him one of her feathers and tells him if he is ever in trouble he must burn the feather and she will come to his aid.

He is reestablished as an Iranian ruler and falls in love with the Arab princess Rudabeh, who marries the greatest Iranian hero.

The story raises questions about power, love, truth and humanity, through which we gain wisdom and understanding of the human soul and spirit.

The performance was attended by Bulgarian Ambassador Nikolina Kuneva and several Iranian cultural officials.

After the performance, Kuneva talked about 125 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and Bulgaria and hoped that programs such as the performance would help widen the cultural ties between the two countries.

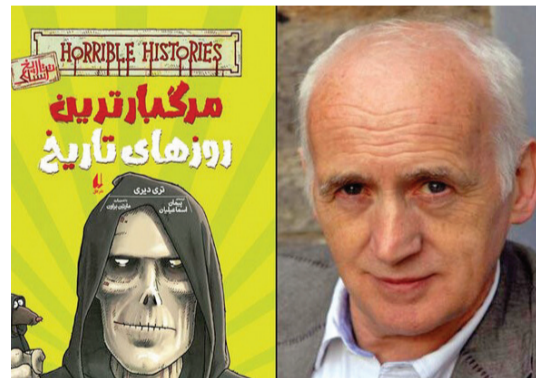
“Deadly Days in History” from “Horrible Histories” comes to Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – A Persian translation of “Deadly Days in History” from Terry Deary’s series “Horrible Histories” has come into Iranian bookstores.

Payman Esmailian is the translator of the book published by Ofoq with its original illustrations by Martin Brown.

“Deadly Days in History” is the most awful story of the “Horrible Histories” series yet. Deary and Brown take a whirlwind tour through the most dreadful, disastrous and deadly days in the whole of horrible history, from the grim Great Fire of Rome to the vile St Valentine’s Day Massacre, leaving the gory bits in and the boring bits out.

Terry’s father, Billy, was a



A combination photo shows writer Terry Deary and the Persian edition of his book “Deadly Days in History”.

butcher in Hendon, Sunderland, and his mother, Freda, was the manageress of a clothing shop. He worked many years in his father’s butcher shop as a boy.

A former actor, stage director and drama teacher, Deary began writing when he was 29.

His “Horrible Histories” series of books are popular among children for their disgusting details, gory information and humorous pictures and among adults for getting children interested in history. Books in the series have been widely translated into other

languages and imitated.

A cartoon series has been made of the series of books and was shown on CITV for a period in 2002.

The first series of a live-action comedy sketch show of the same name was shown on CBC in 2009 and a second series is due.

Terry is also known widely throughout children and adult reading groups alike for his “True Stories” series.

He received an Honorary Doctorate of Education from the University of Sunderland in 2000. His numerous accolades also include the Blue Peter “Best Nonfiction Author of the Century” Award in the UK.

Mind reading in “Without the Father Name”

In the book “Without the Father Name”, which has been published by Jamkaran publication, the author, Seyyed Meysam Mousaviyan, seems to have already discovered readers’ mind and their predictions of the story, so he tried to surprise them with a completely different storyline. Choosing such a subject with all the details of the historical events in the Pahlavi era would make the readers want to finish the whole book in a day.

Without any introduction or explanation, the story begins right in the middle of the adventure with a vague atmosphere, and raises many questions for the readers that keep them reading to find their answers.

The story goes on with monologues and dialogues, and what makes it more interesting is how every character’s tone is different. Each character has a tone based on his or her

personality, so reading it, you can recognize each of them without even remembering the name of that character.

Characters’ stories

They are different characters in the story that continuously affect each other in various times and places, and that’s why the story seems so vivid and real. The main feature of this book is creativity and breaking some traditions, like the main character who has a negative role and how the author has written about him with even trying to reduce the darkness of this character’s personality. Another feature of this book is that the author has given a lot of information about the Pahlavi era.

Historical novel

In writing a historical novel, authors have always faced some limitations and questions,



on the other hand, the readers also get confused to find the differences between novels and documentary novels because they want to find things they read in a historical novel in the real history, yet, writing a historical novel is still an art because authors have to find events with documents and bring it into a story.