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Report 

Russia: "U.S. needs a war at any price"

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, has denounced reports of U.S. plans to deploy thousands of extra troops near Russian borders saying "the hysteria of the White House is more revealing than ever. The Anglo-Saxons need a war. At any price", amid escalating tensions over Ukraine.

Maria Zakharova says "provocations, disinformation and threats" are the preference of both America and it's allies to solve problems.

Zakharova added that "a roller of the American military-political machine is ready to go through people's lives again. The whole world is watching how militarism and imperial ambitions expose themselves".

The statements by the Russian official comes as reports have emerged of the Pentagon plans to send an additional 3,000 troops to Eastern Europe.

The troops will (according to an anonymous American official who spoke to reporters ahead of an official announcement) link up with the thousands of soldiers already stationed in the region. ▶ Page 5

Op-ed 

Iran—America's manufactured enemy

By Professor Hossein Askari

Iran and America were the closest of allies before the Iranian Revolution of 1979, but they are now implacable enemies. How have such allies become such enemies for more than forty years?

It all started with the taking of U.S. embassy hostages in 1979. This was a time of fervent nationalism in Iran and of fear that the Shah would return to rule again as he had done in the 1953 CIA-MI6 engineered coup. While it was the seed of Iranian-U.S. enmity, it was further fueled by the government's acceptance of the taking of hostages by students.

The embassy hostage taking was followed by 444 days of nightly reminders to Americans on American news networks. And every time Iran came up in the news, there were images of the hostages and chants of "death to America" to remind Americans of Iran's transgression and its rhetoric. Americans felt helpless and humiliated by Iran as the media and partisan politicians were beating the drums of hate and conflict. There would be a price to pay! ▶ Page 5

Report 

Social distancing: 8 resorts where the slopes are less skied

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — As you may know, Iranian land is covered with chains of jagged, low, or towing mountains some of which are comparable with those in the Alps.

Iran is home to some world-renowned ski resorts. Also, it embraces many countless below-the-radar resorts that offer powder-chasers plenty of challenge amid a winter of social distancing.

Apart from COVID restrictions, some experienced skiers and snowboarders are in favor of below-the-radar resorts; recognizing benefits such as limited distractions from time spent on the slopes, fewer fellow powder seekers, shorter lift lines, more reasonably priced tickets, and lodging.

In times of coronavirus, many leisure activities are subject to special safety measures and regulations. With many ups and downs, a fear of coronavirus infection is still with us, even the full-vaccinated ones.

Here are eight under-the-radar ski resorts that offer you a good time to avoid crowds and hang with the family. ▶ Page 6



The Soldiers of Ruhollah

TEHRAN - Imad Mughniyeh is now a martyr but his legacy lives on. Fourteen years after his martyrdom, Mughniyeh's legacy continues to serve as a guiding principle for millions of fighters in the Resistance Axis across the West Asia region.

Mughniyeh, also known as al-Hajj Radwan, first rose to prominence during and after the consequential 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, which saw Israel getting a taste of defeat for the first time in its decades-long history.

In the blistering summer of that year, few people had expected Lebanon would trounce Israel, which enjoyed unwavering military support from the United States and other Western powers. Israel had much boasted about the invincibility of its armed forces. And its track record of wars with some Arab states left little doubt about who would win the war.

But Israel was to get a big surprise. After 33 days of bloody war, it was clear that the days of Israel scoring military victories were over. Israel's armed forces launched an all-out attack against Lebanon with the purpose of achieving a swift victory.

Israeli air forces targeted Lebanese infrastructure including power plants, Beirut Airport, roads and, bridges, killing dozens of Lebanese people. The war began on July 12, 2006, and lasted 33 days, when the warring sides agreed to an UN-brokered ceasefire on August 14 in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1701. ▶ Page 3

Pakistan eager for establishing shipping line to Iran

TEHRAN - Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini has said Pakistan is willing to establish a shipping line to Iranian ports, the portal of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) reported.

"Pakistan is interested in launching a shipping line between the two countries' ports, but there are obstacles and problems that need to be resolved in this regard; the Iranian side is ready to allocate vessels for this line provided that the Pakistani side agrees to pay the costs for these vessels," Hosseini said in

an online meeting with PMO Head Ali-Akbar Safaei on Saturday.

Referring to the interest of the Pakistani Minister of Maritime Affairs in cooperating with Iran for resolving maritime issues, launching shipping lines, and joint cooperation of Gwadar and Chabahar ports, Hosseini said: "Pakistanis are currently considering launching shipping lines with Iran, Oman, and UAE."

Further in this meeting, Safaei emphasized the need to strengthen maritime transport

and logistics cooperation with countries in the region and especially neighbors, saying: "To this end, we have had a series of meetings with Iranian ambassadors in neighboring countries and ambassadors of these countries in Iran to discuss cooperation in various port and maritime sectors."

The official noted that the Ports and Maritime Organization is ready to provide the necessary assistance in the field of maritime transport for promoting the exports of energy carriers to Pakistan. ▶ Page 4

"The Situation of Mehdi" tops on leaked Fajr Film Fest winners list

TEHRAN - War drama "The Situation of Mehdi" was crowned best at the 40th Fajr Film Festival on Friday night although everyone at the awards ceremony already knew the results since the winners list had been leaked.

Directed by Hadi Hejazifar, the film portrays the life story of Mehdi Bakeri, the chief of IRGC 31st Shura Division that carried out several major operations during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

"We are really happy that our film was noticed... most of the efforts for making the film were made by Hadi Hejazifar and I feel proud of being beside him in this film," producer Habibollah Vaalinejad said after accepting the Crystal Simorgh for best film.

As the closing ceremony of the festival was underway at Tehran's Milad Tower on Friday night, the organizers found that the winners list had been published earlier on a Persian news website. ▶ Page 8



Fajr Music Festival pays tribute to General Soleimani
The IRIB Symphonic Orchestra performs the symphonic poems "Arvand" and "The Soldier" in memory of Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani during the opening ceremony of the 37th Fajr Music Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on February 11, 2022.
The symphonic poems, both produced at the Art and Cultural Organization of the Tehran Municipality, were also performed by the orchestra at the hall to commemorate the second martyrdom anniversary of the former IRGC Quds Force chief who was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

Iran's Moameri appointed Italy sitting volleyball coach

TEHRAN - Iranian coach Alireza Moameri has been appointed as new head coach of Italy sitting volleyball team.

As coach of Iran, he helped the Persians win two gold medals in 2008 and 2016 and a silver medal at the 2012 Paralympic Games.

Moameri has most recently coached Thailand's men's and women's sitting volleyball teams.

The 67-year-old coach has also coached in the several Iranian volleyball clubs.

Under his leadership, Paykan have won title in the Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship.

Moameri has also served as head coach of Pakistan volleyball team.

Moameri was the former coach and of some clubs and was the coach and technical

manager of the Iranian national volleyball team (indoor normal team). He holds a FIVB Level-III coaching certificate. He is also the first VIS expert and scoutman in Iran normal volleyball, who has trained several enthusiasts in this field for volleyball. He has participated in volleyball coaching courses of in Hungary and the Netherlands.

Some \$943m proposed for hard-to-treat diseases

TEHRAN - A total of 250 trillion rials (around \$943 million) has been proposed in the budget bill for the next year (starting March 21) to support and treat patients with hard-to-treat diseases, IRIB reported on Saturday.

For the first time in the budget bill, a fund has been set up to support patients with such diseases, Hamidreza Haji Babaei, chairman of the planning and budget committee of the parliament (Majlis), said.

Necessary coordination was made with the Ministry of Health and the government so that by the next year, patients suffering from hard-to-treat diseases would have no problems in terms of financing treatment, he stated.

Rare diseases prevalence

According to the statistics published in 2019, the number of rare diseases identified in Iran has reached 332 types of diseases and about 4,750 people are covered by the Rare Diseases Foundation of Iran.

Out of a thousand population, 2 people get a rare disease, while the prevalence can be curbed by changing people's culture, screening, identifying, preventing the births, and raising awareness.

According to WHO, rare diseases are often serious, chronic, and life-threatening. The European Union (EU) definition of a rare disease is one that affects fewer than 5 in 10,000 people. At present, more than 6000 rare diseases are known; around 80 percent of them are genetic disorders and half of them occur during childhood. ▶ Page 7

MP: West must adhere to its future commitments

TEHRAN — A member of the parliament said on Saturday morning that Iran enjoys a strong position in the region and the larger world, and this has made the Westerners realize that they are facing a strong and powerful Iran.

In a short interview with Mehr, Nasrollah Pejmanfar stated, "During the past years, the rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been ignored by some Western countries. Therefore, we must learn from the bitter experiences of the past and not allow those events to be repeated."

Negotiations are underway in Vienna to revive the 2015 nuclear deal that was ditched by former U.S. President Donald Trump. Though negotiators have made significant progresses, they are still at odds on certain key issues.

The negotiations are taking place between Iran and the five other remaining parties to the nuclear deal, namely Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain. The U.S. is participating in the talks indirectly as Iran refuses face-to-face talks with the U.S. until Washington returns to the agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The talks are coordinated by EU political director Enrique Mora. ▶ Page 2

Deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy heads to Vienna to join nuclear talks



TEHRAN— Mehdi Safari, the Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy, traveled to Austria on Saturday to join the Iranian negotiating team in the Vienna talks.

Safari, a former Iranian ambassador to Russia and China, was also present at the beginning of the seventh round of the Vienna talks that started on November 29 last year.

While in Vienna, Safari met with a number of Austrian officials on the sidelines of the nuclear talks.

After meeting with the Austrian deputy economy minister as well as central bank and insurance chiefs, Safari told IRNA that the Austrian side is interested and optimistic in developing economic relations with Iran.

Regarding the content of his last meeting with the Austrian deputy economy minister, the Iranian diplomat said that the two sides agreed to set a 5-to-10-year roadmap for economic cooperation.

It was also agreed that Austria would cooperate closely with the Iranian ambassador in Vienna. The background work is done, according to Safari.

The eighth round of talks began on December 26 in Vienna. It is one of the longest rounds of talks so far. Participants are busy drafting the text of an agreement to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. They should agree on some key issues.

The previous six rounds of talks were held during the administration of Hassan Rouhani. They started in April and lasted until June.

The new rounds of the Vienna were

resumed after Ebrahim Raisi took office as president in Iran.

Speaking on the sidelines of President Raisi's meeting with foreign ambassadors residing in Tehran on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said the Vienna talks are a big litmus test for the United States.

"Today in Vienna there is a big test for the United States and the West to show their real behavior to the international community," Amir Abdollahian said.

He stressed that the time for concluding the negotiations will be determined by the will of the Western parties to fully honor their obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal.

The Iranian diplomats in Vienna are negotiating to lift the oppressive sanctions, the top diplomat asserted.

He added, "We are present at the negotiating table with seriousness, plan and initiative, and we are determined to reach a good agreement."

Meanwhile, Iran's Supreme National Security Council secretary said on Wednesday that the United States is not united in making a "political decision" to advance the ongoing negotiations in Vienna intended to revive the 2015 nuclear deal ditched by the Trump administration.

"Voices from the US government show that there is no coherence in the country to make political decisions in the direction of advancement in the #ViennaTalks. The US administration cannot pay for its internal disputes by violating #Iran's legal rights," Ali Shamkhani tweeted on Wednesday.

we will not react to their weak step," Pejmanfar remarked.

Pejmanfar who represents Mashhad in the parliament pointed out that the Americans have not shown their goodwill to the Iranian delegation so far.

"U.S. officials should show us their goodwill in their proposals, and their proposals should be aimed at lifting all sanctions on Iran. The U.S. must prove to us that it wants to change the wrong way of its past," he asserted.

Pejmanfar further noted that the Americans need the Vienna talks and an agreement more than Iran.

"Despite the fact that the sanctions have put a lot of pressure on our nation, but with perseverance and resistance we were able to circumvent the sanctions. The United States and the West cannot increase sanctions on Iran more than they do now, and they imposed all types of sanctions on Iran," the legislator stated.

He concluded by noting that Iran was able to sell its oil, buy its basic goods under sanctions and the country's economy became dynamic.

TEHRAN — In an extensive interview with the Global Times published on Thursday, Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzadeh touched on various important points, from a recognition of the Taliban to applauding the "historically glorious and memorable Beijing Winter Olympics."

Keshavarzadeh also underlined the joint Iran-China efforts for regional and global peace and stability.

The envoy also said Iran will ensure a steady supply of oil to China, and has the prospect of enhancing military cooperation with China within the 25-year strategic partnership.

The ambassador also said Iran and China enjoyed splendid civilizations in ancient times.

"In contemporary times, both Iran and China have made much effort to preserve their territorial integrity and sovereignty and their citizens' right to self-governance. China and Iran have always been at the forefront against U.S. hegemony, and share similar views and attitudes on many international and regional issues," the ambassador remarked.

The Global Times conducted the interview with the ambassador as Iran marked the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. "The 1979 Iranian Revolution was a victory for the Iranian people against outside invasion."

He also praised China for its opposition to the unjust U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Responding to a question on the China-Taiwan conflict, the Iranian envoy noted that the China-Iran relationship is "far-reaching" and Iran will not change its policy toward China because of changes in U.S. attitudes, as some countries have done.

"Iran firmly supports China's territorial integrity and its position on Hong Kong and Taiwan-related affairs, which the U.S. has ceaselessly sought to influence," he affirmed.

China is an important player in the global community

Moving to the topic of the 25-year strategic cooperation document between Iran and China, Keshavarzadeh said presently Iran is under no international sanctions aside from U.S. unilateral ones.

"China as an important player in the international community has repeatedly opposed and disavowed such sanctions. China engages in bilateral and international trade relations based on international norms, rules, and regulations, disregarding unilateral U.S. sanctions," the diplomat noted.

He then went on to say that oil supply to China by Iran is only a small part of the comprehensive agreement between the two Asian countries.

'De-dollarization has become a

Envoy: Iran firmly supports China's territorial integrity



trend'

Iran's senior diplomat to Beijing also said important countries such as Russia, Brazil and India are taking steps to use national currencies in their trade as a counterweight to dollar.

"In energy-related international trade agreements, de-dollarization has become a trend. Many other countries including Russia, Brazil, and India are engaging in bilateral trade based on their local currencies, aimed at confronting this unilateral system and U.S.-led bullying that weaponizes the dollar and leverages against other nations. Additionally, it enhances China's role in international trade to overtake the U.S. Naturally, other countries will be inspired to engage in yuan-based trade," Keshavarzadeh predicted.

He went on to say the United Nations arms embargo on Iran expired on October 18, 2020, as agreed upon in Iran's 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Thus, the ambassador said, Iran will be able to engage in military cooperation with other countries, as predicted in the JCPOA.

The ambassador also pointed to the recent military drills that Iran conducted jointly by China and Russia in the Sea of Oman and the northern Indian Ocean, saying, "Both Iran and China attach great importance to the marine safety. The trilateral 'Marine Security Belt' naval exercises jointly executed by China, Iran, and Russia were done in the southern sea of Iran and the Indian Ocean to boost regional and international peace and stability."

He also said, "To ensure the safety of navigation routes, Iran intends to purchase military equipment from China and Russia."

Iran was given membership to the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in September 2021.

"The common threats the SCO members face are terrorism, separatism, and extremism, and it is also the common goal of China and Iran to combat these forces, which needs military support. Military cooperation outside the SCO framework is also likely," he further noted.

Iranian and Chinese military forces have also gotten closer during the COVID-19 pandemic due to mutual support in medical supplies and vaccines, according to Keshavarzadeh.

U.S. intervention has led to chaos in the region

He then went on to criticize Washington's misguided policies, including its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. He also pointed to misguided economic policies which led to the 2008 financial crisis, and a raft of other U.S.-orchestrated policies that will undermine its hegemony.

"The U.S. is a superpower, but unfortunately and ironically, most of the regions and projects in which it has intervened have ended up in chaos with serious consequences. For example, its entry into West Asia was followed by two wars, which brought great disaster to the stability of the regional order and local people," he added.

The envoy went on to say that the Iran-China-Russia alliance is aimed at ensuring regional and international peace and stability, which the U.S. is effectively undermining.

Iran does not agree with all Taliban-led practices in Afghanistan

About a recognition of Taliban by Tehran, Keshavarzadeh said that Iran as a neighbor shares cultural links and long borders with Afghanistan

and supports an inclusive Afghan government that will lead to "national reconciliation, peace, and integrity with all the ethno-political groups and parties fully participatory."

"Though we do not support all Taliban-led governmental practice in Afghanistan, we respect Afghanistan's political structure and developmental paths as determined by Afghan people's sovereign decision-making as long as it is an inclusive government," he added.

The diplomat also said there are now more than 4 million Afghan refugees in Iran.

"Given cultural similarities, we want to help, not interfere," he asserted.

According to the envoy, by honoring a non-interference policy and emphasizing Afghanistan's territorial integrity and sovereignty, both Iran and China reaffirm the right of Afghan people to determine their future political and economic path.

He added that both sides also share similar views on weeding out terrorism in Afghanistan and its manifestations in neighboring countries.

"We are in active communication with China and Russia on this issue. Iran sees China's role in Afghanistan as a constructive one," Keshavarzadeh said.

No one can question Iran's seriousness in Vienna

On the ongoing negotiations in Vienna intended to lift sanction on Iran, the diplomat said in 2015 the world witnessed the U.S. illegal withdrawal from the JCOPA, an agreement that was product of 13 years of negotiations.

"In addition to the goodwill issue, we are now faced with the problem of not crediting the signature of different governments in that country. Meanwhile, as a huge step toward proliferation, the U.S. founded AUKUS," he remarked.

Iran remained fully loyal to the JCPOA for a complete year after the U.S. quit the agreement.

The ambassador said the Islamic Republic did this to give the European signatories to the JCPOA an opportunity to compensate Iran for the U.S. sanctions.

"After the U.S. unlawful withdrawal and the imposition of sanctions, Iran refrained from remedial measures in good faith, and, granting the request of the remaining JCPOA participants and the European Union as the coordinator of the nuclear deal, avoided resorting to the cessation of its commitments under the JCPOA so as to provide the opportunity for other JCPOA participants to compensate for the negative impacts of U.S. withdrawal," he concluded.

MP: West must adhere to its future commitments

From page 1 ► He added that Iran does not accept the unfulfilled obligations of the Western countries and they must adhere to their obligations in the future while negotiating with the Iranian officials in Vienna.

On remarks by the U.S. State Department that some nuclear sanctions on Iran have been suspended, the MP said, "The Americans imagine that they can still use such tactics to bring the Islamic Republic of Iran to the (direct) negotiation table and gain concessions."

Pejmanfar added that the Americans are facing serious challenges in their country and are looking for a way out of this situation.

"They should know that Iran will not back down from its position in the negotiations in any way," he reiterated.

The legislator added that if the sanctions imposed on Iran are completely lifted, Iran will continue its path in the negotiations.

"But if they want to suspend only a part of sanctions on our country,

7300 Days

Injustice

1. The U.S. military is known for its infamous "detention" facilities or rather, torture facilities.

2. The Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp has the lead in human rights violations.

3. The military opened the camp after 9/11 in January 2002.

4. The U.S. considered the facilities outside of its legal jurisdiction to escape legal difficulties.

5. In some cases, prisoners are held for a lifetime. For each of them they spend \$13 million per year.

6. A recent released detainee is a Yemeni citizen. He was put to jail a month after the facility opened.

7. Mansoor Adayfi was part of the majority of Gitmo prisoners who has no ties to the terrorist groups.

8. He had been captive for 7300 days. He even lost the count of years.

9. In an open letter to Biden, he said "It's not difficult, it's not rocket [science], it's not creating a new planet. It's just justice, man. We are asking for justice."

From Page 1 ▶ Lebanon declared victory over Israel. In a televised speech at the time, Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayed Hassan Nasrallah congratulated the Lebanese on “the strategic and divine victory” over Israel. Similarly, regional leaders, including the Emir of Qatar and the then-president of Iran congratulated the Lebanese leaders on their victory over Israel.

The 2006 war was fought differently on the part of Hezbollah while Israel had stuck to its traditional way of fighting – blanket bombardments and land advances. Hezbollah troops employed many tactics that caught Israeli troops by surprise. For instance, Israeli troops thought that they were at war with ghosts. It wasn't clear how they would come out from behind the front line. During the 2006 war, Hezbollah prepared the battleground in such that its forces would go into hiding in trenches and then pop up behind the advancing enemy troops.

The mastermind behind Hezbollah's military tactics was Imad Mughniyeh, who was at the time the



commander of Hezbollah's military wing. Mughniyeh was both a field commander and strategist.

Israel knew full well who was behind its defeat. In the 2006 war, Mughniyeh was on the front line, organizing his forces personally.

His pivotal military role made him a prime target for many world intelligence agencies. All spies in the region were looking for a clue that could lead them to him. But Mughni-

yeh was extremely cautious and strictly adhering to security precautions galore. He was not the one who would tread the same path twice. At the same time, he never had bodyguards or accompanying security detail. A meeting with him was possible only if he okayed.

Mughniyeh was not always Mughniyeh. Sometimes he was Mustafa, other times Mortada among other names. Mughniyeh continued to operate under pseudonyms and in a

convert way until a gray Mitsubishi Pajero went off in the Kafr Sousa neighborhood of Damascus on February 12, 2008. Mughniyeh got martyred in the explosion.

Mughniyeh trained and organized a generation of jihadi and Resistance leaders in the region that continue to operate to this day. His innovative military tactics also live on even after he is no longer among the rank and file of Hezbollah.

He set up military and security infrastructure for the Resistance Axis whose influence stretches beyond Lebanon.

In a 2008 speech, the Hezbollah chief underlined the need for the Islamic Ummah to get acquainted with Mughniyeh, not for the sake of the martyr, but for the sake of itself.

“The right of Hajj Imad Mughniyeh, the martyr, is for this Ummah to know him for its sake, not for him. And it is his right on the Ummah to do justice to him for its sake, not for his sake. And his right upon the Ummah is to draw inspiration from his spirit, lesson and jihad for its sake, not for him,” Nasrallah pointed out.

Anniversary of Islamic Revolution marked in Baghdad, Damascus

TEHRAN – Commemorative ceremonies were held in Baghdad and Damascus to mark the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The Iranian embassy in Baghdad marked Friday the forty-third anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution with a massive public celebration, in the presence of political and cultural figures, including the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Iraj Masjedi, according to U News.

The ceremony began with a recitation of the Holy Qur'an, followed by the national anthems of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, and then a video clip of a choral group, and then an Iraqi poet recited a poem inspired by the occasion.

Masjedi delivered a speech during the ceremony, in which he said, “By God's grace, the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran was established according to Islamic and religious principles in the hands of a distinguished Islamic figure, and this sacred system continued in the hands of [Ayatollah] Seyed Ali Khamenei, who represents the religious authority.”

Masjedi pointed out that the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran was established according to two principles, the first is the republican based on the people and the second is the Islamic one based on religion and the people are the main pillar of the revolution, the system and religion. And Islam is the content of this system.

He added: “The title of our system is to rely on the people and also adopt religious principles. The Islamic Republic extends the hand of friendship and cooperation to all countries with all sincerity and seriousness.”

Masjedi noted, “The Islamic Republic wants its relations to be based on the principle of mutual respect with all countries of the world.”

In Damascus, there were also some celebrations to mark the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. According to U News, a mass celebration was held in the prayer hall of Sayyida Zainab (PBUH) at the invitation of the office of Ayatollah Khamenei to commemorate the victory of the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

The speeches delivered on the occasion praised the greatness of the Islamic revolution that was launched and led by Imam Khomeini and its firm approach in supporting the weak and the oppressed in the face of arrogance.

Iranian Ambassador to Syria Mehdi Sobhani also delivered a speech at the ceremony. The ambassador stated that the Islamic revolution in

Iran was one of the most important events in the last years of the twentieth century and was a comprehensive revolution in all aspects of life.

Sobhani pointed out that the forces of global arrogance have been conspiring against the Islamic Republic from the moment it was launched until today due to its resistance approach, firm support for the oppressed, and its firm position in support of the Palestinian cause.

In an interview with U News, the head of the Jaafari Islamic Council in Syria, Muhammad Ali Al-Miski, congratulated Ayatollah Khamenei, the state and the Iranian people on the victory of the revolution.

He highlighted the scientific status that the Islamic Republic witnessed under the revolution.

He described Iran as a country that exports technology. He also noted that the Islamic revolution transformed the Islamic peoples from defeated peoples into dignified peoples of resistance.

The embassy of Sanaa in Damascus also held an intellectual and political symposium on the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, at the invitation of the Yemeni ambassador in Damascus.

The symposium was attended by intellectual, academic and media personalities and representatives of the Palestinian factions, at the embassy in Damascus, U News reported.

During the symposium, the Cultural Counselor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hamid Reza Esmati, said that the revolution, whose foundations were laid by Imam Khomeini, had taken root and became stronger with Imam Khamenei. And the revolution of the weak remained in the face of the forces of arrogance.

Esmati stressed that the Islamic Revolution is a revolution of pride and dignity in the face of tyranny, pointing out that it stands by the oppressed peoples to achieve their just rights.

The Yemeni ambassador in Damascus, Abdullah Ali Sabri, said in an interview with U News, “We celebrate with the brothers in Iran the revolution because we see that it is a global Islamic revolution, and it is a revolution for the oppressed in all the world and it has supported the Palestinian cause as it established a strong state and an Islamic republic that we cherish and this republic has supported Yemen.”

He pointed out that Iran stood by the oppressed people of Yemen in the



face of the Saudi-American aggression. He stressed that the victory of the Iranian revolution is a victory for the revolution in Yemen.

Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi congratulated the people of Iran and the free people of the world on the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Speaking on Friday in his speech before the Friday prayer sermon, the president described “independence-seeking”, “freedom-seeking”, “justice-seeking” as elements of the revolution and noted, “This revolution is justice-seeking within itself. The element of justice can never be separated from the Islamic Revolution, because within the Islamic Revolution, justice-seeking, anti-oppression and anti-corruption are institutionalized.”

Regarding the characteristics of the despotic regime of the Shah, Raisi said, “That oppressive regime was the full manifestation of tyranny, dictatorship, submission to the dominating powers and arrogance against the will of the people.”

Ayatollah Raisi stated, “The Islamic Revolution came to overthrow this corrupt regime, which was supported by the dominant powers, and to establish a system based on religion and what the people have repeatedly shouted ‘independence, freedom, the Islamic Republic’.”

The president added, “The glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution marked a civilization that was a new civilization in the name of Islam and the Republic, as opposed to the civilizations that formed the polarization of the world.”

Raisi continued, “What is clear is that the slogans of the Islamic Revolution are innate and universal slogans and are related to the nature of all human beings.”

He said, “What the Islamic Revolution is shouting is independence,

national dignity, brotherhood, denial of domination and oppression.”

Ayatollah Raisi added, “We neither seek to dominate anywhere in the world, nor we give up our independence, and we are not willing to oppress anyone in the world; these are among the principles of the Islamic Revolution that are still stable.”

Raisi added, “These values are the ones that people have always emphasized, so you see Iranians everywhere in the world are proud of this revolution. Today, not only the Muslim people of the world, but also the non-Muslim people, but the freedom-loving and justice-loving people of the world, the deprived and the oppressed in all parts of the world, love this revolution.”

He said, “The slogans of the Islamic Revolution are rational slogans, and today not only the great nation of Iran, but also the nations of the world have high hopes for this revolution.”

The president stated, “The revolutionary spirit, vision and action and adherence to these principles are still emphasized by people all over the world.”

The president continued, “The late Imam Khomeini and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution presented a political school in contrast to the political schools of the world, which has some characteristics. The first indicator of this political school is ‘sincerity.’”

Ayatollah Raisi said, “The second point in the political school is ‘attention to the republic and the people.’ The late Imam and the Supreme Leader do not consider people as a political and ceremonial thing.”

The president added, “Today, we are proud that in the popular administration, we have put the republic and the people and justice in the sense that the important goal of the Islamic Revolution is the main axis in the government.”

SPORTS

IPL: Sepahan get back on track

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team got back on track with a 4-1 win over Naft Masjed Soleyman on Matchday 17 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Saturday.



Sepahan sit third in the table with six points behind leaders Esteghlal.

Moslem Mojadami scored an own goal just eight minutes into the match and was sent off in the 22nd minute after receiving a straight red card.

Shariar Moghanlou, Sajad Shahbazzadeh and Reza Shirzaei scored three goals in the second half to seal three points for the Yellows in Isfahan.

Naft Masjed Soleyman's forward Mehran Amiri scored a consolation goal with one minute left.

Padideh suffered a home 3-1 loss against Mes Kerman and Sanat Naft earned a late 1-0 win over Tractor in Abadan.

On Sunday, Gol Gohar will host Fajr Sepasi, Paykan meet Havadar, Foolad face Aluminum, Nas-saji play Persepolis and Esteghlal entertain Zob Ahan.

Esteghlal forward Ghaseminejad joins Gol Gohar

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team forward Amin Ghaseminejad joined Gol Gohar on Saturday.

The 35-year-old player has joined the Sirjan-based football club on loan until the end of season.

Ghaseminejad joined Esteghlal in last year's March but was forced to leave the Blues due to lack of playing time.

Gol Gohar sit seventh in Iran Professional League (IPL), 16 points adrift of leaders Esteghlal.

Persepolis defender Shiri joins Foolad

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team right back Mehdi Shiri joined Foolad on Saturday.

The 31-year-old defender has joined Foolad on Saturday.

Shiri joined Persepolis in 2019 and helped the Reds win three titles in the Iran Professional League.

He was a member of Persepolis football team in the 2020 AFC Champions League, where the Iranian team lost to South Korean team Ulsan Hyundai 2-1 in the final.

Shiri touched the ball in the second half in the area and Ulsan Brazilian forward Junior Negrao found the back of the net from spot.

In a match against Foolad in Iran's Super Cup earlier this week, Shiri was sent off early in the second half after receiving his second yellow card.

Persepolis failed to win Super Cup for the fifth time in a row.

Hassan Maleki appointed India taekwondo team head coach

TEHRAN – Iranian coach Hassan Maleki has been named as new head coach of India taekwondo team.

The Indian sports officials have hired the long-serving trainer for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Iranian coaches Fariborz Askari and Mohammad Bagheri Motamad have previously coached the Indian taekwondo team.

India has invested in sports in the recent years.

Mehdi Taremi scores as Porto draw with Sporting

TEHRAN – Porto football team extended their unbeaten run to 50 matches Friday night.

The Portuguese table-topper battled back from 2-0 down against their title rivals to earn a price-less 2-2 draw at the Estadio do Dragao.

Sporting raced into a 2-0 lead in the first half thanks to goals from Paulinho and Nuno Santos.

Porto halved the deficit just before the half-time interval courtesy of Fabio Vieira's strike and they finally found an equalizer in the 78th-minute of play.

Mehdi Taremi was the man who delivered it, the home side taking advantage of the fact that Sporting were down to 10-men because former Liverpool defender Sebastian Coates picked up a second booking four minutes after the break.

It was a thrilling match all in all, but things descended into chaos at full-time.

The match ended 2-2 and Porto managed to maintain a 6-point difference with Sporting at top of the table, earning a total of 60 points.

Furthermore, there was a brawl between players after the final whistle and the referee showed four red cards – two to Porto and two to Sporting players.

Iran start CAFA U19 Futsal Championship on high

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Afghanistan 10-3 in their opening match of the CAFA U19 Futsal Championship on Saturday.

Five teams will battle for regional bragging rights over five Matchdays at Bishkek's Gazprom Arena, with every CAFA Member Association except for Turkmenistan taking part in the inaugural U19 event.

Played on a round-robin basis, the tournament will not only provide a platform for the region's next generation of senior internationals but deliver competitive preparation for regional and continental competitions to come over the next two years.

Each team will play four matches, with the final Matchday to be held on Saturday, February 19.

Central Asia has long been considered an Asian futsal hotspot, with 12-time continental champions Iran leading the way, while Uzbekistan have reached the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Final on four occasions.

Kyrgyz Republic has reached the semi-finals of the continental finals on three occasions, and Afghanistan were runners-up in the inaugural AFC U-20 Futsal Asian Cup in 2019, while Tajikistan have qualified for the last nine AFC Futsal Asian Cups.

UAE and van Marwijk part ways

The UAE Football Association announced on Saturday the departure of men's national team head coach Bert van Marwijk and the technical team.

The 69-year-old Dutchman was shown the door with two matches remaining for UAE in the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to Qatar. The West Asian side are third in Group A with Islamic Republic of Iran and Korea Republic having already booked their places to the Finals.

“The decision came following a recommendation from the Committee for the national teams and technical affairs,” read a statement from the UAE FA. “A new head coach will be announced in the next few days.”

After a slow start in the AFC Asian Qualifiers that saw them garner three points from their first five matches, UAE claimed consecutive victories against Lebanon and Syria to climb to third in the group.

UAE take on Iraq on March 24 before hosting Korea Republic five days later.

A third place finish will see them advance to a playoff against the third-placed side from Group B, with the winners to play in the Inter-Confederation playoff for a spot in Qatar 2022.

Vienna talks gain steam

TEHRAN – Talks in Vienna continued on Saturday with meetings being held between the various delegations participating in the talks.

On Saturday, Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, held a meeting with head of the Russian delegation Mikhail Ulyanov.

“Met with the chief negotiator of #Iran Dr. A. Bagheri Kani. We discussed in details the way ahead at the #ViennaTalks on #JCPOA,” the Russia diplomat said on Twitter.

Ulyanov also met with chief U.S. negotiator Rob Malley and EU coordinator Enrique Mora. “Met with the #US Special Envoy for Iran Mr. Robert Malley. We discussed the most contentious issues which need to be settled at

the #ViennaTalks on #JCPOA,” Ulyanov noted.

He added, “Met with the #EU Coordinator and Political Directors of France, Germany and U.K. to discuss the way ahead at the #ViennaTalks on #JCPOA.”

Earlier on Saturday, the Russian diplomat said “very intensive” talks in Vienna were under way to bring the 2015 nuclear, formally called the JCPOA, back to life.

“Very intensive diplomatic efforts will continue today in the course of the #ViennaTalks on #JCPOA,” he added.

On Friday afternoon, the delegations from Iran and China held a meeting headed by the top negotiators of the two sides.

Earlier in the day, the nuclear measures and sanctions removal working groups of Iran and the P4+1 held separate meetings at the Palais Coburg Hotel in the Austrian capital, according to Tasnim.

The two sides have bridged some gaps since the talks began last year but differences remain, especially on the issue of U.S. sanctions. Tehran wants all sanctions imposed by the administration of former U.S. president Donald Trump removed and says the issue is its red line.

The eighth round of the negotiations were briefly put on hold as diplomats returned to their capitals for consultations.

Pakistan eager for establishing shipping line to Iran



From page 1 ▶ In terms of energy, Pakistan can be a good market for Iran, and Iran is also interested in exporting oil

and petrochemical products to Pakistan, however, the realization of this goal depends on the Pakistani sides' determination, Safaei said.

Hosseini also referred to his embassy's efforts for the holding of the fourth Iran-Pakistan Joint Maritime and Port Cooperation Committee meeting in the near future, saying: "The two countries have already signed three agreements in the field of maritime cooperation, including maritime search and rescue, maritime cruise certificates and also seafaring certificates for near the coast voyages."

Having up-to-date machinery a must for industrial development: ICCIMA head

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has said having advanced and up-to-date production lines and machinery is the prerequisite for developing export-oriented industries, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Mentioning a meeting of the country's industrial manufacturers with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei on February 1, Gholam-Hossein Shafeie said: "Having employment-generating and export-oriented production requires bridging the gap between the technology level of domestic and

global production lines."

In the meeting with the country's producers the leader had stressed the need to pay attention to "employment-creating and export-oriented production" in order for the country to overcome its economic problems.

According to Shafeie, the decline of the value of the national currency against the U.S. dollar along with the sanctions have prevented domestic producers from upgrading their production lines, and this has created a gap between Iran and the world in terms of technology.

Tavanir supplies solar electricity to 10,000 nomadic households

Tehran - Iran's Power Generation, Distribution and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir) Operator for Rural Electricity Expansion Program Ali Chehel-Amirani says 10,000 nomadic households have been supplied with photovoltaic power stations (known as PV systems), IRIB reported.

"With the indigenization of the knowledge for manufacturing solar panels in the country, so far 10,000 nomadic households have been supplied with solar electricity," Chehel-Amirani said.

The official noted that rural households currently account for over 31 percent of the country's total electricity consumers, saying: "The number of rural electricity subscribers has reached more than 21 million; to supply electricity to this number of subscribers, 25,000 kilometers of power distribution network has been constructed."

According to Chehel-Amirani, before the Islamic Revolution, only 4,367 villages had access to the national electricity network, but with the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the



access of rural areas to electricity increased 15 times, and currently, 57,966 villages are connected to the national power grid. The figure is expected to reach 58,000 by the end of the current fiscal year (March 20), the official said.

The official noted that currently, over 99.7 percent of the country's rural areas have access to the electricity network and the rest will also join the grid over the next four years.

Back in October 2019, the energy ministry had announced the implementation of a program for supplying the country's nomadic

TEHRAN- The value of Iran's non-oil trade in the tenth month of the current Iranian calendar year (December 22, 2021-January 20, 2022) rose 19 percent from that of the same month in the past year, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that Iran traded 11.184 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$8.153 billion during the tenth month of this year.

He further said that 8.092 million tons of non-oil products valued at \$3.622 billion were exported from Iran in the first ten months of the present year, indicating 18 percent rise in value year on year.

The official named China, Iraq, Turkey the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Afghanistan as Iran's major export destinations in the said time span.

The IRICA spokesman also announced that 3.092 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$4.531 billion were imported to the country in the tenth month, with 20 percent growth as compared to the past year's same month.

He named the UAE, China, Turkey, Germany, and Switzerland as the main sources of export to Iran in the said month.

As previously announced by the IRICA head, the value of Iran's non-oil exports rose 38 percent during the first 10 months of the current

Monthly non-oil trade up 19% year on year



year, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Alireza Moghadasi said Iran exported over 100 million tons of non-oil products worth \$38.763 billion in the mentioned period.

According to the official, the weight of exports in the mentioned period also grew by seven percent in comparison to the figure for the previous fiscal year's same 10 months.

He said major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were China, Iraq, and Turkey during the said 10 months.

The IRICA head further announced that the Islamic Republic imported 33 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$41.473 billion in the mentioned period, with a 34-percent growth in value and a 17-percent rise in weight, year on year.

The United Arab Emirates was

the top exporter to Iran in the said period, followed by China, Turkey, Germany, and Switzerland, he stated.

According to the official, out of the total non-oil goods imported into the country in the first 10 months of this year, 25 million tons worth \$15 billion were basic goods,

which indicates an increase of 26 percent in weight and 56 percent in value, year on year.

Moghadasi noted that currently about five million tons of commodities are stored at the country's customs for which the clearance procedures will be carried out soon.

"There are 160 customs active in the country, and this number is increasing with the creation of new free zones and economic areas," he added.

IRICA has previously announced that the value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the

past Iranian calendar year.

IRICA former Head Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi had put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons and said that the figure showed a 25-million-ton annual decline, which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

Iran's non-oil export was 112 million tons valued at \$34.5 billion, and that of import was 34.4 million tons worth \$38.5 billion in the past year, the official said.

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the fifth with importing \$2.2 billion, Mir-Ashrafi announced, and named gasoline, natural gas, polyethylene, propane, and pistachio as Iran's major exported products during the past year.

He further named Iran's top sources of non-oil imports in the said time, as China with exporting \$9.7 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic, the UAE with \$9.6 billion, Turkey with \$4.3 billion, India with \$2.1 billion, and Germany with \$1.8 billion, respectively, and mentioned corn, cellphone, rice, oil meal, and oilseeds, wheat, and raw oil as the major imported items.

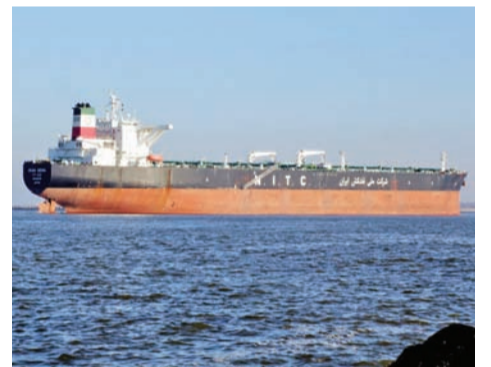
China, Iraq, Turkey main export destinations of Iranian non-oil goods in a month

NITC shipping activities increase significantly

TEHRAN - The shipments of crude oil and oil products by the fleet of the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) have increased significantly over the past few months, according to the Iranian Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare.

Speaking to IRNA, Hojatollah Abdolmaleki praised the performance of NITC Head Hossein Shiva during his tenure and noted that transportation and export of crude oil and petroleum products by the company's fleet have witnessed a serious leap in the mentioned period.

"There has been a significant leap in the transportation of oil and petroleum products by the National Iranian Tanker Company fleet so much, so that the Oil Minister personally called and thanked me in this regard, because we have always had some issues regarding the transportation



of crude oil and products in the past," Abdolmaleki said.

Supplying refineries with the necessary feedstock and delivering crude oil and oil products to foreign buyers is a priority of the government which has been appropriately done over the past few months, he stressed.

IGEDC implementing 12 gas pressure boosting projects

TEHRAN - Iran Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC) is implementing 12 gas pressure boosting projects across the country, an official with the company announced.

According to Samad Rahimi, two of the mentioned facilities including Kheirgo and Arsanjan have been completed and inaugurated in Fars Province, on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic revolution.

Rahimi noted that 90 percent of the equipment used in these projects including air conditioners, air compressors, valves and fittings, scrubbers, electrical equipment, and instruments, etc. has been provided by domestic manufacturers.

The implementation of these projects has increased the gas transmission capacity in the fourth and eighth lines of the national gas network, and consequently guaranteed the stability and flexibility of the country's gas transmission, especially in the cold months of the year, he said.

Rahimi noted that the other 10 facilities will also be completed and put into operation by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 2023).

Explaining that the turbines used in Kheirgo gas pressure boosting facilities have been provided by MAPNA Group and the turbines used in Arsanjan facilities have been provided by OTC Company.

"With this advanced and high-tech equipment which are made by talented domestic specialists and engineers we won't need to import from foreign countries," he said.

According to the official, Iran Gas Engineering and Development Company has played a significant role in the indigenization of the knowledge for the production of the above-mentioned turbines and the development of turbine manufacturers such as MAPNA and OTC increases employment for engineers and skilled workforce.

TEDPIX down 37 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 37 points on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

The index closed at 1.284 million points as over 6.579 billion securities worth 41.498 trillion rials (about \$159.6 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index dropped 1,315 points, and the second market's index rose 3,901 points.

TEDPIX lost 17,000 points (1.3 percent) to 1.284 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, Tejarat Bank, and National Iranian Copper Company were the most widely followed ones.

On January 22, Head of Iran's Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund Amir-Mahdi Sabaei said that part of the allocations by the National Development Fund (NDF) has been deposited into the stabilization fund to support the stock market.



Sabaei had previously announced the allocation of 120 trillion rials (about \$462 million) of NDF resources for the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund.

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

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

The allocation of financial resources from NDF to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund is one of the measures that the government has been taking

since the stock market started a downward trend.

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

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

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

basis.

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

The government has applied several new changes in the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 21) which according to experts and analysts will ensure the stock market's stability and growth in the coming years.

Reducing taxes on production units active in the stock market, strengthening the Capital Market Development and Stabilization Fund, eliminating subsidized foreign currency allocations, and stabilizing the ownership interest of the mines are some of the measures considered in the budget bill to support the capital market.

Allocating a 20-percent tax on legal entities is considered in next year's budget bill which is less than

the previous years. 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 the 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.

Iran— America's manufactured enemy



Muslims everywhere, especially in Iraq. These allies would give Iran offensive capabilities in dealing with what they perceived as a U.S. threat to the regime's survival. In view of America's past rebuttals and the need to shore up its Shia allies in Iraq, Iran supported Shia resistance in Iraq. Around the same time, under the watchful eyes of General Soleimani Iran played a big role in confronting and defeating ISIS. While in Iran's own interest, such cooperation in support of the regime in Baghdad and its Shia allies, was also critical in the U.S. effort to defeat ISIS. General Soleimani's tactical skill was even applauded by a U.S. general. Soleimani had become critical for Iran's national defense and regional ambitions. While Soleimani had been seen as an ally in the early days in Afghanistan and in the fight against ISIS, he was increasingly seen as a danger to U.S. regional hegemony.

By this time, Iran realized that cooperation with the U.S. would not lead to bilateral benefits but that it should only work with the U.S. when this was directly in its own self-interest and survival. Iran set about a more concerted effort in ramping up its domestic arms industry, something that had already started in the waning years of the Iran-Iraq war. The most cost effective weaponry were missiles and drones. These were cheap and they offered Iran offensive, as well as defensive, capabilities.

At the same time, Iran had quietly ramped up its nuclear research—adding more and more centrifuges and higher levels of enrichment. Although Iran was a signatory to the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons), it had not received all the peaceful assistance in nuclear technology that was promised under the treaty. Therefore Iran did not inform the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) of its nuclear activities, as was required. Having received little or no assistance for its nuclear program, under debilitating sanctions, isolated and surrounded by U.S. forces, Iranian officials felt that premature disclosure would result in an attack on their facilities.

After the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MKO) divulged Iran's program in 2002, the question became was Iran working toward developing a bomb, nuclear breakout capability or was it all peaceful? The U.S. ramped up sanctions on Iran even further. During the second Bush administration, financial sanctions took center stage, effectively cutting Iran off from the international financial system (SWIFT) and imposing serious penalties on any bank that engaged with Iran. Exports and support regional allies—Assad in Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Shia

the UAE pressed the U.S. to undermine and contain Iran at every turn.

Iran's economy was hobbled as never before. Iran had severe shortages of medicines and essential medical and industrial equipment as ordinary Iranians suffered. While sanctions took a toll, Iran's economy was mismanaged, and in my view domestic mismanagement was as damaging as sanctions.

Israeli and Saudi lobbying against Iran was ramped up. In the case of Israel, it lobbied its allies in the U.S. Congress and in the media to isolate Iran, increase sanctions, engage in covert activities inside Iran and adopt a policy of regime change as the only long-term acceptable solution. Some even feared that the end goal was to dismember Iran into four or five parts, all of them too weak to pose any problem for Israel, Arabs and the U.S.

The Obama administration feared Iran's ramped up nuclear efforts but was unwilling to attack Iran as Israel and some Persian Gulf Arabs advocated. The U.S. secretly began to negotiate with Iran through Oman's auspices. These discussions culminated in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was also ratified by the UN Security Council. It was by no means a perfect agreement. It provided the most intrusive program of Iran's nuclear activities for the U.S. and its allies, albeit with a sunset clause of ten years, the mothballing of Iran's heavy water reactor, the handover of most of Iran's enriched fuel (far from weapon grade) and a limit on Iran's enrichment program. For Iran, there was to be a lifting of sanctions—the unfreezing of Iranian

**All-pervasive
sanctions are
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assets, unobstructed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), access to international financial markets and the flow of imports (except certain nuclear and military goods) and exports of goods and services. Iran was naive in one very important respect—America's concessions were reversible whereas many of Iran's concessions were irreversible.

Iran kept its end of the bargain. America appeared to also keep its end but American companies and institutions, and indeed companies from other countries, did not jump in and embrace the deal. Iranians blamed the U.S. authorities but some banks and companies did not trust the United States to keep its word about lifting primary and secondary sanctions, namely, depending on future developments, the U.S. might penalize entities that had engaged Iran. All in all, Iran got some sanction relief but not all that it had been promised and expected.

The incoming Trump administration threw everything overboard. President Trump had close relations with Prime Minister Netanyahu and rich Gulf

Arabs, with Saudi Arabia the first country he visited. Trump demanded limitations on Iran's missile and drone programs, instituted new sanctions on Iran, was complicit in Israel's sabotage of Iranian facilities and murder of Iranian scientists, most notably Iran's top nuclear physicist. Then America withdrew from the JCPOA. And most notoriously, the United States assassinated General Soleimani, with Israeli complicity, inside Iraq. To save face, Iran had to retaliate, which it did by firing missiles at a U.S. base. Iran could still choose to extract proportional revenge for a man that many Iranians, pro and against the regime in Tehran, saw as a national hero who devoted his life to the defense of Iran in its darkest hours.

President Biden set about restoring the JCPOA. Iran, having kept its end of the bargain for one year even after Trump withdrew, is willing to fall into line with the JCPOA if all sanctions—sanctions that were lifted at the JCPOA signing as well as others imposed by Trump—are lifted and if the U.S. provides guarantees that it will not again withdraw as long as Iran keeps its commitments. The U.S. has been unwilling to lift all these sanctions, cannot provide the guarantees that Iran seeks and wants to discuss Iran's missile program and regional activities in support of Iran's allies, which the U.S. argues are against U.S. interests. Discussions are continuing in Vienna.

Although the U.S. was more popular in Iran than in any Arab country for years after the Revolution, Trump's actions toward Iran and the suffering of average Iranians have irreparably damaged this relationship. So where do we find ourselves? How will Iran-U.S. relations evolve?

While Iranian students sowed the seed for this conflict, the U.S. has shown little compassion toward the Iranian people. Sanctions on top of more sanctions have impoverished ordinary Iranians. Sadly, some Iranian ex-pats living in the West have championed Iran's isolation and even endorsed military action to overthrow the regime for their own selfish ends. A principal factor fueling and prolonging Iran's isolation has been anti-Iranian lobbying by Israel and its American surrogates and to a lesser extent by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and their corporate backers in the West. This lobbying has turned the U.S. Congress so against Iran that it may take a generational turnaround to change U.S. policies. The propagation of anti-Iranian sentiments all over the U.S. media has "manufactured" Iran as enemy number one in the eyes of average Americans. The merciless Israeli and Arab lobbying has in turn boxed Iran in. Arab lobbying has made business relations more challenging, while Israeli lobbying has poisoned Iran's political relations with the U.S. Iran feels threatened by U.S. forces and by Israeli adventurism that would in all likelihood be backed by the U.S. military. All-pervasive sanctions are tantamount to an act of war, as even trade embargoes have been historically viewed as such.

As Iran has been boxed in by the U.S., it has had little choice but to develop its military capabilities and alliances in the region to defend itself and to thwart would-be adversaries. At least in a conventional war, when it is over it is over. This adversarial relationship has gone on for over forty years with no end in sight. The future of Iran-U.S. relations is not bright, no matter what happens in the JCPOA negotiations in Vienna. U.S. presidents and other politicians do not dare oppose Israeli and Arab lobbies. The only ray of hope for better Iran-U.S. relations is for a strong U.S. President to tell Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in no uncertain terms to cease their interference in U.S. foreign policy and for the U.S. to adopt policies that represent its long-term national interest. A broad businesslike relations with Iran, which can be better achieved without the interference of other countries, would undoubtedly serve U.S. interests.

Hossein Askari is Iran Professor Emeritus of International Business and International Affairs

Russia: "U.S. needs a war at any price"

From page 1 ▶ The Russian Foreign Ministry has also issued a statement that says Moscow has been the subject of a coordinated well planned media attack, aimed at discrediting Moscow's "rightful demands for security guarantees and at justifying Western geopolitical aspirations".

The ministry says that since late 2021 and early 2022, the global information space witnessed a media campaign of unprecedented scope and sophistication, aimed at convincing the global community that Russia was plotting an invasion of Ukraine.

It also says items and articles that have been published as part of the information war campaign saying "this dossier brings together some of the most scandalous fake news items, published by Western media"

"They serve as an evidence of a well-coordinated information attack against Moscow, aimed at undermining and discrediting Russia's rightful demands for security guarantees and at justifying Western geopolitical aspirations and its military development of the Ukrainian territory".



"One can even say Western governments and media have conspired with each other, with the goal of fuelling contrived tensions around Ukraine, through a massive and well-coordinated release of false information, carried out for political reasons and aimed, among other things, at distracting attention from their own aggressive actions"

U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin have held a phone conversation; which Moscow stated came at the request of Washington.

Prior to the call, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters

"Indeed, the U.S. side requested a conversation with President Putin, and the talks of the two presidents are planned to take place on Saturday in the evening"

Since October last year, the U.S. and some of its allies have been claiming that Russia is preparing to attack Ukraine; allegations which Moscow has rejected outright and dismissed as "fake news".

The U.S. and NATO are currently at loggerheads with Russia over the real prospect of membership for Ukraine in the western military alliance.

The West insists that Ukraine should be allowed to join NATO, while Russia says this would expand the North Atlantic Alliance's missiles and troops on its doorsteps which Moscow considers as an unacceptable security risk.

The Kremlin has maintained its opposition to the eastward expansion of NATO since the end of the Cold War, when the west promised not to admit former Warsaw Pact nations into the alliance, a promise the West would later go on to break.

In an exclusive interview with Russian news outlet RT, Dmitry Lyubinsky, Russia's ambassador to Austria, stresses that the West is sending military aid to Ukraine without considering what this could lead to.

He says "right now they are burying Ukraine in tons of different weapons, American planes are flying from different countries. When you ask, are you sure about who will be in control of this weaponry and its deployment? you get no answer".

Russia has sent proposals to the U.S. and NATO to diffuse the tensions by offering security guarantees to Moscow. The responses so far have been very far from meeting Moscow's main and most serious security requests.

Analysts say the West is acting aggressively and ruthlessly with Russia to try and force

Moscow to back down from all its demands; despite the seriousness of the situation.

Western media are beating the drums of war with headlines citing an imminent "Russian invasion of Ukraine". Some have even set an actual date for invasion despite the dates American media had set before didn't materialize as planned.

Nevertheless the situation remains tense unless there is a diplomatic solution to the matter; with the West installing more armaments in Ukraine and on Russia's border.

Observers also say Russia has been seeking a change to the security apparatus in Europe since the end of the Cold War.

Russia has voiced strong opposition to the waves of NATO expansion towards its borders that began in the 1990s.

Since 1990, Moscow has seen NATO rolling its tanks eastwards towards Russian borders by around a thousand kilometers.

The geo-strategic shift that has occurred essentially means about half of Europe that was

part of the Soviet Union slowly dissolved and joined NATO.

The Kremlin has accepted this in a diplomatic manner despite assurances and promises from the U.S. and NATO that it would not expand eastwards towards Russia.

In essence, being a NATO member means the expansion of NATO troops and weapons in the NATO member state which is why Ukraine's membership of NATO is a red line for Russia.

With fighting between Russian separatist rebels in Eastern Ukraine and forces loyal to the government in Kiev; Moscow has concerns that Ukraine will use the pretext of the conflict to win the territory back from the separatist rebels with the backing of NATO.

This has led to speculation and strong concern of a false flag attack in Ukraine that could trigger a major conflict.

Which may explain why Zakharova says "we are making a conclusion that American and British colleagues are possibly aware of certain violent actions prepared in Ukraine that can seriously undermine security".

She added that "fearing possible provocations by Kiev or third countries, we have indeed made a decision about some optimization of the staff at our missions in Ukraine".

Also according to analysts, Russia has also deployed some troops within its own border (the numbers of which have been exaggerated by the West) and it has conducted military maneuvers to show it is serious and is seeking a comprehensive conversation on the best way forward to get legal assurances of a halt to NATO's further expansion.

That means no Ukraine, no Georgia, no Moldova in NATO.

Some experts say Russian military officials are said to be okay with having a belt of neutral countries between Russia and NATO. That means countries aligned with the West (so long as they that they don't join the Western alliance) as well as countries that are aligned with Moscow.

The West has to be prepared to negotiate this, and experts say they would be negotiating good deals not just for NATO and Russia but also for all the countries stuck in the middle.

For that to happen NATO must drop its mentality of an open door to membership and expansion.

Neither can the United States violate prior agreements and continue moving the goal posts as it wishes.

A diplomatic solution is the only way forward to end the escalating crisis.

Masuleh prepares to host ICOMOS assessors



TEHRAN – Masuleh is getting prepared to be assessed by experts from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) as part of a formal process to possibly become a UNESCO World Heritage.

The ICOMOS assessors are expected to visit Masuleh in the coming summer as the ancient village is getting prepared for the examination, Gilan province's tourism chief vali Zahani said on Saturday.

The scenic village is famed for its Lego-shaped earthen houses built on another's rooftop. He added the discovery of archaeological remains at such high altitudes would help archaeologists to shed new light on the human adaptation to the high Alborz mountains since prehistoric times up to recent centuries.

Home to some of the most stunning landscapes in the country, Masouleh is one of the many stepped villages that are quite common to find around the country, especially in Iranian Kurdistan and around Mashhad. They have been built on a hill so steep that the roof of one house is the pathway for the next.

Whereas practically, all stepped villages in Iran have been able to keep their rural and traditional

essence, for some reason, Masouleh has evolved into a popular touristic destination that especially attracts domestic vacationers.

Thanks to pretty developed tourist infrastructure, Masouleh is receiving the attention of all the guidebooks, portraying it as a dreamy mountain village so, slowly, it is becoming the prime destination for those travelers who have a little more than two weeks in Iran.

The village is pretty, composed of some yellowish houses which disappear behind the mist during the early morning hours. Being the most visited stepped village in Iran, Masouleh has all types of opinions. On the one hand, the most well-traveled backpackers will tell you that Masouleh is not worth the journey unless you don't mind eating in overpriced restaurants or trying to bargain ridiculous fares with taxi drivers. On the other hand, less demanding travelers will tell you that Masouleh is such a lovely village which you can't miss.

Surrounded by green valleys, misty forests, and 3,000m peaks, Masouleh is the ultimate trekking destination in Iran, offering several trails that include both day treks and multi-day treks.

Rome exhibit explores North Khorasan's tourist attractions

TEHRAN-Tourist attractions and natural sights of Iran's North Khorasan province can be seen in an exhibition of photos by Iranian photographer Hamed Musavinejad, which is currently underway in Rome, Italy, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The exhibit showcases photos of culture, traditional rituals, historical sites, and natural sights of the northeastern province, CHTN quoted Ali Mostofian as saying on Saturday.

The exhibition was originally scheduled to run from January 28 to February 2 but has now been extended, the official added.

In addition to promoting Iranian culture and art, this exhibition looks to introduce the cultural, artistic, tourism, and economic attractions and capacities of North Khorasan, he explained.

Though North Khorasan province may not be the first choice of travelers, its tourism is getting momentum.

According to Lonely Planet, most foreign tourists pass straight through North Khorasan



in transit between Mashhad and Gorgan, but if you have time to explore, it's worth diverting south from the capital, Bojnord, towards Esfarayen, famed for its wrestling tournaments, the remarkable citadel of Belqays and the partly preserved stepped village of Roein some 20km north. Although a lot of new buildings spoil the effect in parts of the village, Roein is considered Khorasan's answer to the well-known Masuleh and is a possible starting point for hikes to little-visited mountain villages.

Nomadic handicrafts put on show in Chabahar

TEHRAN-An exhibition of handmade products of nomadic people, as well as their local food, was held in Pir Sohrab Village in Chabahar, Sistan-Baluchestan province 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), Chabahar's tourism chief has announced.

"15 booths were installed for the exhibition to showcase and sell handicrafts, souvenirs, dairy products, local food, and tropical fruits," Abdolhamid Baluchzadeh said on Saturday.

The historical and agricultural potential of this region calls for the creation of a new tourism route to benefit the local economies and, consequently, the region's

development, he explained.

Tribe tourism, also known as ethnic tourism, lays the ground for you to feel indigenous people by living with a nomad or rural family or enjoying an independent stay.

For both domestic and foreign travelers, tribal tourism is all about opening eyes to new places, traditions, cuisines, beliefs, and ways of life.

Many tourists from all over the world tend to observe the lifestyle of these hardworking people and spend a few days watching activities such as milking, yogurt making, buttering, oiling, woolen, carpeting, and much more. Many Iranian and foreign tourists are interested in sleeping in nomadic black tents.

The varied natural setting of the country never disappoints visitors when it comes to tribal



tourism as the culturally-diverse country is home to many regional people including ones with Turk and Arab elements in addition to the Kurds, Baloch, Bakhtyari, Lurs, and other smaller minorities such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and others.

Language, music, indigenous cuisine, clothing, songs, anecdotes, crafts, live performances, and local rituals such as celebrations and wedding ceremonies have always spurred many to experience life among the tribes.

Social distancing: 8 resorts where the slopes are less skied

From page 1 ▶ Fereydunshahr

Named after a nearby city, the Fereydunshahr ski resort is situated at an elevation of 2500m in the Zagros mountain range. The city is renowned for its tough winter and heavy snowfalls.

Expert skiers from Isfahan come here to practice when they don't compete in bigger ski resorts of Shemshak, Darbandsar, or Dizin.

The resort is equipped with a rope tow for beginners, a ski lift, and two-seat chairlifts which gives you access to a hipline. From the summit, you can reach numerous off-pistes trails.

Sahand

Situated in northwest Iran in the Sahand mountain, some 50km away from Tabriz, the Sahand resort has two ski lifts that give fast access to the summit.

According to locals, you can sometimes ski until June in this freezing resort. For beginners, a rope tow and a green slope are located just a few meters away from the main building.

The vertical drop and steepness of the slope are good reasons for visiting this small ski resort. In the main building, you will find a restaurant and a rental ski shop.

Pooladkaf

Enclosed by amazing landscapes and natural sceneries, Pooladkaf



is Iran's south-most ski resort. It is located near Sepidan, a leisure place for wealthy families from Shiraz. Envisage that it's only 300km away from Kuwait which has a subtropical desert climate; mild winters and very hot summers.

Created during the sixties, an industrial group 'Pooladkaf' manages the resort since 2000. The group invested a lot to develop the resort and attract more tourists. Even though Pooladkaf stays relatively small, it offers a large choice of activities: skiing, snowmobile riding, restaurant, horse riding, après-ski, hotel, mountain bike, and hiking.

Pooladkaf is the fifth biggest ski resort in Iran, after the famed Dizin, Shemshak, Darbandsar, and Tochal ski resorts.

Kakan

About a hundred kilometers north of Shiraz stands the small ski resort of Kakan. It can be reached within 20 minutes drive from the city of Yasujm, and the resort is settled next to the protected area of Dena, which concentrates more than 40 summits higher than 4000m!

The ski area can be summarized as having two ski lifts (one is out of order) and two rope tows. The surrounding area is a heaven for ski touring as well.

Chelgerd

Situated in heart of the Zagros mountain range, 200km away from Isfahan, the Chelgerd ski resort is a popular destination for skiers and tourists from Isfahan and Share Kord.

The ski area is tiny and at the snow front, small slopes give easy access to

beginners.

Khoshakoo

Situated in northwest Iran with Urmia as the nearest city, the Khoshakoo ski resort is equipped with two ski-lifts. It is a haven for paragliding as well.

The resort is a famous spot for "Tubing", using old inner trucks' tubes. Surely one of the most dangerous sports on earth.

Alvares

Located in Ardabil province, northwest of Iran, the Alvares ski resort is known for its tough winters, "cool" summers, beautiful landscapes, the quality of its dairy products (butter, dough, thick traditional soups, honey...), and its numerous hot springs.

The small town of Sareyn (8,000 inhabitants), located 20km away from the resort, is famous across Iran for its spas where travelers come from all over the country to relax. The resort is equipped with a two-seat chairlift, a rope tow for beginners, and a "Pisten Bully" snow groomer.

Bijar

Equipped with a ski lift and a snow groomer, the Bijar ski resort is named after the nearby town of Bijar in Kurdistan province.

The resort is situated at an equal distance from the cities of Zanjan and Hamedan. And it is equipped with a snow groomer.

Aveh site capable of becoming center for archaeological research

TEHRAN - The historical site of Aveh, near Saveh, the central province of Markazi, can become one of the country's most important archaeological research bases, Saveh's tourism chief has announced.

The historical site is considered one of the most important cities during the Islamic era with its predominantly Shia population, ISNA quoted Reza Ayyaz as saying on Saturday.

According to the results of the last season of excavation, about 110 hectares of this historic city have been buried under the ground, including caravanserais, reservoirs, bazaars, and other important historical layers, the official added.

Aveh's Shah Abbasi caravanserai is a part of the site and about 70% has already been repaired and restored however, due to limited funds, the



restoration will be done in phases, he explained.

During the Mongol era, the historical site was abandoned for unknown reasons, and after years and due to the weather factors, it eventually collapsed into rubble and was buried, he mentioned.

Despite excavations in 2006, accurate knowledge and understanding of the history of this area, which

is estimated to date back to 5,000 years ago, require research and archeological work, which has been halted due to financial constraints, he noted.

This historical site, which now spans approximately 75 hectares, has been registered as a national heritage site

Soaked in history and culture, Saveh is situated in the north of Markazi province at a height of 995 meters above sea level. The climate of this city is warm and semi-arid in the east by vicinity to desert and cold in the mountainous region of the west.

Markazi province is considered the industrial capital of the country. It is rich in natural, historical, cultural, and religious attractions.

Hand-woven carpets and kilims, made in its cities including Farahan, Sarugh, Lilivan, Senejan, and Vafs are known internationally.

Local authorities seek to revive Chabahar arts

TEHRAN-Local authorities plan to revive traditional arts and forgotten handicrafts in Chabahar port, southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province, CHTN reported on Saturday.

The old Chabahar customs building will host cultural programs aimed at reviving the traditional arts of the region, said Abdolhamid Baluchzadeh, Chabahar's tourism chief.

Cultural events, such as performances of traditional music and exhibitions of traditional arts and crafts are scheduled to be held in the Qajar-era (1789-1925) monument, the official added.

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

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

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March



20, 2020 - February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported

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

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Prominent Iranian archaeologist Hamid Khatib-Shahidi dies at 74

TEHRAN - Emeritus Iranian professor and archaeologist Hamid Khatib-Shahidi, who joined plenty of excavations such as ones in Bastam and Hasanlu, died of natural causes on Saturday. He was 74.

Born 1948 in Maragheh, Khatib-Shahidi received his bachelor's degree in archeology from the University of Tehran in 1972 and then received his doctorate from the University of Eastern Naples (Italy) in 1975.

He was a member of the Archaeological Center of Iran (later the Iranian Center for Archaeological research) between 1973 to 1986. Furthermore, he was an assistant professor at Farabi University in Isfahan between 1977 to 1979.

He also served as an assistant professor in the archeology department of Tarbiat Modares University between 1998 to 2011. His main specialty was the study of archeology and the history of the Urartu civilization in northwestern Iran.

Khatib-Shahidi supervised more

than 40 archeological field programs in different parts of the country, including Urartian sites such as Bastam and Hasanlu.

Moreover, he was a member of the archeology group of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature since the mid-1980s.

Several cultural figures and archaeologists including Jebrael Nokandeh, the director of the National Museum of Iran, have offered condolences over his demise.

"The National Museum of Iran extends sincerest condolences to his family, friends, former students, and colleagues," Nokandeh stated.

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Lake Urmia volume up by 160m cubic meters

TEHRAN – The level of Lake Urmia has risen in recent weeks due to increased rainfall, flowing 160 million cubic meters more water compared to the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2021).

According to the latest monitoring, there are 2.890 billion cubic meters of water in Lake Urmia, while it was estimated at 2.730 billion cubic meters at the beginning of the current water year, Javad Mohammadi, deputy head of West Azarbaijan Water Company, said.

Also, the level of Lake Urmia has increased by 5 centimeters, reaching 1,270.70 meters, he added.

Announcing an increase of 234 square kilometers in the lake's surface, he stated that at present, the lake is now stretching to 2,261 square kilometers.

Of course, the level and volume of Lake Urmia are still far from the same period last year, so the current level is 58 cm lower,



he lamented.

Also, over the past year, the volume of the lake decreased by 1.890 billion cubic meters and the surface shrank by 1,377 kilometers, he concluded.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in West Asia. It was home to many migratory and indigenous

animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets, and ducks, and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in the agriculture sector

shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrank to one-tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

Lake's surface area has reached up to 2,917 square kilometers, indicating 1,582 square kilometers increase in comparison to 2013 when the Lake Urmia Restoration Program began.

The level of Lake Urmia has reached 1,271 meters, which indicates an increase of over 1.39 meters compared to the lowest volume recorded. However, it still needs 9.5 billion cubic meters of water to reach its ecological level.

The above normal levels of rain came to help conservation measures to preserve Lake Urmia, but, this year, the drought and low rainfall are threatening the lake again.

Some \$943m proposed for hard-to-treat diseases

From page 1 ► Grouped together, rare diseases affect 6–8 percent (or about 30 million people) out of the 508 million population of EU countries. This roughly equals the estimated prevalence of diabetes in the World Health Organization European Region, which in 2013 was 6.8 percent of 658.7 million adults in the 20 to 79-year age group.

Rare diseases are associated with a high psychological burden for the patient but they can also have a major impact on a patient's family. In addition to the health burden on patients, few of these

diseases have effective drug treatment available.

The National Document on Rare Diseases has been approved in December 2020, with the aim of preventing the birth of infants with rare diseases, medical and therapeutic problems.

Patients with rare diseases launched and signed a petition calling for drawing up a national document on rare diseases on the occasion of Rare Disease Day, February 28, 2019.

The main vision of this document is to prevent the birth of infants with rare



diseases and to solve the medical and therapeutic problems of rare patients in the country.

One-week closure for kindergartens in red-zone cities

TEHRAN – The National headquarters for Coronavirus Control has announced that kindergartens in high-risk red-zone cities will be closed for a week, due to a surge in Omicron cases.

"It was approved today at the Headquarters for Coronavirus Control meeting that those kindergartens in the red cities will be closed for a week, and due to this closure, the organizations will provide telework for mothers with children aged 6 years or younger for a week," Abbas Shiravjan, a spokesman for the National headquarters for Coronavirus Control, tweeted on Saturday.

The highest category on Iran's coronavirus risk scale is the red zone (highly infected cities), which reaches lower risk areas by orange, yellow,



and blue zones.

With the spread of Omicron across the country, the number of red cities has risen from 120 to 247, and no cities are currently blue.

According to the latest announcement, 112 cities are at medium risk of the virus transmission being in the orange zone and 89 cities are in the low-risk yellow zone.

Based on the Ministry of Health announcement, 15 percent of the population have not yet referred to vaccination centers for inocula-

tion, which will also endanger the health of other members of the community.

Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi has urged more caution against the disease, saying that getting booster vaccinations could play a major role in preventing a fresh surge in the number of deaths and infections from the virus.

However, the cheapest, safest, and most accessible way to prevent virus transmission and infection is to follow health protocols.

All educational centers in Iran have been closed since February 2020.

In order for students to keep in touch with their studies, the Ministry of Education launched a homegrown mobile application on April 9, called SHAD, providing stu-

dents with distance learning programs. More than 60 percent of students and 94 percent of teachers attended 64 percent of classes through the SHAD app, whose acronym in Persian translates as the Students Education Network.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) also began to broadcast televised educational programs on a daily basis after school closures.

Due to the vaccination and the reduction of transmission, schools are gradually reopened since September 2021, and about 15 million students across the country attended schools with strict observance of health protocols. However, the fifth and sixth waves of the pandemic prevented the students to enjoy face-to-face education.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

'Green taxes not used for environmental development'

While the Municipality of Tehran receives green taxes paid by pollutant industries, the money is not used for developing the environment or improving the industries, Ali Moridi, head of department of environment's (DOE) soil and water office has said.

The DOE is trying to revise the law and receive green taxes to use it toward eradicating air and water pollution, wastewater treatment and environmental issues, along with technology and industries improvement, he said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Referring to proper laws adopted on waste management, he stated that there are rules which obliges the waste management affairs of the DOE to make the manufacturing and import industries pay taxes and spend the taxes on waste management and recycling.

عوارض آلودگی صرف ارتقای محیط زیست نمی شود

مدیرکل دفتر آب و خاک سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: عوارض اخذ شده از صنایع آلاینده در محل خودش و با هدف رفع چالش محیط زیست هزینه نمی شود. به گزارش خبرنگار علمی ایرنا، «علی مریدی» سه شنبه افزود: در سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست در تلاش برای بازنگری این قانون هستیم تا زمینه ای فراهم شود عوارض آلودگی به حساب صندوق ملی محیط زیست وارد و صرف حل مسایل زیست محیطی شود و بتوانیم به صنایع برای ارتقای فناوری و تصفیه پساب ها کمک کنیم. مدیر کل دفتر آب و خاک سازمان حفاظت دامه داد: البته قوانین خوبی در زمینه مدیریت پسماند تصویب شده است که سازمان محیط زیست را مکلف کرده تا از صنایع تولیدی و وارداتی درصدی را به عنوان مالیات اخذ و به صندوق ملی محیط زیست واریز کند تا صرف هزینه پسماند و بازیافت شود.

Air quality inside homes worse than office buildings, study suggests

A new study from Texas A&M University of Public Health suggests the air quality inside homes may be worse than the air quality inside office buildings.

Researchers published their study in the journal Atmosphere after studying indoor air quality and health outcomes for people who have been working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Part of the study included measuring indoor air quality in both offices and homes in 2019 and 2020 and then looking at the health outcomes during that time period. Researchers used an air quality monitor to collect data on air temperature, relative humidity, concentrations of a particular matter and volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs.

They then had participants complete a survey where they ranked the prevalence of symptoms like dry, itchy or watery eyes, stuffy nose and dry or irritated skin on a scale ranging from not experiencing symptoms to having them every day.

Results showed the fine particulate matter concentrations were significantly higher in the participants' homes than in their offices, and the home levels were greater than the standard for a healthy work environment. Results also showed that VOC concentrations were higher in homes compared to offices; however, the VOC concentrations in both places were well below the limit set by health

standards.

The majority of employees in the study also reported higher frequencies of symptoms while working at home, according to the university.

Researchers noted that indoor air pollution is often linked to building materials and household activities. They can include VOCs from carpet and furniture, paints and other chemicals as well as fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and mold.

They said prolonged exposure to indoor air pollutants can lead to adverse health effects from headaches and dry eyes to cardiovascular disease and lung cancer. They add that significant work has gone into improving office building indoor air quality because of these possible outcomes.

But with the percentage of people working remotely growing amid the COVID-19 pandemic, scientists believe home indoor air quality can now be considered a workplace health issue.

The university hopes its findings will lead people to improve home indoor air quality, such as opening windows. They also advise companies to provide air purifiers to remote workers.

"Taking steps to improve indoor air quality in both conventional office buildings and home offices will likely become a growing area of study for public health researchers and employers looking to ensure health, safety and productivity," the university said in a statement.

Europe's energy market: torn between cost and climate

The dynamics of Europe's energy market have shifted considerably over the past year, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While European countries discuss how to change the regulation framework to meet their 2030 climate goals, skyrocketing global gas prices have brought the focus back to the short term and to the cost and challenges of the energy transition. IHS Markit forecasts that in the coming years, Europe will find itself having to manage concerns about energy costs with the need for climate action.

* In the short term, affordability is the major concern. Contrary to the initial expectation, commodity prices will not fall back down as quickly as they rose: during 2022, wholesale power and gas prices will remain at a premium to historical levels. Consequently, energy costs will stay at the top of governments' agendas in 2022. Longer term, higher energy bills could slow the development of electrification initiatives or the implementation of carbon taxes on fossil fuels.

* Climate ambitions remain high. European countries continue to raise their climate ambitions. Recently, Ireland, Denmark, and Spain have upped their renewable targets. By mandating a climate-focused government, Ger-

many confirms its role as a European climate leader, but its much higher ambition raises tough questions about market design.

* Tensions build between climate and practicality. The outcome of the discussion on the EU taxonomy proposal to include natural gas is a direct result of the understanding that Europe will not be ready to deliver enough low-carbon gas to meet strict environmental credentials ahead of 2030. Similarly, the energy crisis and prospects of increasing costs for consumers are weighing over the discussions on the "Fit for 55" package. So far, the focus on energy prices and the magnitude of the package have eclipsed the full implications of the package. As discussions progress and the complexity of making changes becomes clear, the timeline of approval may slip.

* A wide range of technologies are needed. Renewables will provide the bedrock of tomorrow's power and gas markets, but a wide range of technologies will be required, in particular to ensure continued security of supply. In 2022, decisions will be made to kick off investments in floating offshore wind, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage (CCS), and nuclear.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON FEBRUARY 12

New cases	18,598
New deaths	133
Total cases	6,780,453
Total deaths	133,570
New hospitalized patients	2,078
Patients in critical condition	3,343
Total recovered patients	6,281,274
Diagnostic tests conducted	45,980,540
Doses of vaccine injected	137,334,302



FEBRUARY 13, 2022

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Unfortunate is he who cannot gain a few sincere friends during his life and more unfortunate is the one who has gained them and then lost them (through his deeds).

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon: 12:18 Evening: 18:02 Dawn: 5:28 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:53 (tomorrow)

Hafez's tomb (Hafezieh)

Part 1

The tomb of Hafez and the surrounding area, formerly known as Tekye-ye Hafez. The Hafezieh is located south of the Quran Gate (Darvazeh Quran) on the northern edge of Shiraz, at the beginning of Golestan Street, formerly known as Kharabat Street.

It is on the site of the famous Golgasht-e Mosalla, the pleasure ground often mentioned in the poems of Hafez, and occupies about 19,000 square meters, incorporating one of Shiraz's most famous cemeteries, Khak-e Mosalla.

In 1452, some sixty years after Hafez's death, the Timurid governor of Fars, Abul-Qasem Mirza Babor ibn Baysonqor, ordered his vizier, Shams ad-Din Mohammad Yaghmai, to erect a dome-like structure over Hafez's grave in the Mosalla garden.

In the front part of the garden he also built a large pool, which was filled from the nearby Rohnabad stream. This building was restored twice, first in the reign of the Safavid Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), and again on the order of Nader Shah Afshar (r. 1736-47), both times as the result of omens (fal) taken from Hafez's Divan.

In 1772-73, Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-79) enlarged and enclosed the site. He built a vaulted hall (talar) in the style of the Divankhaneh palace he had made, with four massive tall stone columns, open on the north and south and flanked by two large rooms on the east and west sides.

This building effectively divided the area into two separate sections, the Naranjistan (orange grove) in the front, and the Gurestan (cemetery) in the back.

Hafez's tomb was located outside and behind this building, in the middle of the cemetery. Over the grave he placed a marble slab, which still exists today. On this slab two lyrics (ghazal) by Hafez were inscribed in nastaliq style by the calligrapher Hajji Aqasi Beg Afshar-e Azarbaijani. The ghazal beginning: Mozhd-e wasl-e to ku k'az sar-e jan bar khizam/Tayer-e qods-am o az har do jahan bar khizam was inscribed in relief in the center panel on the grave just under the Arabic phrase Howal'-baqi, and the ode beginning: Ey del gholaam-e shah-e jahan bash o shah bash/Peyvasta dar hemayat-e lotf-e elah bash on the margin around the first ode. The date of his death is also inscribed in the chronogram "khak-e mosalla" on the lower corner of the grave.

Subsequent construction on the site was carried out largely by various governors of Fars. In 1857, Tahmasb Mirza Mo'ayyed ad-Dawla restored and repaired the tomb.

In 1878, Motamed ad-Dawla Farhad Mirza built a wooden enclosure around the tomb. Later, in 1899, again as the result of an omen taken from the Divan, a Zoroastrian philanthropist called Khosrow obtained permission from the ulema of Shiraz to build a shrine (boq'a) of iron and wood around the grave.

Before it was completed, however, the influential doctor of religious law (mojtahed) of Shiraz Ali-Akbar Fal-Asiri led his followers to the site and had the building destroyed, on the pretext that a Zoroastrian was raising a building over the grave of a Muslim.

Although the resulting public outcry caused the government in Tehran to order its reconstruction, Fal-Asiri declared that he would destroy anything built there, even by

the king himself.

The building remained in ruins until 1901, when Malek Mansur Shoa us-Saltaneh secured funding for an iron transenna to be built around the grave.

The transenna was commissioned and designed by Ali-Akbar Mozayyen ad-Dawla Naqqash-bashi; around it ran a verse inscription including the date and names of the patrons.

Mozayyen ad-Dawla also ordered that both sides of Karim Khan's hall be adorned with marble slabs, on which the ghazal beginning: Rawza-ye khold-e barin khalwat-e darvishan ast/Maya-ye mohtashami khedmat-e darvishan ast was inscribed in the calligraphy of Mir Emad (fl. 17th cent.), copied by the Qajar artist Abd us-Samad Lala-bashi.

In 1931, Farajollah Bahrami Dabir-e Aazam, the governor-general of Isfahan and Fars, erected a large stone portal in the south wall of the Hafeziya and repaired its walls and naranjistan.

Further plans for renovation remained in abeyance until, in 1935, the Department of Education of Fars, on the initiative of Ali-Asghar Hekmat, the Minister of Education, arranged for the construction of a new building.

The French archeologist André Godard, the technical director of the Department of Antiquities, drew up an appropriate design.

Execution of this project was delegated to Ali Riazi, the head of the Department of Education of Fars, and Ali Sami was put in charge of its supervision.

The present building is in the style of the period of Karim Khan Zand. Over Hafez's gravestone—raised one meter above ground level, and surrounded by five circular steps—there is a copper dome shaped like a dervish's hat, supported by eight columns ten meters in height. The interior of the dome is covered in polychrome glazed tilework; eight distichs of the ghazal beginning: Hejab-e chehre-ye jan mishavad gho-bar-e tan-am/Khosha dam-i ke az an chehreh parda bar fekanam are inscribed in thulth script on eight massive stones, one on each column.

Karim Khan Zand's four-columned hall has been incorporated into a new and spacious hall, with sixteen additional identical stone columns; Karim Khan's four columns occupy the center of this building.

This twenty-columned veranda (ayvan) divides the Hafezieh into two sections, north and south. Hafez's tomb is located in the northern section, as is also a library 440 square meters in area (formerly the tomb of Qasem Khan Wali, d. 1873), which contains 10,000 volumes and is used as a center for Hafez scholarship.

On the external façade of the hall, facing the entrance garden, the ghazal beginning Gol-ezari ze golestan-e jahan ma-ra bas/ Z'in chaman saye-ye an sarv-e ravan ma-ra basis inscribed on azure glazed tiles.

Also in this section are orange trees and two large rectangular pools, on the eastern and western sides, which provide water for the large pools in the entrance garden, as well as a recently established traditional coffeehouse, 330 square meters in area.

(Encyclopedia Iranica)

(To be continued)

“The Situation of Mehdi” tops on leaked Fajr Film Fest winners list

From Page 1 ▶ In an immediate comment, the president of the festival, Masud Naqqashzadeh, said that only a few specific people had the list of winners and added that a team of experts are investigating the issue.

“The Situation of Mehdi” garnered several other awards, including the award for best directorial debut for Hejazifar.

“Cinema has been very kind to me over the past six years,” said Hejazifar who had previously focused his activities on theater.

“This is the beginning of the way; we have come to stay,” he added.

Reza Mirkarimi, who was absent at the closing ceremony, was selected as best director for his film “The Night Guardian” and the film's star Turaj Alvand received the award in his behalf.

The special jury award was given to director Amir-Hossein Asgari for “The Last Snow”, which brought Amin Hayati the



“The Situation of Mehdi” directed by Hadi Hejazifar.

Crystal Simorgh for best actor.

The award for best screenplay went to “The Meadow” written and directed by Kazem Daneshi.

The film is about an inquisitor facing several challenges amid his transfer to office.

Tannaz Tabatabai was named best actress for her role in director Arian Vazirdaftari's drama “Without Her”.

The Golden Simorgh for best film from the national point of view was awarded to “No Prior Appointment” directed by Behruz Shoeibi.

After living in exile in Germany for a long time, Yasmin returns to her homeland Iran due to the death of her father. In her short stay in Iran, she achieves a new understanding of humanity and death.

Director Ahmadreza Motamedi also received a lifetime achievement award.

The following is a list of other winners at the festival.

Best supporting actor: Nader Soleimani for “The Opposition”.

Best supporting actress: Sadaf Espahbodi for “The

Meadow”.

Best editor: Hamid Najafi-Rad for “The Meadow”.

Best cinematographer: Arman Fayyaz for “The Last Snow”.

Best composer: Masud Sekhavatdoost for “The Situation of Mehdi”.

Best set design: Mohammadreza Shojaei for “The Opposition”.

Best costume designer: Maral Jeirani for “Killing the Traitor”.

Best makeup artist: Omid Golzadeh for “The Last Snow” and “The Late”.

Best practical special effects supervisor: Iman Karamian for “The Situation of Mehdi”.

Best computerized special effects supervisor: Hassan Najafi and Amir Valikhani for “The Squad of Girls”.

Best documentary: “Moribund” directed by Hojjat Taheri.

Best short film: “Bonus” by Reza Nejadi.

Azerbaijani troupe performs play on 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war at Fajr festival

TEHRAN – An Azerbaijani group performed a tragedy about the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war at the 40th Fajr International Theater Festival on Friday.

Azerbaijani Ambassador Ali Alizada attended the performance of the play “Like a Breath”, which was directed by Samir Gulamov at Tehran's City Theater Complex.

The play tells the story of a mother who does not believe that her son has been killed in the war and is always waiting for him with longing and high hopes. The mother believes that her son will definitely return someday. In the darkness of one of the long nights, the mother almost reaches her dream. In fact, she has to come to terms with the lack of a bridge between fantasy and reality.

“We have always supported our soldiers in wars and we remember them by telling stories about their valor,” Alizada said before watching the play.

“For sure, theatergoers here will feel impressed by the play and will show



An Azerbaijani troupe performs “Like a Breath” during the 40th Fajr International Theater Festival at Tehran's City Theater Complex on February 11, 2022.

sympathy,” he added.

The troupe performed the play at the Azerbaijan State Academic Musical Theater on November 8, 2021 to celebrate Victory Day, which is observed every year since 2020 in commemoration of Azerbaijan's victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, which is called “The Patriotic War” in the country.

Dutch pianist Van Poucke cancels Tehran gig after testing positive for COVID19-

TEHRAN – The 37th Fajr Music Festival said on Saturday that Dutch pianist Nicolas van Poucke has called off his Tehran performance after testing for COVID-19.

Replacing Van Poucke is German pianist Moritz Ernst, whose performance will take place at the Niavaran Cultural Center on Sunday.

Ernst will play a repertoire of works by George Frideric Handel, Claude Debussy, Beethoven and Brahms.

He will also perform Emanuel Melik-Aslanian's “Butterfly” in memory of the celebrated Armenian-Iranian composer and pianist.

Previously in August 2015, Ernst joined Iran's Nilper



A file photo shows Dutch pianist Nicolas van Poucke.

Orchestra for a concert of contemporary and classical music by world composers at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

He also performed during the 36th Fajr Music Festival, which was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

36-year-old Ernst gave his debut performance in June 2013

with the Symphony Orchestra of Bern (Switzerland) under the baton of Mario Venzago with a performance of the 2nd Piano Concerto by Edward Staempfli.

His highly acclaimed Asian debut took place in 2014 at the University of Malaysia and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where he also held master classes and lectures.

In 2017, his commitment to ostracized music led him to an appearance at Deutscher Bundestag.

Since 2018 his concert appearances have led him to perform on a worldwide scale, commuting between his native Europe, North America, Asia and Australia.

Several overseas musicians

from across the globe are scheduled to perform at the Fajr Music Festival this year.

Najmeddin, an Afghan qawwali group, is among the guests of the festival. The band features Javad Tabesh, Asef Habibi, Abdolqader Azizi, Abdolkhaleq Azizi, Gholamsakhi Rasuli, Hushang Javid and Nematollah Hosseinzadeh.

Egyptian oud virtuoso Mohamed Abozokry and Macedonian percussionist Ersoj Kazimov have also been invited to give a duet at the Niavaran Cultural Center on Sunday.

Abozokry is the leader of Mohamed Abozokry & Heejaz, a Franco-Egyptian quartet of instrumental music formed in 2010.

“Music of a Life” comes to Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – Russian writer Andrei Makine's book “Music of a Life” has been published in Persian by the Mahi publishing house in Tehran.

Nahid Forughan is the translator of the book originally published in 2001.

May 24, 1941: Alexei Berg, a classical pianist, is set to perform his first solo concert in Moscow. But just before his debut, his parents – his father a famous playwright, and his mother a renowned opera singer – are exposed for their political indiscretions and held under arrest.

With World War II on the brink, and fearing that his own entrapment is not

far behind, Alexei flees to the countryside, assumes the identity of a Soviet soldier, and falls dangerously in love with a general officer's daughter.

What follows is a two-decades-long journey through war and peace, love and betrayal, art and artifice – a rare ensemble in the making of the music of a life.

Makine was born in 1957 and grew up in the city of Penza, a provincial town about 440 miles southeast of Moscow. As a boy, having acquired familiarity with France and its language from his French-born grandmother, he wrote poems in both French and his native Russian.

In 1987, he went to France as a member of

a teacher exchange program and decided to stay. He was granted political asylum and was determined to make a living as a writer in French. However, Makine had to present his first manuscripts as translations from Russian to overcome publishers' skepticism that a newly arrived exile could write so fluently in a second language.

After disappointing reactions to his first two novels, it took eight months to find a publisher for his fourth, “Le Testament Français”. Finally published in 1995 in France, the novel became the first in history to win both the Prix Goncourt and the Prix Medicis plus the Goncourt des Lycéens.