

# TEHRAN TIMES

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## U.S. Dithering Over Vienna Talks Increase Uncertainty

STAY UPDATED #ViennaTalks ▶ Page 3

### Opinion

## Stop Ukraine war or face another Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan

By M.A. Saki

It is essentially necessary to bring the war in Ukraine to an immediate end. The longer the war continues the more complicated it will become to resolve.

The Soviet war on Afghanistan in the 1980s brought extremists mostly from Muslim states to the landlocked country. The invasion made the country a safe place for terrorism to breed. The fact that al-Qaeda network used Afghanistan as a platform to advance its vicious goals is clear to all.

The war in the country led to catastrophe after another. The extremist ideology in Afghanistan started to give birth to other groups whose brutality superseded that of al-Qaeda. Daesh, also called ISIS/ISIL, is a concrete example.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is quite a familiar name. Al-Zarqawi, who ran a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, went to Iraq to quench his thirst for more bloodshed by brutalizing Iraqi civilians and soldiers after the U.S. invaded the country in March 2003. In fact, the war on Iraq spread the area of activity by extremists.

The chaos that followed the civil war in Syria also brought extremists to the country from dozens of countries, including Chechens from Russia. They poured into the country from Indonesia and Malaysia in southeast Asia to those in Western European countries.

The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria are an eye opener about the dangers of extremism. ▶ Page 5

### Op-ed

## Women – the resilient core of society

By Claudio Providas  
UNDP Representative in Iran

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world, with no regard to social or economic status. Families, households and particularly women, suffered a combination of economic, physical, and emotional stress.

During the pandemic-induced lockdowns, family interactions and livelihoods were impacted. Reduction in income, business losses, having to spend increased time in closer proximity than usual, and the fact that children could attend school gave rise to tensions between family members.

Pandemic pressures

Iran was among the first countries to be hard hit by COVID-19. The pandemic broke out at a time when the nation was still reeling under the impact of the unilateral economic sanctions, and this added to the pressures on daily life, particularly on women.

The participation of Iranian women in the economy post-pandemic declined. The effect of this reduction was worse among Women Head Households (WHH) – and in low-income households headed by women, the situation was even more complicated.

According to Statistical Center of Iran, out of twenty-two (22) million families in Iran, over three (3) million are WHH and most of them are in less-developed areas. The Government prioritised such families for targeting the socio-economic support. ▶ Page 7

## Canadian inspired American truckers reach Washington



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More than a thousand large trucks, recreational vehicles, and other cars have encircled the outskirts of Washington, that may force motorists to wait in a long line of traffic blocks around the city as part of anti-government protests that threaten to roll on the U.S. capital in

the coming days.

The “People’s Convoy” is one of several national and international movement groups inspired by similar anti-government protests that began in Canada.

After weeks of Canadian truckers blocking major

routes in central Ottawa and trade crossing points with America in protest at multiple grievances, the country’s Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, was heavily criticized for invoking rare emergency powers allowing security personnel to use extra force to disperse the protesters. ▶ Page 5

## New year travels allowed if COVID protocols observed, Iranian president says

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has said new year (Noruz) travels are allowed on the condition that holidaymakers observe COVID protocols required by the government.

Noruz journeys as well as (public) gatherings and celebrations will be allowed if coronavirus protocols declared by National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control are observed by people,

Raisi said, CHTN reported.

Furthermore, the president said the same rule will come to effect for people joining tour packages are called “Rahiane Nour” (“The Path of Light”), which explores former combat zones in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

People who received the third dose of a

COVID vaccine have been given priority to travel and join [public] gatherings, he added.

“Based on decisions made by the National headquarters for Coronavirus Control, people who have not received the third dose of the vaccine can also go travels, use social services or attend meetings if they present a negative PCR test.” ▶ Page 6

### Opinion

## FFIRI’s statutes; an unsolvable challenge

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - The statutes of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has been a significant and seemingly unsolvable challenge in the country’s football during the recent years.

From time to time, the FFIRI’s statutes turned to an important subject and then is postponed again as the football federation officials try to buy time by creating a new challenge.

The FFIRI Assembly was canceled on March 15, 2020, because FIFA had objections to the statutes and ordered the federation to solve the problem-making parts.

The story of the FFIRI’s statutes goes back to many years ago. In 2007, the statutes was drafted in the football federation, ▶ Page 3



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## Twelve scientists announced winners of Khwarizmi Intl. Festival

TEHRAN – The 35th Khwarizmi International Award ceremony was held in Tehran on Monday, appreciating 12 winners for their scientific achievements with President Ebrahim Raisi in attendance, IRNA reported. ▶ Page 7

## Iran assessing new elements bearing on Vienna talks: Shamkhani

TEHRAN – Iran’s top security official has pointed to the positive and negative move by negotiating partner in the Vienna talks, saying that Iran is taking stock of new elements impinging on the talks.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said Iran

understands the negative move made by the countries participating in the talks.

“The positive and negative moves by the countries participating in the Vienna talks are being made with the aim of securing interests and are understandable. The only factor affecting our interaction with the P4+1 is

securing of the interests of the people of Iran. Thus, we’re assessing new elements that bear on the negotiations and will accordingly seek creative ways to expedite a solution,” Shamkhani said on Twitter.

The tweet came after Russia demanded guarantees from the United States ▶ Page 3

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### Opinion

## Mining sector facing shortage of machinery

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- Three factors including the sanctions, rising forex rate, and improper management and policy in the production chain, maintenance, import and distribution of heavy machinery have caused serious damages to the mining production chain which if continue may lead to irrecoverable losses in this major part of national economy.

While emphasizing the necessity of importing mining machinery, the chairman of the Mines and Mining Industries Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has said last week that the mines of country need 10,000 pieces of machinery, while domestic production is just 500 pieces per annum.

Emphasizing the close relationship between mining machinery and the amount of mineral production, the cost of production and also whether mines remain active or inactive, Ebrahim Jamili said, “What everyone agrees on today is that, firstly, our mining machinery fleet is worn out, and secondly, the existing machinery is very, very expensive, and thirdly, due to not meeting the need for mining machinery in the past years, these problems have accumulated and have reached an alarming stage.”

These three factors necessitate an urgent and decisive decision to supply mining machinery, he stressed.

“Under the pretext of supporting domestic production, the supply of mining machinery has become a major challenge in the mining industry,” he said, adding, “There is no doubt that domestic producers must be active and produce the required products, but domestic production capacity in terms of type, quality and number of their products, especially in the field of mining machinery does not meet the existing needs. ▶ Page 4

## Iran launches center to fight art counterfeiters and raise public awareness

TEHRAN – Iran launched a foundation on Sunday to evaluate the authenticity of artworks in auction sales and gain people’s recognition of art in their homes.

A team of artists, including calligraphers Javad Bakhtiari, Banafsheh Mesripur and Mohammad-Ali Sabzevar, came together in a meeting organized at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to announce the launching of the center entitled “Mahestan-e Honar Foundation”.

“The foundation also aims to raise the standards of aesthetics in society and public knowledge of art by organizing meetings and workshops with the help of all art elites and cultural figures,” said Bakhtiari who is also the director of the founding board. ▶ Page 8



## IAEA to present quarterly report on Iran on Tuesday



Mohammad Reza Ghaebi

TEHRAN — The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plans to release its quarterly report on Iran's nuclear program to its board of governors.

Mohammad Reza Ghaebi, the head of Iran's Permanent Mission to the IAEA, said that the new report contained some positive developments, including the removal of one of the alleged sites from the list of remaining safeguards issues from the IAEA agenda at this time.

Following the publication of the report of the IAEA's director general on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Safeguard Agreement with Iran, Ghaebi said the new report reiterates some technical issues between Iran and the IAEA.

It contains some positive developments

and welcomes the progress and strengthening of cooperation between Iran and the IAEA, as well as resolving safeguards issues, including a joint statement on Saturday between the IAEA director general and the head of the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran (AEOI), as well as announcing the removal of one of the alleged safeguards from the IAEA agenda at this time.

According to the IAEA report, Ghaebi added, following constructive consultations between the IAEA chief and the AEOI president on December 15, 2021, Iran and the IAEA agreed to continue resolving the remaining safeguards issues.

To this end, he said, it was also agreed that Iran and the IAEA would conduct a series of information exchanges and assessments through expert meetings.

Ghaebi added, "The Agency has stated that it has now reached the conclusion that it has no questions about one of the alleged sites and that this site is no longer a matter of safeguards."

The diplomat noted that another part of the new report is devoted to the subject of the Saturday joint statement between Iran and the IAEA, under which the director general welcomed the joint statement agreed with Iran's nuclear chief to resolve other remaining safeguards issues in the form of a timetable.

## In fresh blow to free speech, Facebook deletes al-Alam TV page permanently

TEHRAN - American social media giant Facebook has "permanently" removed the page of Iran's Arabic-language television news network al-Alam TV from its platform without giving any prior notice, Press TV reported Monday.

The new attack against freedom of expression comes as al-Alam TV Facebook page, which was launched in 2010, had attracted some 6,000,000 followers over the past years.

Facebook had earlier refused to register al-Alam TV's page, claiming that the Tehran-based network had not complied with its terms regarding the publication of photos of the flags and the leaders of the Lebanese Hezbollah, Yemen's Ansarullah and Palestinian resistance groups.

This is while a number of other media outlets freely publish pictures of leaders of Takfiri militant groups, including al-Qaeda terrorist outfit, on their Facebook pages.

The al-Alam TV Facebook page had

"temporarily" been blocked in January 2020 following the assassination of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and his Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Units, in a U.S. drone strike near Baghdad airport.

Back in late January, Facebook permanently deleted the page of Iranian Spanish language news channel Hispan TV.

Over the past years, Facebook — along with YouTube, Twitter and Google — have repeatedly targeted media outlets of Iran and the countries critical of the West and the Israeli regime's occupation of Palestine.

Last January, Facebook briefly disabled the account of Press TV with nearly four million followers, alleging that Iran's international English news network was not eligible to use the social media platform.

However, it reversed the decision hours later in response to an appeal filed by Press TV.

## IRGC unveils new kamikaze drone

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has unveiled one of its new kamikaze drones which is specialized in attacking enemy's defense systems.

According to a Sunday report by Tasnim, the new unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), dubbed Me'raj 504, has been designed and produced by the IRGC's Ground Force and is capable of carrying a 2.5kg explosive payload over 100 kilometers, Press TV reported.

It uses a reciprocating engine for propulsion.

The new drone is an upgrade of the IRGC's former Me'raj 214 UAV, which was also used to target enemy's air defense systems.

The new model has greatly decreased the design and manufacturing cost of this line of drones, which are now being operated by the IRGC's Ground Force.

The new development came only a day after the IRGC's Aerospace Force unveiled two missile and drone tunnel bases built at the heart of high mountains.

The bases house ground-to-ground missile systems with advanced equipment, as well as attack drones that can penetrate the enemy's radar and defense networks.

They are also home to unmanned aerial



vehicles with a range of 2,000 kilometers, two-missile launch platforms and multi-drone launch platforms, which were unveiled during the IRGC's Great Prophet 17 joint military exercises in Iran's southern shore in December 2021.

Addressing a ceremony to unveil the bases, the commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Division said the country can simultaneously launch 60 unmanned aerial vehicles from its newly unveiled underground base with no target limitation.

Brigadier General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh said 60 drones can fly from the base at the same time without any limitation on the targets because the "range of the unmanned aircraft is long and not limited."

"We can hit any hostile target," Hajizadeh emphasized.

TEHRAN — Speaking at his weekly presser on Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the Russians' request for guarantees from the United States has been stated in the media, and not being received diplomatically.

Khatibzadeh said that Russia is one of the negotiating parties in Vienna, and Iran must receive and consider requests within the framework of the negotiating table in Vienna.

"This is what we saw in the media, and we are waiting to see the request at the negotiating table. Iran's peaceful cooperation with the countries involved, including Russia, should not be limited to any sanctions, especially if those sanctions are self-imposed sanctions without the United Nations authorization," he added.

Russia on Saturday demanded guarantees from the United States that the sanctions being imposed by the West on Russia over Ukraine won't impede Moscow's economic and military cooperation with Iran in case the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is revived.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the sanctions the West imposed on Russia over Ukraine will create a problem for the nuclear deal and demanded written guarantees from the U.S. that these sanctions won't impede Russia-Iran cooperation in case the JCPOA is revived.

"We want an answer - a very clear answer - we need a guarantee that these sanctions will not in any way touch the regime of trade-economic and investment relations which is laid down in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," the Russian foreign minister said.

He added, "We have asked for a written guarantee ... that the current process triggered by the United States does not in any way damage our right to free and full trade, economic and investment cooperation and military-technical cooperation with the Islamic Republic."

**'We are not worried about the rhetoric of this regime'**

Responding to a question by the Tehran Times correspondent about Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's meeting with the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the regime's moves to disrupt the Vienna talks, Khatibzadeh also said, "The actions of the Zionist regime are in European capitals and the P4+1. Russia knows, and the elites are well-aware of the extent of the regime's hostility in the international arena. We are not worried about the rhetoric of this regime."

Moving on to the Vienna talks to resurrect the 2015 nuclear deal, the spokesman said what is happening in Vienna today can be identified by two characteristics and components of "continuity

# Foreign Ministry: Russia's demand not mentioned in Vienna



and change."

"Until the day it is agreed to make the text available to the people, I can say that what is happening today is in the direction of maximizing the interests of the nation by observing all the red lines and instructions given to the Foreign Ministry, and we are moving forward so seriously that we can maximize the interests of the nation," Khatibzadeh said.

The E3 (France, UK, and Germany) negotiators have returned to their capitals. Yet, the spokesman said that negotiations are underway in Vienna, and there has been significant progress in the field of safeguards and other issues in the recent days.

He also said, "I have no news that the Iranian delegation will return, and we are there within the framework of the instructions we have."

**'Agreement in Vienna will close political claims against Iran'**

International Atomic Energy Agency director Rafael Grossi visited Tehran on Saturday. He held talks with Iran's nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Immediately after Grossi's return to Vienna, Iran and the IAEA issued a joint statement for closer cooperation.

Khatibzadeh said one of the clauses in the Vienna talks is the resolution of politically motivated questions about Iran's nuclear program.

"Grossi's visit to Tehran was successful and there were good talks and comprehensive technical cooperation to pave the way for closing the questions between the two sides. Of course, the timetables seen in the agreement being reached

Khatibzadeh noted that there is a direct link between the closure of these issues and revival of the 2015 nuclear deal in the Vienna talks.

"While the technical path of this agreement is maintained, it is clear that this agreement must be considered simultaneously and in part of the Vienna talks," he noted.

**'Prisoner swap talks with U.S. have made progress'**

"Iran-U.S. talks on prisoner exchanges have progressed and we are waiting for them to be concluded, and if the U.S. side fulfills its obligations and does not withdraw on the night of releasing prisoners, we can close one of the humanitarian cases that was Iran's priority," he said.

**'Iran's decisions are not based on opaque messages'**

Responding to a question about the possibility of direct negotiations with the U.S., the diplomat said that Iran's position in this regard is consistent, and has not changed.

"Iran's position has been a continuous one and there has been no change in it. Both when Trump asked to meet and take pictures and today with the new administration. The position is that we make decisions based on American behavior, not on opaque messages," he elaborated.

"It is clear that the United States has left the 2015 nuclear deal, and the commitments it must make are clear to us and the P4+1. To date, we have not seen any change in U.S. behavior on the ground. The same maximum pressure continues, and the prospect of any move is decided based on the interests of the Iranian people," Khatibzadeh noted.

The spokesman added that the remaining points of difference are "less than the number of fingers on one hand, if no one adds a new topic."

"All the P4+1 nations are waiting for a response from the American side. If the United States has a rational approach and takes into account the concerns of the P4+1 and Iran, and if the United States responds appropriately to these requests, an agreement will be reached in the shortest possible time," he added.

He said Iran is in the midst of tough and comprehensive negotiations. These are negotiations between Iran and the P4+1 on the one hand and the United States and the P4+1 and Iran on the other, the spokesman explained.

"We saw different behaviors from different actors on different days."

Khatibzadeh added, "As negotiators of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we are never surprised by the positions of countries, whether they have already announced some positions or what we hear these days."

## FM consults with MPs on the latest developments surrounding Vienna talks

TEHRAN — Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian attended a consultation meeting with a group of parliamentarians on Monday to discuss the latest developments in foreign policy.

The foreign minister explained the latest developments in the field of foreign policy, especially in the ongoing Vienna talks.

Amir Abdollahian also exchanged views with the MPs in these areas.

In the meeting which was held at the joint committee of the parliament, the foreign minister emphasized Iran welcomes the finalization of a good and strong agreement in Vienna.

He also specified Iran's red lines, particularly regarding obtaining effective economic guarantees and maximizing the interests of the Iranian people.

Amir Abdollahian added, "While standing up for the observance of the red lines, we will not allow any foreign agent to affect the national interests of the country in the Vienna negotiations for the lifting of sanctions."

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# U.S. dithering over Vienna talks increase uncertainty

TEHRAN – Talks in Vienna are entering a new phase of uncertainty due to the lack of political decisions on the part of the United States, which now needs a deal with Iran more than ever for a number of reasons.

A few days ago, the Vienna talks were widely expected to culminate in a deal by Monday or Tuesday this week. Rumors had it that the foreign ministers of Iran and the P4+1 group of countries (China, Russia, France, and Britain plus Germany) were planning for an in-person signing ceremony in Vienna. Some reporters even claimed that the foreign minister have received invites in this regard.

But the optimistic outlook for the deal changed out of the blue, with the U.S. and Iran both underlining that a deal is not in the air at least for now.

Iranian officials said the reason for this is that the U.S. continues to hesitate to make political decisions needed to push the talks another step toward the finishing line.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in his weekly press briefing on Monday that the remaining issues in Vienna are very few and all awaiting a U.S. decision.

“The remaining differences are less than the number of fingers of one hand, if no one adds a new topic. They are all waiting for the U.S. response. If it has a rational approach and considers the concerns of the



P4 + 1 and Iran, and an appropriate response is given by Washington, an agreement is available in the shortest possible time,” Khatibzadeh said.

He added, “The criterion for us is a good agreement, an agreement that takes into account the interests of the nation. And if it is done today, we are ready to do it today in Vienna.”

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, reiterated the need for the U.S. to make political decisions.

“Prospect of a deal in Vienna Talks remains unclear due to Washington's delay in making a political decision,” Shamkhani said on Twitter.

He added, “Priority of Iranian negotiators is to resolve remaining issues that are considered in the red

line. Rapid access to a strong deal requires new initiatives from all parties.”

Some believe that the U.S. needs to make political decisions as soon as possible given the dramatic developments currently taking place in the world. Most issues in the talks have been resolved and the remaining issues can be settled quickly if the U.S. shows seriousness.

According to experts, the U.S. is in dire need to help quickly conclude the Vienna talks for a number of reasons. First, if the U.S. makes political decisions on Vienna talks, the return of Iran's oil exports will help bring down the surging oil prices in the world. The U.S. is now desperately looking for an increase in oil output in order to stabilize the global oil markets.

And Iran's oil is a silver bullet.

Second, any further delay in concluding the talks could prompt some parties to present new demands.

Of course, presenting new demands does not mean that the talks would fail. But addressing the demands would require more time and energy.

Over the last few days, at least one such demand was presented by Russia, which called for guarantees from the U.S.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the sanctions the West imposed on Russia over Ukraine will create a problem for the Iran nuclear deal and demanded written guarantees from the U.S. that these sanctions won't impede Russia-Iran cooperation in case the JCPOA is revived.

“We want an answer – a very clear answer – we need a guarantee that these sanctions will not in any way touch the regime of trade-economic and investment relations which is laid down in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,” the Russian foreign minister said.

He added, “We have asked for a written guarantee ... that the current process triggered by the United States does not in any way damage our right to free and full trade, economic and investment cooperation and military-technical cooperation with the Islamic Republic.”

## Iran president congratulates Ghana on Independence Day

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi has sent a congratulatory message to his Ghanaian counterpart to congratulate him on Independence Day of his country.

In the message, the Iranian president congratulated the President of Ghana on the 65th anniversary of the country's independence.

In his message, Ayatollah Raisi expressed hope that in the light of the will of the high-ranking officials of the two countries, friendly relations between the two countries will be expanded and consolidated, according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian also sent a similar message to Ghanaian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Shirley Ayorkor Botchway congratulating her and the people of Ghana on the 65th anniversary of the country's independence.

In his message, the Iranian foreign minister said, “I hope that given the capacities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Ghana, we will see

a further expansion of relations and cooperation between us in order to ensure the common interests of the two countries.”

In August 2021, Ghanaian Minister of Tourism Ibrahim Mohammed paid a visit to Iran and met with President Raisi in Tehran.

In this meeting, Raisi thanked the Ghanaian official for conveying the congratulatory message of his counterpart and said, “I would like you convey the message of the will of the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop economic relations with Ghana when you go back to your country.”

Referring to the Ghanaian Minister of Tourism's dissatisfaction with the decrease in the level of Iran's economic interactions with the country, Raisi added, “The decrease in relations with Ghana and other African countries is not acceptable for the 13th government, and we will take all the potentials and capacities to develop the level of relations with African countries.”

In the same meeting, Ibrahim Mohammed conveyed the congratulations of the President of his



country to Ayatollah Raisi on the beginning of his term of office and said, “We hope that relations between Iran and Ghana develop in different fields, especially in economic fields, with the removal of obstacles.”

Referring to his country's convenient location in West Africa, he said, “Ghana has a good position for economic activity and can be Iran's gateway to the continent.”

## Iran assessing new elements bearing on Vienna talks: Shamkhani

From Page 1 ► that the sanctions being imposed by the West on Russia over Ukraine won't impede Russia's economic and military cooperation with Iran in case the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is revived.

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He added, “We have asked for a written guarantee ... that the current process triggered by the United States does not in any way damage our right to free and full trade, economic and investment cooperation and military-technical cooperation with the Islamic Republic.”

A senior Iranian lawmaker has said that the Russian demand for guarantees from the U.S. is a “bilateral” issue between Moscow and Washington.

The lawmaker, Abolfazl Amouei, who is a member of the Iranian par-

liament's National Security and Foreign Policy, said the Russian demand stems from wider concerns in the world over the U.S. compliance with its commitments.

In remarks to Tasnim News, Amouei said Iran hasn't put forward a Russian-styled demand on guarantees and “in fact, this issue should be settled between Russia and the United States because it has to do with bilateral issues currently happening between the two countries in Ukraine.”

“Iran has done its utmost to distance the Vienna talks from the ongoing relations in Eurasia, Eastern Europe and the developments in Ukraine. For this reason, Americans must be able to convince all parties

of their intentions,” he added.

In a sense, the onus is now on the U.S. to convince other partners to the Vienna talks to proceed with what is taking shape in the negotiations.

According to Amouei, the U.S. track record in not complying with its commitments has aroused concerns in countries beyond Iran. “The fact is that today the concern about the implementation of U.S. commitments is a concern beyond Iran. And various countries are concerned about whether the Americans will live up to their obligations under the agreement if the JCPOA is revived.”

## Iran says seeks meaningful ties with Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday that dispute between Iran and Saudi Arabia as an important country in the region and the Muslim world should not prevent Tehran and Riyadh from having a minimum of meaningful relations.

Khatibzadeh made the remarks in response to a question on the recent remarks by Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in his lengthy interview with The Atlantic in which he spoke favorably of the possibility of patching up relations between Tehran and Riyadh.

Speaking at a weekly press conference, the spokesman refrained from responding in detail to the question and referred the reaction of the Iranian foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian. “Our Foreign Minister expressed the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran and expressed his views in specific statements,” he said.

Khatibzadeh said relations between Saudi Arabia would benefit the people of the region. “The main beneficiaries of these relations are the people

of the region and the people of the two countries.”

He added, “The talks in Baghdad have continued in a good, respectful and positive atmosphere in the last four rounds. Of course, I would like to emphasize that tangible results have not been achieved from these talks to date, and the results have been limited. In the fifth round, we must try to translate the understandings that we had in some areas into results.”

He noted, “The date of the fifth round is not yet final. But it is the will of both parties to hold the next meeting. If Saudi Arabia comes to Baghdad with the firm will to achieve a good result from these talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran is also ready to speed up the establishment of relations between the two countries.”

Earlier, Ebrahim Azizi, deputy chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, urged the Saudi crown prince to pursue dialogue with neighbors.

In remarks to the Islamic Consultative Assem-

bly News Agency (ICANA), Azizi said bin Salman's remarks that Saudi Arabia needs peaceful coexistence with Iran is right.

“Mohammad bin Salman made right remarks but he was expected to make such remarks earlier,” Azizi said.

He added, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly stated in recent years that the countries of the region should resolve their differences and problems through dialogue, not follow the path drawn by foreign countries.”

Iran's top security official, Ali Shamkhani, has explained the goal of Tehran's negotiations with Saudi Arabia, reminding it that Israel is the biggest enemy of the Islamic and Arab worlds.

He said that “Iran's active participation in bilateral talks with Saudi Arabia – hosted by Iraq – stems from the Islamic Republic's principled strategy for [fostering] cooperation & amity with neighbors based on securing bilateral and regional interests.”

## IRAN IN FOCUS

MARCH 8, 2022

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### FFIRI's statutes; an unsolvable challenge

From Page 1 ► which was governed by the Transitional Committee. It was approved by the government and it sent to FIFA. In 2011, the federation amended the statutes. However, it became clear that the statutes had legal problems.

FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) have emphasized in the recent years that FFIRI must be amended.

After presenting several drafts and resolving FIFA's objections, Iran football federation finally managed to get the statutes' approval from FIFA in 2021.

However, FIFA gave the FFIRI one year time, until March 31, 2022, to change the nature of the federation to “non-governmental” and private organization in the statutes.

The federation, led by Shahaboddin Azizi Khadem, former president of the FFIRI, did not take any practical action in this regard during the past year.

Apart from the approval of the Assembly, FIFA, and the government, the statutes also need to be approved in the Parliament, for which no other effort was made except for various interviews by the officials of the previous federation, discussions that ignited the fire of disagreement and delayed the process of approving the statutes.

March 4, 2022, has passed, and the problem of the FFIRI statutes persists. With the removal of Azizi Khadem, everything in the process backed to the drawing board, and the issue of buying time until next year is raised again by the new officials of the federation.

Now the officials of the current federation (especially the board of directors) are under scrutiny by the Iranian football community over the issue of finalizing the FFIRI statutes.

### Iran to send women's volleyball team to 2022 Asian Games after 48 years

TEHRAN – Head of Iran volleyball federation Mohammadreza Davarzani says that the country's women's volleyball team will participate in the Asian Games after 48 years.

Iran, for the last time, participated at the 1974



Asian Games, where the Persian women came fifth.

They had also competed in the 1966 in Thailand and won a bronze medal.

Now, Davarzani says that the Iranian volleyball team, headed by Alessandra Campedelli, will take part in the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

“Our strategy is to have a special look at women's volleyball. Fifteen years ago, we started the support of our men's volleyball team and moved up from 27th to eighth place,” Davarzani said.

“Iran's men's team are among the top 10 teams in the world at the moment and it took a lot of energy, but we want to do the same in the Iranian women's volleyball,” he added.

“To achieve our goals in women's volleyball, we planned to use the experiences of good coaches in the world. After consulting with Julio Velasco (former Iran coach) and other friends, Campedelli was introduced to us and the Italian coach began working with the federation.

“She has experience working with different categories and ages. In addition, she had worked with the Italian boys' team, and for this reason, we came to the conclusion that Campedelli can help the Iranian women's volleyball team achieve their goals,” Davarzani said.

### Taremi steals the show against Pacos Ferreira

TEHRAN – Porto football team defeated Pacos Ferreira 4-2 and moved a step closer to claim the

Portuguese championship.

Pepe put the league leaders ahead on the 17th minute at the Estadio da Mata Real.

Juan Delgado leveled the score in the 31st minute.

Porto Brazilian striker Evanilson gave the visiting team the lead in the 38th minute. He was on target once again in the 52nd minute.

Taremi scored Porto's fourth goal before the hour mark.

Porto midfielder Nicolas Gaitan pulled a goal back in the 66th minute.

Porto lead the table with 67 points, six points ahead of Sporting.

### Paykan, Shahdab to represent Iran at Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship

TEHRAN – Paykan and Shahdab volleyball clubs will represent Iran at the 22nd edition of the Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship.

The competition will be held from May 15 to 22 with the participation of 11 teams.

Paykan and Shahdab have qualified for the final match of the Iran Volleyball Super League.

Paykan have been chosen as the host and Shahdabi will be another Iran's representative in the competition.

Iran has previously hosted the competition three times in 2002, 2004 and 2013.

The Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship, previously the AVC Cup Men's Club Tournament (between 1999–2002), is an annual continental club volleyball competition organized by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC), the sport's continental governing body. The competition was first contested in 1999 in China. It was not held in 2003 and 2020 due to 2002–2004 SARS outbreak and COVID-19 pandemic respectively.

The winners of the Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship qualify for the FIVB Volleyball Men's Club World Championship.

Paykan Tehran holds the record for most victories, winning the competition seven times. Teams from Iran have won the tournament 15 times out of 21 editions, the most for any nation.

### Iran to send 11 archers to Asia Cup Stage 1

TEHRAN – Iran will send 11 archers to the 2022 Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament Stage 1.

The competition will be held in Phuket, Thailand from March 14 to 19.

Reza Shabani, Arashk Fazel, Mohammad Hossein Golshani, Mahta Abdollahi, Gisa Baybordi, Raheleh Farsi, Kosar Khoshnoodi Nia, Mohammad Saleh Palizban, Amir Kazempour, Hesamoddin Kosar and Hamzeh Nekouei will represent Iran in the competition.

### Iran's Sarkhosh earns two wins at 2022 IBSF Snooker Championships

TEHRAN – Iranian player Amir Sarkhosh earned two wins at the 2022 IBSF Snooker Championships underway in Doha, Qatar.

He defeated Qatar's Mansour Alobaidli 4-0 in his first match and then defeated American Ahmed Aly Elsayed 4-0.

Sarkhosh booked his place in the IBSF Snooker Championships's knockout stage.

The competition has started on March 1 in Doha, Qatar and will finish on March 11.



## Iran exports 3 gasoil cargoes to Asia last month



TEHRAN – Head of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) Jalil Salari said on Sunday that the country has delivered three gasoil shipments to Asian refineries over the past Iranian calendar month (January 21-February 19), Shana reported.

Speaking to the press on the sideline of a signing ceremony in Tehran, Salari noted that although the Islamic Republic has the appropriate capacity to export petroleum products even to Europe, the focus is currently on supplying the domestic market and storing enough fuel to meet the country's needs in peak consumption periods.

He further emphasized the need for developing infrastructure for the exports of oil products in the country.

In response to a question about the possibility of exporting petroleum products to western countries, including the United States, if the sanctions are lifted, he said: "We have already assigned a group of experts to study crude oil

grades used in refineries of various countries; at the moment our focus is to send crude oil to the consumer markets instead of supplying oil products."

NIORDC, on Sunday, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Tejarat Bank to cooperate in a project for constructing a pipeline to transfer oil and petroleum products from southern Hormozgan Province to Fars Province.

The MOU was signed in a ceremony attended by Oil Minister Javad Oji, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, NIORDC Head Jalil Salari, and Managing Director of Tejarat Bank Hadi Akhlaghi-Feyz.

As reported, the pipeline (known as Pars pipeline) extends over 400 kilometers from Mehravaran in Hormozgan Province to Shiraz city and is going to transfer 12 million liters of oil and petroleum products on a daily basis.

Optimal fuel distribution in Fars Province, using the pipeline as an alternative to road transportation of products, reducing traffic and fuel consumption, reducing operational costs, reducing road hazards and pollution, and increasing the storage volume of petroleum products in the mentioned province are among the goals of constructing this new pipeline.

NIORDC had previously signed an MOU with Bank Mellat in January for cooperation in the construction of a strategic pipeline for transferring oil products in eastern provinces.

## \$4b to be invested in Khuzestan Province's oil industry

TEHRAN – Vice President for Executive Affairs Solat Mortazavi has said the government is going to invest four billion dollars in Khuzestan Province's oil industry, Shana reported on Monday.

According to Mortazavi, the mentioned funding is going to be provided by the Headquarters for Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, Mostazafan Foundation, the government, and the country's banking system.

The official made the remarks in the inauguration ceremony of a project for supplying water to 19 villages in the mentioned province.

The Iranian government and especially the country's Oil Ministry have been following new strategies to use the capacities of domestic companies for funding development projects in the country's oil and gas sector as the U.S. sanctions are preventing foreign investors from collaborating with the Islamic Republic.

Back in September 2021, Oil Minister Javad Oji said his ministry was making necessary arrangements and planning for attracting \$125 billion of foreign and domestic investment in the country's oil industry within the next four to eight years.

The oil minister stated that the 13th administration presided over by Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, is completely



ready to cooperate with domestic companies to develop oil industry projects in the upstream and downstream sectors.

Later in November 2021, Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr also said his company was seeking new win-win strategies for attracting investment in the country's oil and gas industry.

"When talking about the need to improve contracts and increase the bargaining power and attractiveness of projects, we do not necessarily mean changing the nature of previous approaches, but it means seeking to improve and create win-win situations in the investment sector," the official said.

Khojasteh-Mehr stated that oil activities are both capital-intensive and income-generating and that the profitability of activities in this industry is highly dependent on investment.

# Mining sector facing shortage of machinery

From page 1 ► "At present, due to the shortage of these machines, purchase prices have skyrocketed and, in addition, their rents have become very expensive. At these prices, it is not profitable for small and medium-sized mines to rent machinery and become active.

Finally, the miner has the mine and the raw material, but it is not economical due to the expensive operation of the machinery", the ICCIMA member further lamented.

Mentioning the small mines, it should be noted that Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry is seriously following a program for reviving, activation, and development of idle small mines.

The plan for reviving small mines

in Iran was first launched by Iran Mine House in early 2018 in the framework of some agreements with the mining associations and companies.

Then the plan was officially put into operation in April 2020, and Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry is pursuing it seriously.

As stated by the vice chairman of Iran Mine House, the ban on the import of mining machinery and the staggering costs of supplying them have caused small and medium-sized mines to close and large mines to operate at 50 percent of their capacity.

"This is a disaster for the mining industry", Hamid-Reza Amirian lamented.



It is while minerals such as iron and copper are used in the country either as raw materials for domestic production and create jobs, or are exported and bring foreign currency, he noted.

Pointing out that the excuse for banning import of these machines is to support domestic production, he explained, "Unfortunately, no one pays attention to the fact that many of these machines are not domestically manufactured at all.

Mining machines are super heavy machines and have limited manufacturers in the world. That is, there are no more than six or seven producers."

"In the current situation, we cannot say that we want to produce

alongside these producers, in addition, the country does not need so many machines of this kind that we want to be the independent producer", he added.

Finally, as stated by the head of ICCIMA's Mines and Mining Industries Committee, "Various estimates show that more than 10,000 units are needed in the country's mines next year. This is while the domestic production capacity is less than 500 units. Therefore, it is necessary to supply these machines through imports in order to break their price bubble in the market. Because the price bubble of mining machinery is only for the benefit of brokers; neither the miner nor the machine manufacturers make a profit"

## TSE to hold 17 IPOs next year

TEHRAN – Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) is going to host 17 initial public offerings (IPOs) in the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21), TSE's Admission Manager Mohammad-Amin Qahremani announced on Monday.

According to Qahremani, several meetings have been held in this regard and the necessary preparations have been made for holding the mentioned IPOs, IRNA reported.

Asked about the schedule for the offerings, the official said determining the exact time for the mentioned offerings is not possible due to various factors including market conditions, preparation of various documents by companies, as well as other necessary measures such as holding introductory sessions based on new procedures.

"The list of mentioned companies has been made available to the public on the Tehran Stock Exchange website, under the "Publishers and Admissions" and "Stock Acceptance Cases" sections," he explained.

He emphasized that the process of accepting and listing companies as one of the main missions of the Tehran Stock Exchange is always ongoing and has never stopped.

"In the Tehran Stock Exchange, no process



has been stopped in order to list or accept companies," the official said, adding: "It is hoped that with the improvement of capital market conditions, we will also see an improvement in the valuing process of initial offerings."

Following the fluctuations in the Iranian stock market over the past year the government has been taking serious measures for increasing its support for the market.

Back in October 2021, Head of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Majid Eshqi had outlined new strategies and programs for improving the country's stock market during his tenure among which supporting investors, creating a transparent, efficient, and equitable market, as well as reducing inclusive risk

based on the market's broad objectives can be mentioned.

Eshqi stressed the use of modern technologies and mechanisms to facilitate listing of new companies and to increase public access to market data as a major strategy in this regard.

According to the SEO head, another strategy would be amending the market's rules and regulations to increase justice and accountability, while strengthening the medium- and small-scale level financing through new mechanisms.

"Diversification and promotion of the capital market (in terms of market, tools, and institutions), increasing the transparency and quality of information published in the capital market, reforming business processes and increasing the efficiency of financial markets, development of financial institutions and de-monopolization, development and strengthening of technical infrastructure, facilitating and clarifying the issuance of licenses in the capital market and the development of the debt market and increasing its liquidity will also be pursued," Eshqi explained.

## Industry Ministry inks MOU with acting banks to fund production units

TEHRAN – Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with five acting banks to collaborate on implementing a supply chain financing plan to provide facilities to production units across the country.

The MOU was signed on Monday, in a ceremony attended by Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi Amin, the portal of the ministry Shata reported.

Speaking in the mentioned ceremony, Fatemi-Amin underlined the significance of the chain financing plan and noted that the country's banking system has had a very positive cooperation with the

ministry in implementing this project.

"This plan started from the beginning of [the Iranian calendar month of] Khordad (May 22, 2021), and since then we have held meetings every week to monitor and supervise the progress of the plan," the minister said.

The official pointed to the ease of access to resources, liquidity management, and reduction of diversion of resources from productive sectors as the advantages of the mentioned plan.

Back in January, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with seven acting banks to

collaborate on implementing the supply chain financing plan.

The MOU was signed on January 1, in a ceremony attended by Fatemi Amin, CBI Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi, and Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi.

Under the framework of the mentioned MOU, CBI and the Industry Ministry would cooperate with the acting banks to provide facilities to production units in various sectors including metals, construction, automobiles, home appliances, machinery, foodstuff, as well as chemical and petrochemical industries.

Unlike traditional methods of providing direct facilities by financial

institutions, supply chain financing is a form of financial transaction wherein a third party facilitates an exchange by financing the supplier on the customer's behalf.

Also, it refers to the techniques and practices used by banks and other financial institutions to manage the capital invested into the supply chain and reduce the risk for the parties involved.

In this method, the production units can also receive other credit instruments such as bonds and negotiable instruments instead of cash facilities, which in addition to reducing the need for liquidity, bank resources are also directed to productive activities.

## Export from Kermanshah province increases 12%

TEHRAN – The value of export from Kermanshah province in the west of Iran rose 12 percent during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-February 19, 2022), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, a provincial official announced.

Bakhtiar Rahmani-pour, the director-general of the province's customs administration, said that 5.888 million tons of products worth \$2.44 billion were exported from the province in the 11-month period, indicating one percent growth in terms of weight.

Tiles, ceramics, rebars, iron products, fruits and vegetables, constructional stones, dairy products, plastic products and disposable containers were the major exported items in the said time span, the official stated.

He also announced that 4,573 tons of commodities worth \$33.428 million were imported to the province in the first eleven months of this year, up 104 percent in terms of value and 124 percent in terms of weight as compared to the



same period of time in the past year.

He named major imported goods as aluminum alloy, factory production line, sealed acid batteries and various tires.

As previously announced by the deputy head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent during the first 11 months of the current year.

Foroud Asgari said that Iran traded over 149.4 million tons of non-oil products worth \$90 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

He noted that the weight of trade in the mentioned period also grew by 12 percent in comparison to the figure for the previous year's same 11 months.

The official put the 11-month non-oil exports at 112.658 million tons valued at \$43.517 billion, with a 40-percent rise in value and 10 percent growth in weight.

The Islamic Republic imported 36.777 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$46.577 billion in the first 11 months of the present year, with a 36 percent growth in value and a 19 percent rise in weight year on year, according to the official.

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 added.

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.

## TEDPIX rises 20,000 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 20,324 points to 1.342 million on Monday.

As reported, over 9.516 billion securities worth 66.466 trillion rials (about \$265.86 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 18,412 points, and the second market's index gained 30,003 points.

TEDPIX lost 7,000 points (less than one percent) to 1.281 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Tehran Oil Refining Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Company, Saipa Company, National Iranian Copper Company, and Bank Mellat were the most widely followed ones.



# China touts ‘rock solid’ ties with Russia as it offers to mediate Ukraine conflict

China is ready to act as mediator between Ukraine and Russia, the country's foreign minister said on Monday, as he declared Beijing's relationship with Moscow "rock solid" amid international censure of Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

While Beijing has consistently called for a negotiated diplomatic solution to the conflict, the comment was the first time officials had formally confirmed readiness to be directly involved.

"China is willing to continue playing a constructive role in urging peace talks and is willing when necessary to work together with the international community to launch required mediation," Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters at his annual news conference, the Washington Post reported.

Wang further implied that Chinese President Xi Jinping had encouraged Putin to begin talks when the two spoke by phone on Feb. 25, with Xi expressing

China's desire for peace talks to begin "as soon as possible."

At the same time, Wang ruled out the possibility that diplomatic fallout from the war could undermine China's growing alignment with Russia.

Asked whether the conflict had impacted bilateral ties, Wang said the relationship "is not subject to third-party interference," adding: "No matter how perilous the international situation, China and Russia will ... continuously advance with a new era of comprehensive strategic partnership."

Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said in an interview published Friday that, when it came to mediating a peace deal, "it must be China." He told Spanish newspaper El Mundo: "We have not asked for it nor have they asked for it, but since it has to be a power and neither the U.S. nor Europe can be [mediators],

China could be."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Saturday that Chinese diplomacy had "sufficient tools to make a difference."

China officially maintains a position of noninterference in other countries' domestic affairs, making it traditionally reluctant to play an active role beyond disputes that touch on core Chinese interests. In recent years, China has adopted a more active foreign policy stance and positioned itself as a broker in several disputes, including those between Pakistan and Afghanistan or between North and South Korea.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has tested China's deepening strategic partnership with Russia. Beijing speaks of respecting territorial integrity and remaining neutral, while blaming NATO and the United States for instigating the conflict, which it refuses to call an invasion.

That implicit defense of

Russia has been complicated by Beijing's concern about the safety of Chinese nationals in Ukraine after one was wounded while attempting to flee the country.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry previously rejected calls from the United States to exert influence over Russia and has denied that Xi asked Putin to delay the assault until after the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Biden administration officials said last week that a Western intelligence report indicated that Chinese officials in early February requested a delay until after the Closing Ceremonies.

Instead, China claims that Western powers share responsibility and must act to defuse tensions.

On Saturday, in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Wang called on the United States, the EU and NATO to "engage in equal-footed dialogue with Russia, face up to the frictions and problems accumulated over the years."

## Canadian inspired American truckers reach Washington

From page1► Critics say the Canadian government's reluctance to listen to the demands of the protesters but rather crackdown on them would only divide Canadians further. Lawmakers accused the prime minister of using "the politics of division rather than cooperation and understanding."

Critics say Canada's mishandling of the trucker's protest has inspired similar methods of protest in other countries. The American convoys themselves say part of their protest is in solidarity with the Canadian truckers.

The American group dubbed the "People's Convoy," which began marching from the Western State of California, has been drawing participants from across the country. The protesters, who argue that American authorities have deprived them off their freedom during the Coronavirus pandemic, are calling for an end to all pandemic-related restrictions.

Many of the protesters who reached near Washington have been driving slowly in laps on the Beltway (a highway that surrounds the American capital) in the form of a circle. According to witnesses, they honked their horns as they set off, while onlookers cheered on in support of the demonstration.

The "people's convoy", which is reportedly several miles long, was slowing traffic at points along the Beltway but has not brought it to a standstill yet. The convoy's main protest is against vaccine requirements and other pandemic restrictions that have actually been slowly removed in recent weeks as major U.S. cities have rolled back mask mandates and other measures against COVID-19.

The convoy left California more than a week ago and made it to the East Coast by Saturday about 70 miles northwest of the capital, converging with other drivers and their supporters.

As part of an ongoing nationwide effort by citizens fighting for freedoms they believe were taken away during the pandemic, another convoy of truckers and supporters hit roadways on the north route of New

Jersey, another demonstration in the series of protests.

There is speculation that the New Jersey convoy had eyed Washington, D.C., as its final destination. According to the New Jersey Convoy website, participants that continue traveling south will do so "at their own discretion."

In his State of the Union speech last week, President Joe Biden signaled that the country was entering a new, phase of the pandemic without business lockdowns, school closures, or other daily disruptions.

Analysts say the protesters who have come out despite the easing of Covid restrictions indicate that the demonstrations are frustrated with other domestic problems the American administration has failed to address.

It remains unclear whether the convoys intend to drive into downtown Washington. According to the organizers, the plan, for now, is to stay on the Beltway, then head to Hagerstown, a city in Washington County, Maryland.

one participant who described himself as the lead trucker told a cheering crowd he would drive his truck into the heart of the American capital saying "D.C., the government, whomever, can claim that they have all this opposition for us waiting in D.C.," the man said. "But that flag on the back of my truck will go down to Constitution Avenue between the White House and the Washington Monument."

According to one U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss domestic operations, for weeks now, U.S. federal law enforcement agencies have been making plans in coordination with state and local authorities in preparation for the possible arrival of the convoy.

In the last week of February, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security bulletin sent to security forces, which was reviewed by some media outlets said trucker convoys could hinder emergency responders depending on the size of the protest.

This is in addition to far-right extremists from Europe and North America who are already seeking to enter or may have entered Ukraine to fight the Russians.

In a report on March 3, Brookings said, "When foreign fighters deploy, violence against civilians goes up." It added, "Far-right militias

are already declaring they plan to exploit the war (in Ukraine)."

Also, in a report on February 25, one day after Russia invaded Ukraine, the New York Times reported, "The Russian attack on Ukraine has prompted a flurry of activity among far-right European militia leaders, who have taken to the internet to

## Roger Stone raged at ‘disgrace’ Trump over failure to overturn election: report

*Washington Post* report, based on unseen film footage, also says Stone, 69, said Jared Kushner ‘needs to have a beating’



evening, the Post said, Trump said: "If you count the legal votes, I easily win."

The Post detailed Stone's activities leading up to 6 January, including staying at the Willard hotel, a "command centre" for Trump associates. Footage, the paper said, showed Stone with members of the Oath Keepers militia now charged with seditious conspiracy.

The film-makers also shot Stone as he attempted to broker presidential pardons for money, and as he attempted to secure access to Trump's rally near the White House on 6 January, but failed.

As the Capitol riot began, the Post said, Stone was unavailable for a short period of time. He then told the film-makers: "I think it's really bad for the movement. It hurts, it doesn't help. I'm not sure what they thought they were going to achieve."

But he also said: "When you can't get a fair and honest judicial opinion, when you can't get a fair, honest and transparent election, when your legislative process is constipated by fear and threat ..."

The Post said Stone then "slightly misquot[ed] former president John F Kennedy": "Those who make peaceful progress impossible make violent revolution inevitable."

Stone returned to Florida and worked on his pardon plan. The Post said intended recipients included senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley and representatives Jim Jordan and Matt Gaetz. Spokesmen for Cruz and Jordan denied contacts with Stone.

On 20 January 2021, inauguration day, enraged by a pardon on fraud charges for Steve Bannon, a rival for Trump's attentions, Stone reportedly said Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, was "going to get a beating. He needs to have a beating. And needs to be told, 'This time we're just beating you. Next time we're killing you.'"

Urged to say he was joking, the Post said, Stone said: "No, it isn't joking. Not joking. It's not a joke."

Stone also said Kushner should be "punished in the most brutal possible way" and would be "braindead when I get finished with him".

Stone then turned to Trump, who he said deserved to be impeached and whose presidency had been the "greatest single mistake in American history".

"A good, long sentence in prison will give him a chance to think about it, because the southern district is coming for him, and he did nothing," Stone said, referring to prosecutors in New York investigating Trump's business.

Stone also mocked Trump's apparent plan to run again, saying: "Run again! You'll get your fucking brains beat in."

He told the film-makers: "Obviously if you use any of that, I'll murder you."

(Source: Guardian)

## Stop Ukraine war or face another Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan

From page1► Now those extremists who used Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan as their battlegrounds, may seek to find a way to Ukraine, especially as the domain of their action has been greatly reduced in these countries. They are adventurers who have thirst to kill and don't care who is right or wrong.

raise funds, recruit fighters and plan travel to the front lines to confront the country's invaders." The Times used the SITE Intelligence Group, a private organization that specializes in tracking extremist groups, as its source.

Before it is too late and extremists turn their guns against Ukrainians

all must work hard to end the Russian war against Ukraine. Failure to silence the guns in Ukraine then one should not wonder if Ukraine becomes another Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. In that case even the Russians, who now feel they have the upper hand in Ukraine, will suffer greatly.



## New year travels allowed if COVID protocols observed, Iranian president says



From page 1 ► Noruz ceremonies and trips, if practiced under health protocols, could be beneficial for the revival of the tourism industry and handicrafts, which have been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic in many provinces, the minister explained.

Iranians traditionally make hundreds of thousands of domestic trips during the New Year holidays, when most businesses and workplaces are closed, as are schools.

### Noruz travels slump by 96 percent due to virus

In 2021, the number of domestic travels fell by 96 percent during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 20-April 2) compared to two years earlier due to struct virus-related restrictions, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. "According to the latest data Iranians made some 2.5 million overnight stays across the country during the Noruz holidays, while the number added up to over 74 million in the same period in 1398 (March 21-April 2, 2019), which shows a drastic fall," former deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri said.

"It seems many people have postponed, rescheduled, or even delayed their travel plans to help limit the spread of the coronavirus around the country," the official added.

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

of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent.

### Iran tourism loses \$233m due to COVID restrictions

Available data suggest the country's tourism industry has suffered \$233m losses due to COVID restrictions over the past two years. "Iranian tourism facilities have incurred a loss of 69 trillion rials (\$233 million) due to the outbreak of the coronavirus over the past two years," an official with the tourism ministry said early in January.

It has been a major shock to the tourism industry when the coronavirus emerged in 2019, Rokna quoted Mohammad-Kazem Kholdi-Nasab as saying on Monday. Citing an example, the official said, nearly all pre-scheduled trips were canceled during the new Iranian year holidays in March 2020 except for those that were necessary.

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

With only two months until the upcoming new Iranian year holidays, the tourism ministry is preparing safe and smart travel packages for Iranian holidaymakers and travelers, he noted. "Nearly 70 percent of the population has been vaccinated, so these trips may be able to partially compensate for the damage done to tourism facilities over the past two years."

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

## Tehran exhibit features clay works, ceramics

TEHRAN – A collection of clay works, ceramics has been put on show at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Tehran.

Handcrafted by Iranian artist Zohreh Hosseini, the works have been formed through various traditional skills passed down from generation to generation, Mehr reported.

Most of her quality ceramics and earthen works have been decorated with vivid colors, the report said.

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.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven

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

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

The public exhibit will be running through March 9.

TEHRAN – Iranian Hamedan province is further moving towards possible inscription of its ancient Hegmataneh hill on the UNESCO World Heritage list as it has reached solutions to solve obstacles.

Based on UNESCO criteria, the traffic fellow related to a nearby steel marketplace has been declared as a major barrier faced with the registration.

In that regard, a provincial official on Monday said an alternative route has been designed in order to solve the problem.

"An alternative route for the steel sellers' market has been designed and ratified to replace the current road which is the biggest obstacle to the global registration of the archaeological hill," Farzad Teymouri explained.

So far, several follow-up meetings have been held in this regard, the last of which attended by Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, the deputy minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, resulted in a decision that paves the way for the inscription, the official added.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations. Ecbatana was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenian kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

# Hegmataneh hill one step closer to become World Heritage



*This golden rhyton (drinking vessel) is excavated from Ecbatana, west central Iran. The object, which dates from the Achaemenid era (c. 550 – 330 BC), is being kept at the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran.*

Ecbatana is widely believed to be once a mysterious capital of Medes. According to ancient Greek writers, the city was founded in about 678 BC by Deioces, who was the first king of the Medes.

French Assyriologist Charles Fossey (1869 – 1946) directed the first excavation in Tepe Hegmataneh for six months in 1913. Erich Friedrich Schmidt (1897 – 1964), who was a German

and American-naturalized archaeologist, took some aerial photos from Hamedan between 1935 and 1937.

According to the Greek historian Xenophon of Athens (c.430–c.355), Ecbatana became the summer residence of the Achaemenid kings. Their palace is described by the Greek historian Polybius of Megalopolis. He writes that the city was richer

and more beautiful than all other cities in the world; although it had no wall, the palace, built on an artificial terrace, according to Livius, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

An inscription, unearthed in 2000, indicates that Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358) built a terrace with columns in Ecbatana. Some twelve kilometers southwest of Hamedan is Ganjnameh, where Darius I and his son Xerxes had inscriptions cut into the rock.

Polybius, a Greek historian of the Hellenistic period noted for his work The Histories, tells that the builders used cedar and cypress wood, which was covered with silver and gold. The roof tiles, columns, and ceilings were plated with silver and gold. He adds that the palace was stripped of its precious metals in the invasion of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great and that the rest was seized during the reigns of Antigonus and Seleucus. Later, Ecbatana was one of the capitals of the Seleucid and the Parthian Empires, sometimes called Epiphaneia.

About 1220 Hamedan was destroyed by the Mongols. In 1386 it was sacked by Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, and the inhabitants were massacred. It was partly restored in the 17th century and subsequently changed hands often between Iranian ruling houses and the Ottomans.

## Tehran, Tashkent museums call for robust cooperation

TEHRAN – The National Museum of Iran has reached an agreement with the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan to widen relations, organize loan exhibits and share expertise.

On Friday, National Museum of Iran Director Jebrael Nokandeh and his counterpart Jannat Ismailova, who presides over the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, inked a memorandum of understanding in Tashkent.

The agreement is expected to help develop scientific and cultural ties such as research, cultural and educational projects between the two major museums, an official with the National Museum told Tehran Times on Sunday.

"Cooperation in the field of culture, history, art and museum activities; holding joint symposiums; organizing joint exhibitions; the exchange of specialists and joint publications are amongst other pillars of the argument," the official explained.

This memorandum of understanding is valid for five years. It should be noted that the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan is under the auspices of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, the official added.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the fourth working meeting of the joint exhibition on Common Heritage along the Silk Roads. The meeting was held by UNESCO in Tashkent on Thursday and Friday. In addition to the National Museum of Iran, the National Museums of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan also signed a memorandum of understanding with the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan.

On the same day, the Iranian ambassador



to Uzbekistan Hamid Nayyerabadi said the two countries have immense potential to broaden museum ties due to deep cultural and historical commonalities. "Deep cultural and historical commonalities between Iran and Uzbekistan has provided a rich ground for interactions between the museums of the two countries in holding cultural events and exhibitions," Nayyerabadi said.

Nayyerabadi made the remarks on Friday during a meeting with Nokandeh at the embassy in Tashkent. Referring to the interest and desire of the government and people of the Republic of Uzbekistan to have more relations with Iran, Nayyerabadi said the two nations enjoy profound cultural and historical commonalities.

Furthermore, the Iranian envoy announced his readiness to help with the translation of the guidebook of the National Museum of Iran into Uzbek. This important reference of Iranian culture, art, and civilization has been translated into various languages such as English, Italian, Japanese, French, and German in addition to Persian.

Chock-full of priceless objects showcasing the juicy history of the nation,

the National Museum showcases ceramics, pottery, stone figures, and carvings, mostly taken from excavations at Persepolis, Ismail Abad (near Qazvin), Shush, Rey, and Turang Tappeh to name a few.

Its main building, designed by French architect André Godard and completed in 1928, is one of the more attractive modern buildings in Tehran, blending Sassanian principles such as the grand iwan-style entrance with art deco-style brickwork.

Inside, among the finds from Shush, there's a stone capital of a winged lion, some delightful pitchers and vessels in animal shapes, and colorful glazed bricks decorated with double-winged mythical creatures. A copy of the diorite stele detailing the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, found at Shush in 1901, is also displayed – the original being in Paris.

Exhibits from Persepolis include a magnificent human-headed capital, a cuneiform inscription proclaiming the might and godly affinity of Xerxes, and a striking frieze of glazed tiles from the central hall of the Apadana Palace. Also on display are a famous trilingual inscription from the time of Darius I, a bull-headed capital and carved staircase, a statue of a sitting dog that looks like it was carved just weeks ago, and four foundation tablets inscribed in cuneiform.

One of the more startling exhibits is the Salt Man from Zanjan. He is estimated to have been a miner who died in the 3rd or 4th century CE, but whose white-bearded head, leg in a leather boot, and tools were preserved by the salt in which he was buried.

# 19 Yazd elements win heritage status

TEHRAN – 19 elements traditionally practiced in Yazd including the art of making indigenous dishes have won national heritage status, joining some 2,000 ones inscribed on Iran's national list of intangible cultural heritage.

The entries comprise making various meat stews and bread, as well as their associated rituals, passed down from generation to generation in villages across the central Yazd province, CHTN reported on Monday.

Some 2,000 elements have been registered on Iran's national list of intangible cultural heritage, tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami said on Friday.

"So far, about two thousand intangible cultural elements have been registered in the country."

"Intangible cultural heritage such as culture, religion, and rituals are of very

high importance as they shape the identity of any nation," Zarghami said.

Moreover, 17 Iranian elements have been registered in the UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Among Iran's entries to the prestigious list are Radif of Iranian music; traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan; Music of the Bakhshis of Khorasan; Naqqali, Iranian dramatic story-telling; traditional skills of building and sailing Iranian Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf; and traditional skills of crafting and playing Dotar.

Furthermore, the ancient country seeks to register five intangible elements on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in near future. They are ancient festivities of Mehregan and Yalda, crafting and



playing [the stringed instrument of] the Oud, traditional craft of silk spinning, and Turkmen Duzi (a kind of traditional textile being practiced by Iranian Turkman tribes).

Yalda (the birth of a new sun), which is also called Yalda Night, is celebrated on the eve of the winter solstice, which falls on the last day of Azar (the last month of autumn in the Iranian calendar year). On that graceful night, the winter chill is vanquished and the warmth of love embraces the

entire family. It's a time for pleasant family reunions that entails laughter, merriment, and good cheer. According to UNESCO, Yalda ceremonies, in the best way, point to cultural diversity and human creativity, especially when one considers the wide range of the communities that celebrate it.

Mehregan celebration, which falls on the 196th day of the Iranian calendar year that usually equals October 2 in the Gregorian calendar, brings together clusters of Iranian Zoroastrians to hold reunions in celebration of Mithra, an ancient goddess of friendship, affection, and love. A key feature for the event is large spreads in purple laden with various ingredients, dishes, and elements each on behalf of a particular belief. Fruits, vegetables, dried nuts, sweets, rosewater, grilled lamb meat, lotus seeds, silver coins, and a scale are typically placed, the

latter symbolizes autumnal equinox.

The oud is a pear-shaped stringed instrument frequently used in Persian and Middle Eastern music whose construction is similar to that of the lute. It was thought that this musical instrument was invented by nomad tribes since it was light and mobile. Some believe it was originated in the Caucasus region, other sources report more western regions as a point of origin. Some findings show an early elliptical design of Oud found in the ruins of Shush, Iran. Some experts theorize that a priest is shown to be playing it in that depiction.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26

are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

With its winding lanes, a forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, being referred to as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region. The oasis city is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains.

Yazd has an interesting mix of people as well, some 10 percent of whom follow the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism. Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atashkadeh-e Yazd, Towers of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.



# Iran ready to offer innovative investment opportunities to D-8 countries

TEHRAN – Iran has announced its readiness to offer innovative investment opportunities and export technological products to the member countries of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

D-8 includes major Muslim developing countries namely, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

In order to attract capital for startups, inventions, and technological projects, we are ready to take a step to attract foreign investors, Mohammad Saleh Khaleghi, Iran's representative in

the technology exchange network of the D-8 countries, said.

“We collect export opportunities from national offices and monitor the market in seven other countries, and our effort is to address the issue of technological export to these countries in the simplest way,” he explained, IRNA reported.

### Technology advancement

Today, the country's knowledge-based ecosystem accounts for more than 3 percent of GDP. And the figure is projected to reach 5 percent, however, the main goal is to step toward a 10 percent share in GDP, Sattari told



Fars on February 13.

The share of knowledge-based companies in the country's economy has exceeded 9 quadrillion rials (about \$34 billion), and since 2019, it has experienced a growth of more than 450 percent, he stated.

The knowledge-based ecosystem is a newly-emerged ecosystem but has so far been able to solve many of the country's problems.

The Innovation and Prosperity Fund affiliated with the Vice Presidency of Science and Technology has earmarked a sum of 170 trillion rials (nearly \$650 million) to

support knowledge-based companies over the past 4 years.

There are currently 6,263 knowledge-based companies operating in the country, offering advanced products and services in various fields of technology to domestic and foreign markets, and some of them have entered international markets, Siavash Maleki, deputy head of the Fund, stated.

The fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, oil, and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in, leading to import reduction.

## Twelve scientists announced winners of Khwarizmi Intl. Festival

From page 1 ► The annual festival is an opportunity for both Iranian and foreign participants to put their scientific achievements on display. Khwarizmi International Award is dedicated to recognizing outstanding scientific achievements made by researchers, inventors, and innovators from all over the world.

The executive process of this festival in five competitive sections includes domestic projects, foreign projects, projects of Iranians living abroad, selected successful projects in national production, commercialized projects from the previous award winners, and special awards (to honor Iranian intellectuals and scientists).

Fields of participation included aerospace, civil engineering, materials and metallurgy, agriculture, natural resources, animal sciences and veterinary medicine, electrical and computer, mechanics, basic sciences,

green technology, mechatronics, biotechnology and basic medical sciences, industry and technology management, medical sciences, chemical technology, information technology, and nanotechnology.

Nine domestic and three foreign projects from Italy, France, and China were selected as the winners of the 35th Khwarizmi International Festival.

Three foreign projects were selected from the fields of heterogeneous photocatalysts, treatment of hypertension, and human genetics; and the national projects were in the fields of chemical compounds, cultural heritage restoration materials, railway signal exchange, design and production of cardiac electroshock devices, and design and production of nanofibers and etc.

The ceremony was also attended by Science Minister Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol,

Health Minister Bahram Einollahi, and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari.

### Khwarizmi International Award

According to Khwarizmi official website, in 1987, the leading Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST), affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, decided to institute an award, which acknowledges the Iranian outstanding achievements in the field of Science and Technology.

IROST proposed the creation of the Khwarizmi Award in memory of Abu Jafar Mohammad Ibn Mousa Khwarizmi, the great Iranian Mathematician, and Astronomer (770-840 C.E).

The first session of the Khwarizmi Award, in 1987, called for Iranian nationals to present their outstanding contribution, invention, or innovation.

## Majlis supports building schools, releasing prisoners

TEHRAN – Members of the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) have approved special budgets to support releasing unintentional crime prisoners and building schools nationwide.

In this regard, a total of 3 trillion rials (nearly \$12 million) was earmarked to the Blood Money Organization to help release prisoners of involuntary crimes and reduce social harms as per the next year's budget bill (March 2022-March 2023).

Moreover, it was approved that the Ministry of Education should spend one percent of the revenues of state-run companies and the net profits of banks and private institutions to build schools in deprived areas in line with the goal of promoting educational justice.



### Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes

A total of 6,362 inmates of involuntary crimes have been released since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21, 2021), according to the head of the Blood Money Organization.

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

The third way of assistance is

the release of unintentional victims by paying their debt.

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

The prisoners had a sum of 3 trillion rials (nearly \$111 million) in debt, and more than half of this amount has been forgiven by the plaintiffs, IRNA reported on Friday.

### School-building donors

Benefactors have proposed 28 trillion rials (nearly \$102 million) to be included in the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year for building and renovating schools, Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Devel-

opment, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said.

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

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

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

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

## Women – the resilient core of society

From page 1 ► **Focus on Women and the multiplier effect**

UNDP Iran sprang into action, formulating immediate response initiatives and longer-term recovery plans. Working in close collaboration with the Government to reduce the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, UNDP designed a Rapid Socio-Economic Response (RASER) initiative to support the worst-affected populations, including WHH and vulnerable women in rural and deprived areas. The RASER initiative recognizes the need to combine social protection with home-based income generating activities and other economically sustaining measures.

The initiative is based on an integrated development model and focusses on supply and demand simultaneously. Promoting the circular economy and networks and promoting the use of digitalization are at the core of the response.

Vulnerable women in 100 villages belonging to three provinces were particularly identified under the scheme, implemented in partnership with three main Government agencies – Vice-Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, and Ministry of Cooperative, Labour and Social Welfare, apart from relevant line ministries such as Ministry of Health and Medical Education, and Provincial Governors.

### Job-generation and psycho-social support

The joint interventions by the Government and UNDP focussed on both creating employment opportunities and providing psycho-social support. They included conducting medical and psycho-social training programmes to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic, distributing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) packages to vulnerable households and providing medical and COVID-19 life insurance to whole families, besides providing conditional cash transfers to households to buy essential supplies. Approximately 5,500 households were targeted, and 4,400 women, including WHH and rural women, benefitted from RASER.

Micro, small and home-based businesses which were hit by the pandemic were revived through interventions under RASER, and around 5,000 jobs were created or reinstated, keeping in mind both local strengths and the need for sustainability.

Microcredit funds for rural women were an

important feature. UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad and Vice-Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, supported affected businesses in Lorestan and Hormozgan provinces by leveraging the capacity of rural woman to make use of microcredits. The entire business chain was covered – from identifying local potential and comparative advantages, targeting clusters to providing necessary materials and equipment, revamping agricultural processes by introducing technology, organising vocational training sessions, encouraging a participatory mindset, and connecting businesses to markets. There was a thrust on digital tools, in respect of both training and marketing.

Under the initiative, UNDP Iran supported rural women in not only increasing agricultural production, but also in connecting them to each other and to the markets. All face masks in the PPE packages distributed to households were produced by women groups. In addition, these PPE producers were connected to other businesses, to provide eco-friendly packaging for agricultural produce, thereby ‘greening’ the RASER initiative. Local products are also being linked to Digikala, one of the main digital market platforms in Iran.

Women accounted for around 90% of the beneficiaries of the various programmes, including job generation and vocational training.

Going forward, UNDP will support the Government in scaling up the RASER initiative to focus on socio-economic recovery.

Overall, lessons learned from RASER prove that:

- \* Building resilience of women to shocks has a multiplier effect.

- \* Women have the capacity to not only take care of the health of the family and society, but also to play an important role in re-activating the local economy.

- \* Women are environmentally conscious and can promote green activities for the protection of nature and health.

- \* Women's traditional multiple roles within the family as breadwinners and educators needs special attention.

In short, women are the heart of society – they keep communities alive!

Happy International Women's Day!

## The influence of Avicenna on medical studies in the West

Part 7

Although the scholastic features of academic medicine were not finally discarded until the eighteenth century, in the choice of subjects for study it was the humanistic tendency that prevailed.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Canon gradually fell out of the syllabus at most European universities, though it was still taught by individual professors, e.g., by Werner Rolfinck at Jena in 1670.

It remained obligatory well into the eighteenth century at the Spanish universities of Valladolid and Salamanca (Gonzalez, p. 20) and likewise at Padua, where Giovanni

Battista Morgagni, the founder of morbid anatomy, still lectured on its first book in 1712-15-just as Santorio Santorio, one of the pioneers of experimental medicine, had done a century before him (Pazzini, “Manoscritti,” pp. 179-82).

It would appear, however, that these teachers used the set text mainly as background for the presentation of more recent knowledge; for example, Santorio in his commentary (Venice, 1625, 1626) describes instruments which he himself had invented (clinical thermometer, pulse meter).

(Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)  
(Concluded)

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON MARCH 7

New cases	6,426
New deaths	168
Total cases	7,096,318
Total deaths	138,116
New hospitalized patients	1,103
Patients in critical condition	3,527
Total recovered patients	6,739,811
Diagnostic tests conducted	47,808,284
Doses of vaccine injected	143,232,107

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### ‘Water transfer from Sea of Oman entails no considerable environmental risk’

Transferring water from Sea of Oman to central drought-ridden provinces of the country, provided that the environmental requirements are met, will not poses threats to the environment, Issa Kalantari, the Department of Environment (DOE) chief has announced.

To provide the amount of water needed for the country, agriculture and industries, there is no choice but to use seawater, the incredible and abundant resources, now and in the future, Kalantari stated, IRNA reported on Monday.

He went on to say that Iran located in an arid and semi-arid area, is facing environmental problems including water shortage, sand and dust storms due to low precipitation amounts coupled with climate change.

“Renewable water resources have drastically decreased to less than 80 billion cubic meters from 132 billion cubic meters over the past 50 years, and 50 billion cubic meters water consumption rate have increased to 95 billion cubic meters,” he lamented.

### شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان مشکل زیست محیطی ندارد

معاون رئیس جمهوری و رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست کشور گفت: شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان به استان های مختلف به شرط رعایت الزامات محیط زیستی مانع زیست محیطی ندارد و از نظر این سازمان بلا مانع است.

عباسی کلاتری دوشنبه شب در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا در چابهار اظهار داشت: برای تامین آب کشاورزی، آشامیدنی و صنایع کشور چاره ای جز استفاده از آب دریا نداریم و باید چه اکنون و چه آینده به این منابع بیکران و بسیار فراوان رجوع کنیم. وی افزود: ایران کشور پر آبی نیست و سالهای سال با بحران آبی، خشکسالی و مسائل زیست محیطی، گرد و غبار و ریزگردها مواجه است.

معاون رئیس جمهوری تصریح کرد: ۱۲۰ میلیارد مترمکعب آب تجدید پذیر ایران در ۴۰ تا ۵۰ سال گذشته به کمتر از ۸۰ میلیارد و مصرف آب از ۵۰ میلیارد مترمکعب به بالای ۹۵ میلیارد مترمکعب رسیده است.



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MARCH 8, 2022

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who is deserted by friends and relatives will often find help and sympathy from strangers.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:15    Evening: 18:24    Dawn: 5:01 (tomorrow)    Sunrise: 6:24 (tomorrow)

## Jalal ad-Din Rumi: Teachings

**Part 2**

The component chapters are usually translated as “Discourses,” and though they mostly seem to be composite units themselves, they are nonetheless very consistent and even include some repetition.

The first general observation that can be made is that the amount of material compiled after an extended effort is quite modest (71 discourses), and the comments that it includes about the difficulty of gaining access to Rumi’s oral teachings except when distinguished guests were present, further indicate that he was not a hands-on teacher of his disciples.

The biographical tradition in this instance supports the textual evidence with its general portrayal of Rumi as a teacher withdrawing from his students after meeting Shams, and appointing deputies (e.g., Hosam ad-Din Calabi) to represent him in that capacity instead.

Rumi’s primary mode of teaching in both of his didactic works is the teaching-story. In the *Fihe ma fih*, his teaching typically consists of a story followed by a homily that draws out its teaching points.

The *Masnavi*, which contains some of the same stories found in the *Fihe ma fih*, is, in contrast, a highly interactive poem, in which Rumi alternates voice at a rapid frequency, for instance, breaking off midstream from a narrative to address the audience directly, or even to a new embedded narrative.

This makes the *Masnavi* especially well-suited for the function of substituting for Rumi’s presence, which may explain the relatively small amount of teaching notes from students studying with him directly.

The *Masnavi* is also informative about Rumi’s private sessions with his deputy Hosam ad-Din Calabi, which are elaborated upon in the biographical tradition.

Moreover, the contents of the *Masnavi*, a work of some 26,000 verses, match the original reason given in Rumi’s biographical tradition for its composition, namely, to satisfy his disciples, who already enjoyed the *masnavi* poems of Shaikh Farid ad-Din Attar (d. ca. 1221).

This is because it is composed in the same mystical *masnavi* genre that his predecessor excelled in, and it contains a much higher theological content, which identifies his immediate audience as being in all likelihood the members of the madrasa that Rumi had inherited from his father.

It is important to note that, while Rumi’s *Masnavi* cites the Quran and Hadiths at a much higher frequency than any other work of its genre, and also contains more technical jurisprudential and theological passages, such material is used as a means for imparting mystical teachings.

Far from promoting a scholastic religiosity with such material, Rumi instead subverts basic religious tenets, including the sealing of prophethood with Muhammad (S), the rituals such as communal prayer, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Rumi’s reference in the *Fihe ma fih* to the common perception of his teaching circle being dangerously likely to make one abandon conventional scholarship, as well as his emphatic dismissal of a more religious rival’s circle, which had managed to draw one of his disciples away, further underline

(Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)  
(To be continued)

# Iran launches center to fight art counterfeiters and raise public awareness

From Page 1 ▶ In its first mission, the foundation, which has chosen “Iranian Art, Global Citizen” as its slogan, will seek to register the Iranian calligraphy style, *nastaliq*, with UNESCO, he noted.

“In this way, we welcome every contribution from everybody, because our neighboring countries are registering Iranian arts in the international arena for themselves,” he added.

He also announced the foundation’s plan to change Iranian people’s attitude on their home decorations, and said, “Iranian people usually exploit carpets, furniture and machine-made sculptures to decorate their dwellings, but we have plans to divert their attention away from these items and encourage them to use artworks in decorating their residences.”



Calligraphers Javad Bakhtiari and Banafsheh Mesripur attend a press conference in Tehran on March 6, 2022 to announce the launching of the Mahestan-e Honar Foundation.

The foundation also will launch the annual Mahestan Awards to honor top artworks of the year in various media.

For her part, Mesripur, who is also the director of the foundation, said that the foundation has also been

assigned the task of designing programs for nationwide art expos and festivals and arranging solo and group art exhibitions.

“The exhibitions will not be technique-oriented; on the contrary, they will be focused on concepts to develop people’s taste for genuine arts,” she noted.

“We will also seek to organize art exhibitions outside the country and also arrange expos to showcase works of overseas artists in Iran to promote peace and friendship among nations,” Mesripur said.

Sabzekar also pointed to the counterfeit artworks offered in the Iranian auctions over the past few years and said that the foundation’s mission to evaluate the genuineness of artworks will help the auctions to restore their reputation.

## BUFF festival to screen “Wolf Cubs of Apple Valley”, “Asteroid”, “Solar Eclipse”

TEHRAN – The BUFF International Film Festival will be screening the Iranian movies “Wolf Cubs of Apple Valley”, “Asteroid” and “Solar Eclipse”.

The children and youth film festival will take place in Malmö, Sweden, from March 19 to 25.

“Wolf Cubs of Apple Valley” directed by Fereidun Najafi and “Asteroid” by Mehdi Hosseiniwand-Aalipur will be competing in the feature films category.

In “Wolf Cubs of Apple Valley”, a shot rings out in the valley, and Asho’s friend drops to the ground. The rifle bullet was meant for Asho; his father is wanted for murder and he, too, is being hunted. To evade those who are looking for him, Asho is forced to dress up as a girl and hide at his aunt’s house. In his hunt for answers, he heads out to Apple valley with his cousin, Pari, to look for his mother, who he has always believed to be dead.

“Asteroid” tells the story of Ebrahim,

a twelve-year-old boy who lives with his mother and five siblings in the middle of the desert. His father and elder brother have disappeared, and the responsibility of looking after his family lies on Ebrahim’s shoulders. “Asteroid” is a dazzlingly beautiful depiction of togetherness, familyties and responsibility, set in Iran’s incredible landscape. “Asteroid” has echoes of lauded films such as “Lilla Mamma” and “Capernaum”.

Directed by Raha Amirfazli and Alireza Qasemi, “Solar Eclipse” has been chosen to be screened in the short movies competition.

The film follows Saghi and her friends, who have gone to the largest park in Tehran to take pictures of the solar eclipse. The rebellious teenagers enjoy their freedom to the maximum, but all good things come to an end.

“Challenges” is the theme of this year’s festival, which features 118 films from 51 different countries.



“Asteroid” by Mehdi Hosseiniwand-Aalipur.

“Youngsters face many challenges in today’s society,” the organizers said.

They added, “This is portrayed in this year’s films from a variety of different perspectives: transgender identity, the climate crisis, sexuality, and mental health, to name but a few. These are challenges that are met both with a struggle and with hope, even when it isn’t easy.”

## “Mr. Penumbra’s -24Hour Bookstore” published in Persian

TEHRAN – “Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore” by American writer Robin Sloan has been published in Persian.

Published by Hirmand, the 2012 novel has been translated by Seyyed Saeid Kalati.

The Great Recession has shuffled Clay Jannon away from life as a San Francisco web-design drone and into the aisles of Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore, but after a few days on the job, Clay discovers that the store is more curious than either



A copy of the Persian edition of Robin Sloan’s novel “Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore”.

its name or its gnomic owner might suggest.

The customers are few, and

they never seem to buy anything; instead, they “check out” large, obscure volumes from strange corners of the store.

Suspicious, Clay engineers an analysis of the clientele’s behavior, seeking help from his variously talented friends, but when they bring their findings to Mr. Penumbra, they discover the bookstore’s secrets extend far beyond its walls.

“Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore” combines elements of fantasy, mystery, friendship

and adventure as a way of looking at the modern conflict and transition between new technology (electronic) and old (print books).

The protagonist is a laid-off Silicon Valley tech worker who begins working at a dusty bookstore with very few customers, only to start discovering one secret after another. The mysterious old books, along with the store’s owner, lead to a 500-year-old secret society.

## I tried not to write a feminist story

### An interview with Reza Shabani

History has always been sweet; even though it seems bitter and painful at the moment, it gradually reveals its sweetness to us, and when we read it in form of a novel or story, it will be even more pleasant. The book “Someone is walking through our lives,” written by Somaye Alemi, and published by Soore Mehr, is one of those sweet historical books.

This book is a great novel about three historical events in three different times and places; “The Hajj in 1987,” “The Imposed War,” and “Internal Laws of Mujahedin-e-Khalq.”

“Someone is walking through our lives” is somehow a feminine novel about three women named Reyhan, Shirin, and Marta; one of whom lives in Iran, the other in Baghdad, and the third in Berlin.

**\* At first glance, the title you chose for the book attracts the readers’ attention. Do you believe the reader will understand why this title was chosen at the end of the book?**

That is exactly what I tried to achieve. I spent a lot of time on the story plan and choosing a name that matches the events in the story, and I believe the title’s meaning has been understood based on audience feedback. In my opinion, the reader’s attempt to discover the connection between the title and the text can be a different experience in the reading process.

**\*Before the story begins, you quote a verse from Surah Al-Kahf, which was: “And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not?” have you addressed one of the**

### book characters or the readers?

The Quran addresses us all, the world of stories and characters.

**\* The book’s content shows that you had done good research. Would explain more about its process?**

The novel’s starting point was in fact a personal experience, a bitter and emotional one that made me write. When I was eight years old, I heard that my mother had died in Hajj; even though it was false news and she was still alive, the pain of that event bothered her for a long time. Her chest bone was broken, her skull was injured, and she fainted repeatedly because of the blows to her head.

**\*Are you talking about the tragic event of Hajj in 1987?**

Yes. My mother was missing for three days and was founded injured three days later. When I became a writer, the idea of writing this pain down as a novel came to my mind, so I searched about it on the internet and found out that Mujahedin-e-Khalq’s organization was also involved in the killing of about 400 Iranians during the 1987 Hajj. In my following research through history, I found “Ulrich” a German General that had things to say.

**\*Did “Ulrich” have an important role?**

Yes, because he was in charge of securing the city of Mecca at the time of the incident, and for sure he had entered Saudi Arabia with a plan. The things he had managed to do and his plan mentioned in the book were documented and real, but the rest of the story and his wife, Marta

was fictional.

**\* So, from the very beginning, you planned to write three stories in parallel?**

No. At first, I only planned to write about “Reyhan,” but then I realized that the story is too deep to be told by just one character, and there was a possibility of losing some details. So, I decided to tell the story using three different characters, and adding them to the story one by one.

**\*How long did the processes of researching and writing the book take?**

The research part took almost a year and a few months, almost more than the writing part, and nine months for writing it.

**\*What genre do you think your novel is in? Can we put it in the war genre?**

I myself consider it historical, with the focus on the Iranian revolution and the imposed war.

**\* Although the role of women is more prominent in your book, and it may be considered a feminine novel at first glance; not only are the women of your book fragile, but also powerful and have their own roles. Does each woman play the role of a symbol?**

The first thing I did for the women of the story to make them look strong was to show men as real, not awkward and weak-minded, like today’s feminist stories.

The first thing I did to make the women in the story seem powerful was to portray men as actual men, not as fool and useless as they are in today’s feminist fiction.