

Iran Highlights Taliban Responsibility to Ensure Security

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Report



Biden's choice

TEHRAN — According to a report published by Barak Ravid, an Israeli author for the Axios website, Washington and Tel-Aviv are set to hold another round of strategic talks focusing on Iran's nuclear activities. Why does this matter?

From the very beginning of his campaigning, Joe Biden pledged to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), otherwise known as the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. However, he delayed the talks for two months with the excuse of deciding his political delegation. Later, he assigned Antony Blinken to "revive" the deal. In this regard, Blinken put Robert Malley, former head of the Crisis Group, a think tank that claims to be "an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict," according to its website.

The appointment of Malley as the chief negotiator of the United States raised skepticism over the very foundation of the JCPOA revival. The logic behind his appointment was that one of the masterminds behind the JCPOA text would be a perfect choice for the revival of the said text. Yet, over the course of eight intensive rounds of negotiations, Malley turned into an entirely different person.

Being one of the minds behind the JCPOA text, one would normally expect Malley to adhere and believe in what he has written, and what has become an internationally recognized agreement. However, this diplomat began his tactics step by step by throwing stones in the way of a fruitful negotiation. How? By making excessive, maximalist demands, some of which were entirely out of the JCPOA context.

Baffled by internal conflicts within the administration, Joe Biden's cabinet has failed to determine a perfect strategy to resuscitate the nuclear deal. Case in point is the new round of talks between the U.S. and the Israeli regime which is set to begin in the current week. This was clear in the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman's remarks to the Tehran Times on Monday. ► Page 2

Barij Essence earn second win in Asian Women's Club Volleyball C'ship

TEHRAN – Iranian volleyball club Barij Essence defeated Uzbekistan's Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute straight sets (25-20, 25-15, 25-16) in the 2022 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship on Monday.

Aytak Salamat scored a match-high 19 points for the Iranian team at the 5,000-seater Abay Arena Cultural and Sports Complex in Semey, Kazakhstan.

Barij Essence started the campaign with a 3-0 win over Kyrgyzstan VC on Sunday.

The Iranian side, spearheaded by captain and opposite spiker Mahsa Kadhoda, will play Thailand's Diamond Food-Fine Chef Sport Club on Tuesday.

"I am satisfied with my girls' performance because Uzbek side played well and made us in trouble. We will do our best against the Thai side on Tuesday," Barij coach Fatemeh Shaban Khamseh said.

"It's very good for my team to win this match and I was very happy. I would like to thank all fans who supported our team," said Mahsa Kadhoda.

Kazakhstan's Altay and Kuanysh, Barij Essence of Iran, Thailand's Diamond Food-Fine Chef Sport Club, Uzbekistan's Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute and Kyrgyzstan compete against one another in the single round-robin competition.

Macron secures second term in a divided French nation



Current President Emmanuel Macron has defeated Marine Le Pen in the second round of France's elections but faces an uphill task to unite a much more polarized nation than when he first took the helm in 2017.

The country's Interior Ministry announced

the final result that saw Macron win a second term in office with 58.55 percent of the votes compared to Le Pen's 41.45 percent.

Five years ago Macron swept to victory over his same rival with 66 percent of the votes.

Around 49 million people were eligible to cast their ballots but 49 million people certainly did not cast their ballots with voter turnout also lower. Abstention has been put at 28 percent which is the highest on record in 50 years. ► Page 5

Iran's annual exports to Russia rise 14%

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's export to Russia rose 14 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), the Iranian Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) data showed.

According to the mentioned data, Iran exported 1,139,992 tons of commodities worth over \$579 million to Russia in the past year,

IRIB reported

The Islamic Republic had exported 1,060,793 tons of commodities worth \$509.917 million to Russia in the Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20, 2021).

The main Iranian products exported to Russia in the previous year were fresh or

dried pistachios, ordinary non-expandable polystyrene, fresh kiwi and synthetic fibers, and other types of polyester.

Wheat, sunflower seed oil, safflower, and raw corn were also major products imported from Russia. ► Page 4

Iranian knowledge-based products to develop markets in Russia, Armenia

TEHRAN – The Innovation and Prosperity Fund has organized two events to expand the international markets for Iranian knowledge-based products in Russia and Armenia.

In this regard, fifteen knowledge-based firms will attend the International Specialized Exhibition of Medical and Health Equipment of Iran with the support of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, from June 10 to 12.

In this exhibition, knowledge-based companies active in the fields of medical equipment will showcase their products, including operating room and emergency equipment, medical consumables, laboratory, and dental equipment, orthopedic supplies and products, hospital equipment and facilities, radiology and sonography equipment, ► Page 7

Susa, a cradle of civilization

TEHRAN – Situated between the Karkheh and Dez rivers in southwest Iran, Susa was once one of the most important and glamorous cities of the ancient world.

Susa, which is inhabited for thousands of years, embraces several layers of superimposed urban settlements from around the late 5th millennium BC until the 13th century CE.

The ancient town served as the capital of

Elam (Susiana) and the administrative capital of the Achaemenian king Darius I and his successors from 522 BC.

Historically speaking, Susa was once part of the historic kingdom of Elam between Babylon and ancient Persia as the lower Zagros Mountains of Persia descend into the Mesopotamian region.

In a story published by The Travel website

on Sunday, People may be familiar with it as being the capital of the Persian Empire in the Book of Esther. According to that account, it was here that Esther was wed to the powerful Persian Emperor and managed to bravely save her Hebrew people from annihilation.

Moreover, Susa continued its magnificence and remained a strategic center during the Parthian and Sasanian periods, the empires that ruled this region during the Roman period. ► Page 6

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Interview



US-Pakistan ties won't come at cost of strategic engagement with China: expert

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – Director of China Pakistan Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad says that Pakistan will not sacrifice its good ties with China for other powers.

"This (U.S.-Pakistan relations) will not come at the cost of strategic engagement with China," Talat Shabbir tells the Tehran Times.

"The incumbent government, led by Pakistan Muslim League (N) had good working experience with China, back to 2013-18 for commencement and timely completion of early harvest projects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," Shabbir adds.

"The focus now again is on reviving that spirit and re-energizing the relationship. In this regard, the commitment of the new government and Chinese side is of greater importance to reinvigorate CPEC which is being considered a lifeline for Pakistan's economy."

Following is the text of the interview:

What were the real causes of Imran Khan's ouster? Had his rapprochement with China and Russia angered Washington?

The real reason for the ouster of Imran Khan was that he lost the confidence of 172 members in the Majlis-e-Shoora of Pakistan. His coalition partners joined opposition parties and voted against Khan because they complained the promises made to them were not fulfilled. He lost office through a democratic and constitutional process. As far as the question of foreign interference ► Page 5

Farabi Cinema Foundation ready to do film on IRGC Aerospace Force's capabilities

TEHRAN – Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation has said that it is ready to produce a film on the IRGC Aerospace Force's powerful defense capabilities.

Speaking in a meeting held last Friday with Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, the director of the foundation, Mehdi Javadi, said, "In collaboration with the IRGC Aerospace Force and the Revayate Fath Cultural Foundation, We are eager to make a film about the IRGC Aerospace Force's powerful defense and drone capabilities this year."

He stressed the need for showing the capabilities and achievements of the force in film productions. ► Page 8



**REMEMBER
PALESTINE**
by Tehran Times

Palestinians resisting despite decades of sufferings and dispossession

TEHRAN- With the rise of tensions between Israeli forces and Palestinian people in Al-Aqsa Mosque over the last weeks, Palestinians from all walks of life are preparing to wield strength against the archenemy on Quds Day.

According to medical reports, Israeli security forces have made a fresh incursion into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, hurting hundreds of Palestinians.

It is worth saying that such violent acts have sparked international condemnation.

Palestinian media outlets released videos featuring Israeli soldiers fired tear gas and rubber bullets at worshippers during dawn prayers in the holy month of Ramadan and Palestinian youngsters retaliated by throwing stones and petrol bombs.

While some Arab states have normalized ties with Israel, Palestinians have launched a new phase of resistance or intifada against the Tel Aviv regime.

As Quds Day is approaching, Iranians express solidarity with the Palestinians and encourage them to press ahead with their struggle against occupation.

Quds Day is an annual event held on the last Friday of Ramadan. It was

initiated by Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in 1979 to show solidarity with Palestinians in condemnation Zionist regime which has stolen the Palestinian lands.

Protests will be staged in a number of countries against Israel's occupation of Palestine, including Jerusalem al-Quds, on Quds Day. Rallies are organized in numerous places throughout the world by both Muslim and non-Muslims.

To commemorate the heroic resistance of Palestinians, including Al-Quds citizens, the Tehran Times is set to host an online event, titled "Remember Palestine". The event is intended to show the world that the dazzling ember of resistance will by no means fade.

Submissions will start from Quds Day and will be closed on Nakba Day (Day of the Catastrophe).

In 1948, the Zionist regime forced 760,000 Palestinians out of their homeland to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, neighboring Arab states as well as too many other countries in the world, and hundreds of Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed.

To know more about the event's categories and types of submission, visit event.tehrantimes.com

IRGC Navy chief: Iran does not kid about its security

TEHRAN — In an interview with Fars news agency published on April 24, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy said that the presence of supra-regional forces in West Asia is intended to sow discord among nations, create insecurity, loot people's wealth, and pursuing colonial ambitions.

"Regarding our confrontation with the supra-regional forces, it should be said that their presence in this region is only for colonialism, looting, sedition and insecurity, and we do not acknowledge their presence in this region as legal and legitimate," Alireza Tangsiri remarked.

The commander went on to ask, "Why was the United States present in Afghanistan? Why is he in Iraq? Why is it helping the Saudi regime to bomb the oppressed people and government of Yemen? Why does it support the brutal, oppressive, and child-killing regime of Zionism?"

He said in every sedition and war which is happening in the world today, the U.S.

is a part of it.

"Today the nations have awakened and you can no longer oppress the nations with the coordination of the oppressive leaders who agree with you," the IRGC Navy chief remarked.

Tangsiri emphasized that Iran is advising the extra-regional countries to stop their evil acts as soon as possible and instead of seeking to loot the properties of the oppressed people around the world and undermining their security put their houses in order and "immediately end their path of darkness."

He added that in confrontations that have taken place Iran has acted in a completely professional manner and in accordance with internationally recognized laws.

"We do not joke with anyone about this. We will not trade the protection of the security and the resources and interests of our dear nation and country, which is the result of the blood of thousands of martyrs, for anything," the commander noted.

Iranian court sentences two anti-Iran terrorists to 16-year jails

TEHRAN - An Iranian court has sentenced two members of the anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) to 16 years in prison for their involvement in plots against the country's national security, Press TV reported.

On Monday, a court convicted the two, who were only identified by their initials, for spreading corruption on earth, conspiring against the Islamic Republic, and spreading fake news against the country.

The two terrorists were arrested while committing a terrorist attack inside Iran in spring 2019.

The two had previously committed terrorist attacks in several areas across the capital Tehran.

The MKO, also called MEK, has conducted numerous assassinations and bombings against Iranian statesmen and civilians since the 1979 victory of the Islamic Revolution in

Iran. Its members fled Iran in 1986 to Iraq, where they enjoyed backing from former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist assaults since the Islamic Revolution, about 12,000 have fallen victim to the MKO's acts of terror.

The anti-Iran cult was on the U.S. government's list of terrorist organizations until 2012. Major European countries, including France, have also removed it from their blacklists.

A few years ago, MKO elements were relocated from Camp Ashraf in Iraq's Diyala Province to Camp Hurriyet (Camp Liberty), a former U.S. military base in Baghdad, and later sent to Albania.

MKO terrorists enjoy freedom of activity in the U.S. and Europe and even hold regular meetings in which anti-European and American officials make speeches.

From page 1 ► "The Biden government has held talks with the regime, which has been trying to damage all diplomatic opportunities since day one, and this is not the first time that the Islamic Republic of Iran has witnessed such talks between the United States and the occupation regime in Jerusalem. We will continue our peaceful nuclear path regardless of any media hypes," he told the Tehran Times correspondent during his weekly presser.

Let's explore why these talks is multitudes of steps back from the previously claimed "constructive approach" of the U.S. in the Vienna talks.

The meetings will take place in the midst of a major deadlock in indirect negotiations between the United States and Iran to resurrect the nuclear accord.

According to the Axios report, "The Biden administration has recently started discussing a scenario in which the nuclear deal isn't revived. Israel is pressing the administration to cooperate on a 'Plan B' in case that happens."

Biden and Bennett held a phone call on Sunday and discussed shared regional and global security challenges, including the threat posed by Iran, the White House reported.

Bennett and Biden mentioned Iran's demand that the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) be removed from the United States' list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), according to the Israeli Prime Minister's office.

"I am sure that President Biden, who is a true friend of Israel and cares about its security, will not allow the



Biden's choice

IRGC to be removed from the list of terrorist organizations," Bennett said in a statement after the call.

"Israel has clarified its position on the issue: The IRGC is the largest terrorist organization in the world."

While the Iranian officials repeatedly underline that removing the IRGC from the FTO list is a must, and an agreement cannot be reached in Vienna without removing the IRGC from the said list, Washington keeps moving in the wrong direction by including a terrorist regime into what is discussed in the negotiation rooms in Palais Coburg, Vienna.

In an interview on March 28, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian stated that one of the outstanding issues in the Vienna nuclear talks is the unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States, specifically under Donald Trump's presidency after he left the nuclear deal.

According to Amir

Abdollahian, the IRGC is "the most important security and defense" organization in Iran, and Iran has told the Americans, likely through the EU coordinator that serves as an intermediary, its concern with the IRGC-related sanctions.

When the Biden administration knows that the IRGC sanctions is a red line for Tehran, conducting talks with Iran's arch enemy in the midst of a make-or-break negotiation could heavily jeopardize the fate of the negotiations in whole.

Iranian Foreign Ministry officials have time and again underscored that Tehran will not back down from its red lines. Though the de-listing of IRGC is one of the stalemates in the Vienna talks, it is not all. There are more stalemates that need to be addressed by the White House, and it is crucial not to undermine the remaining issues in Vienna to just one difference of opinion.

In another part of his press briefing, Iran's

Foreign Ministry spokesman Khatibzadeh said that reducing the remaining issues in the Vienna talks to just one issue is the Israelis' demand.

"Reducing what is left between us and the United States to one issue is the demand of Washington and the Zionist regime. Our topics cannot be reduced or simplified," the spokesman said.

He added that what is going on between Iran and the United States is a confrontation of two perspectives.

"One ignores a view of international law and tries to impose its policy on all international issues, and the other one is the perspective of the Islamic Republic, which believes that the signed negotiations which have been sealed and set aside, should be respected," Khatibzadeh elaborated.

He then stressed that U.S. elections and domestic politics could not determine the outcome of the Vienna talks.

"The sanctions imposed by Trump must be lifted and Iran's economic benefits must be fully considered. But the Zionist regime is deliberately undermining the remaining points," he noted.

In times like this, the role of the media becomes even more vital. The Israelis' tactics should be known to the media.

Media's role aside, the Vienna talks can be successful, if, and only if, Joe Biden makes an important decision and address Iran's concerns in writing. Then, if Tehran receives the desired response from Washington, the Iranian delegation can return to Vienna to "sign" the deal.

Foreign Ministry hopes Taliban would not misuse Iran's patience

TEHRAN — In his weekly press briefing on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman expressed hope that the interim Taliban governing body won't misuse Iran's patience and goodwill.

Responding to a question about the recent border clashes between Iranian and Afghan border guards, Saeed Khatibzadeh said, "Our brave border guards on our border with Afghanistan have dealt with restraint to this day due to the internal situation in Afghanistan and the possible unfamiliarity of some of the border guards stationed by the interim Afghan governing body on the border. Of course, this issue and its repetition is a matter of concern."

He then added that Iran's border guards have a responsibility and it is their duty to prevent any illegal trespassing.

"We were prepared to give the necessary training to the Afghan border guards on demarcate border and so on," he suggested.

The spokesman reiterated that the recurrence of these issues is a matter of very serious concern to Tehran.

"We have informed the interim governing body of Afghanistan in various ways, and we hope that this restraint would not lead to the misunderstanding and misuse of the other side."

An informed source in Herat had reported that there had been tension on Saturday at the border between Iranian border guards and the Taliban forces at the Dogharoon border crossing. The source explained that the Taliban forces initiated the construction of a road in the Dogharoon border area without prior coordination, which is considered a violation of the borders, and the Iranian border guards confronted the

effort.

However, the Taliban forces resisted this measure, and after heated debates, both sides went on alert.

In a call with the Taliban's Ministry of Interior and Defense, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's Special Envoy to Afghanistan, has stressed that any moves at the joint borders without coordination should be stopped and that matters should be settled within the framework of the Supreme Border Committee and the updating of documents between the two countries.

Iran tries to resolve all disputes through other parties' consent

Responding to a question about Iran-Afghanistan water rights agreement, the spokesman said the water right is an agreement between Iran and Afghanistan that has existed for many years, and Iran as a reasonable and stable government in the region tries to resolve all issues and disputes through the consent of the parties and through dialogue and diplomatic means.

"With the governing body of Afghanistan, we have raised this issue many times. The high-water commissioners have met and some inadequate action has been taken by the interim governing body of Afghanistan. We hope that the continuation of the path will lead to a decisive constructive action," Khatibzadeh said.

Afghanistan has always been Iran's priority

According to the Foreign Ministry spokesman, the situation in Afghanistan, has been important to Iran since day one, with a particular focus on involving all ethnic and religious groups in running the Central Asian country.

"Afghanistan's responsibility to all ethnic groups has been reminded. We do not have a minority in Afghanistan, we have tribes in Afghanistan. Let me remind you of the definite responsibility of the interim body of Afghanistan to ensure the security of all ethnic groups in the country. The interim governing body has not yet been able to establish security in some areas," he stressed.

'Unrecognized government cannot take over the embassy'

Khatibzadeh also told reporters that Iran will not hand over the embassy to the Taliban administration unless Tehran recognizes them.

"We will not hand over the embassy to any government that we have not recognized, and this is Iran's decision."

He added that Afghan diplomats travel to their embassies, including Iran. There is no order to prevent the coming and going of diplomats, he said, adding the recognition path is another path that must be followed.

"The coming and going of diplomats between their capital and the embassies is normal and takes place in periods of three, four and five years, depending on the decision of the sending countries. This issue is enshrined in international conventions and is not new and has nothing to do with us recognizing the Taliban or other issues," Khatibzadeh reiterated.

He then stated that the Afghan embassy in Tehran is accepting several thousand visitors and needs a large number of staff, especially in the consular section, adding, "We must help the embassy not to stop working after the end of its staff's mission."



TEHRAN — The metal fence in front of Mir Hossein Mousavi, the former Prime Minister who ran for the 2009 presidential election, was removed on Monday.

The Iranian Judiciary's news agency Mizan said the other restrictions will remain in place with the aim of protecting Mousavi and also preventing

him from engaging in illegal activities.

Mousavi has been under house arrest since 2009 after insisted on his claims of vote rigging and called for protests.

Mousavi was the first candidate in the Iranian election who did not acknowledge his defeat.

Iran highlights Taliban responsibility to ensure security

TEHRAN – Over the last month, a series of violent incidents took place in Afghanistan and eastern Iran that raised alarm bells about possible plots to drive a wedge between the two neighbors.

And in all these incidents Iran exercised maximum restraint to prevent the situation from spiraling out of control while keeping close contact with the ruling authorities in Kabul to make them understand the gravity of the situation.

On March 23, an Iranian police officer lost his life during clashes with militants in eastern Iran. Nearly two weeks later, on April 5, three Iranian clerics were stabbed by an Afghan extremist at the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad two of them lost their lives due to severe injuries. On April 23, the convoy of the commander of the IRGC Special Forces in Zahedan came under attack which resulted in the death of the commander's bodyguard.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, which is a stone's throw from the location of the forgoing incidents, a wave of explosions killed and injured dozens of Shiite and Sunni civilians. Six terrorist attacks hit Afghanistan in a period of four days.

Iran sensed danger early and warned about plots to instigate a sectarian war in Afghanistan and directing it to Iran. The Iranian Foreign Minister was quick to denounce the attacks in Afghanistan and reminded the Taliban of its responsibility toward maintaining peace and security.

In light of the recurrence of numerous explosions in different cities of Afghanistan, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed Iran's

concern about these tragic events. He referred to the blind terrorist acts that took place during the holy month of Ramadan, which coincides with the presence of more people in mosques, describing the targeting of fasting worshippers as a repulsive act.

Shiite and Sunni mosques were equally targeted with bomb explosions in Afghanistan, something that deeply concerned Iran. Following an explosion at the Mawlawi Sekandar mosque for Sunni Muslims, Khatibzadeh pointed to a series of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan over the past days and described the escalation of violence as a source of deep concern.

"The attack on the Sunni mosque in Kunduz Province, which followed yesterday's attack on the Shia mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif, clearly shows the evil goals of the terrorists serving as mercenaries for foreigners, who are seeking to create a civil war in Afghanistan," he added.

Also, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi used his capacity as the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council to warn about threats against the people of Afghanistan and neighboring countries.

"Following the recurrence of criminal terrorist explosions in schools and mosques in different parts of Afghanistan, which have resulted in the martyrdom and injury of a significant number of Afghans, the President sent a message and warned about the spread of threats against the Afghan people



and nations in the region," the official website of the Iranian presidency said in a statement, adding, "The President of the Supreme National Security Council also stressed the responsibility of the Afghan rulers in identifying and punishing the terrorists responsible for the recent attacks, and said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate and use all its means to counter the threat of Takfiri terrorism and prevent recurrence of these tragedies."

Iran is exercising restraint on Afghanistan and has extended a helping hand to the battle-scarred country, but in the last month there have been several dangerous incidents, each of which has the potential to provoke misunderstanding.

"The situation in Afghanistan, including all ethnic and religious groups, has been important to the Islamic Republic of Iran since day one, and the Afghan government's definite responsibility to all ethnicities and groups has been reminded," Khatibzadeh said in a Monday presser. "We do not have a minority in Afghanistan, we have tribes that all share the present and the future of Afghanistan."

Underlining the Taliban's definite responsibility to ensure the security of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Khatibzadeh said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran deeply regrets that [Afghanistan's] governing body has not yet been able to establish the necessary security in some areas."

Iran renews its vision on resolving Palestine question ahead of Quds Day

TEHRAN – Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, has issued a statement marking the Quds Day which falls on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan.

In the statement, which was published in Arabic, the spokesman reiterated Iran's vision for a solution to the Palestinian question. He said the basic solution to the Palestinian question is the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the holding of a general referendum among the aboriginal people of Palestine.

"This year, we welcome the International Quds Day on the last Friday of the blessed month of Ramadan in circumstances in which the liberation of Al-Aqsa Mosque and occupied Palestine from the clutches of the usurper racist Zionist enemy has become more necessary and more important than ever before, as Jerusalem and Palestine have become the center of solidarity between all Muslims and the free people of the world," Khatibzadeh said.

He added, "The International Quds Day, which was established in the eternal calendar of the blessed month of Ramadan, at the historic initiative of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Eminence Imam Khomeini (may God have mercy on him), came to confirm that Quds is a factor of unity and solidarity for the Islamic world and the cause of Palestine is not only Islamic, but



international par excellence."

Khatibzadeh continued, "Today, the Muslims of the world are calling with one voice for the necessity of liberating Palestine as an unparalleled priority for the Islamic Ummah. And normalization efforts do not shake the solid will of the conscious living peoples. Therefore, all Islamic countries are required to assume their responsibilities in supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people and providing them with all the means of strength and protection. Nor can governments and international forums be indifferent towards these just demands and evade their legal and humanitarian responsibilities in this field."

The spokesman stressed, "We emphasize that all political and media efforts undertaken by the Zionist entity will not succeed in removing the hideous, inhumane image of this entity, its terrorist nature, and its creed that is based on racial discrimination from the historical memory of the Islamic Ummah."

He said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran, as it has always been, will remain a mighty fortress in confronting all the conspiracies of world Zionism, and in its insistence on commemorating and dedicating the International Quds Day, calling on the Islamic Ummah to unite on the path of liberating Palestine and defeating the occupation. Hence, it awakens all international institutions and all the free people of the world to harness their political, media and human rights energies to support the defenseless Palestinian people and the resistance in the face of the inhuman policies and practices of the Zionist entity throughout the occupied land of Palestine."

He noted, "In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again that the radical solution to the question of Palestine and to the liberation of Al-Aqsa Mosque is the return of the Palestinian refugees to their motherland and the holding of a national referendum between the two indigenous inhabitants of this land."

ambassador; Tapas Adhikari, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal's new ambassador; and Peteris Vaivars, the Republic of Latvia's new ambassador submitted a copy of their credentials to Amir Abdollahian during the meetings.

The meetings were held at the Iranian foreign ministry.



New foreign ambassadors meet Iran FM

TEHRAN – A number of foreign diplomats who were recently appointed ambassadors to Iran met separately on Sunday afternoon with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The meetings took place at the beginning of their mission in the Islamic republic of Iran.

Anelli Kook, Estonia's new ambassador to Tehran; Gerard Ntahorwaroye Bikebako, Burundi's new

Iran hails latest round of talks with Saudi Arabia as 'positive'

TEHRAN – In its first official position on the fifth round of Tehran-Riyadh talks, Iran has hailed the talks as "positive" and "forward-moving."

Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, made the remarks on Monday morning during a weekly press briefing.

"The fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad was held last Thursday with the efforts of the Iraqi government and the preparations and assistance of the Omani government, and the talks were forward-moving and positive," Khatibzadeh said.

He added, "The frameworks that have been pre-planned were thoroughly discussed in these talks. And the talks were serious. If they are upgraded to the political level a bit, we can rapidly witness serious progress in various fields within the framework of the negotiations."

The spokesman also raised the possibility of a meeting between the foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia. But he said, "We are not there yet."

The fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia was held on April 21 in Baghdad with presence of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. The talks had been put on hold since September last year.

The Iranian delegation was led by Saeed Irvani, an assistant to the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council for international affairs. And the Saudi delegation was headed by Khalid al-Humaidan, the director general of General Intelligence Directorate.

The Arabic service of Russia Today quoted an Iraqi

source as saying that al-Kadhimi attended the meeting between the Saudi and Iranian security delegations in Baghdad.

The source added that "the two sides agreed to end the security negotiations, and they will move to diplomatic negotiations."

The source pointed out that "it is expected that the sixth meeting will be held on Iraqi soil."

The source continued, "The meeting was positive, and they agreed on a set of points of de-escalation between Riyadh and Tehran."

The source indicated that "the meeting lasted for several hours, and the Iranian delegation paid a visit to religious places while the Saudi delegation left Baghdad late."

Khatibzadeh said the meeting focused on bilateral and regional issues.

"We discussed bilateral and regional issues with the Saudi delegation," he said.

In a tweet posted on Saturday, Nour news, a media outlet close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said, "The fifth round of talks between the high representatives of #Iran and #SaudiArabia was held in Baghdad. The positive atmosphere of the recent meeting has raised hopes for the two countries to take a step towards resumption of relations."

It continued, "It is expected that a joint meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries will be held in the near future."

Nour News also released a photo showing al-Kadhimi

is flanked by Irvani and al-Humaidan.

During a recent visit to Tehran, in response to a question about the fifth round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein stressed, "These talks have continued and have been suspended for a while. We hope that the next round of these talks will be held between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is clear that the talks so far have been within the framework of the security offices of the two sides, and from the Iranian side there have been representatives from the foreign ministry, but the framework of the talks has been determined by the security offices. There are some issues that need to be addressed. I hope the next meeting will be held soon."

Hussein said that there has been speculation about the time of the meeting, but he cannot explicitly talk about the time of the next meeting, "but the parties are willing to continue their meetings."

In this regard, Qasim al-Araji, Iraq's national security adviser, had expressed hope that the fifth round of the Iran-Saudi talks in Baghdad would lead to the reopening of the Iranian-Saudi embassies.

Iraqi President Barham Salih first announced in May 2021 that Iraq had announced talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and that four rounds of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia had been hosted by Baghdad.

Saudi Arabia severed its diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016. Since then, tensions prevailed over relations between the two countries.

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Ex-Iran Greco-Roman wrestler Mollaghasemi dies

TEHRAN – Former Iran national team wrestler Hossein Mollaghasemi passed away on Monday.

He died at the age of 90 at a hospital in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Mollaghasemi won a silver medal at the 1957 World Championships in -62kg freestyle. He then changed to Greco-Roman wrestling and competed at the 1960 and 1964 Summer Olympics.

He led Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling team in the 1974 Asian Games, where Iran claimed the title with eight gold medals.

He was Mahmoud Mollaghasemi's nephew, who won a silver medal at the 1951 World Championships and a bronze medal at the 1952 Olympics.

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

Iran to send 18 sports to Islamic Solidarity Games

TEHRAN – Chef de Mission Asghar Rahimi says that Iran will send 18 sports to the 2021 Islamic Solidarity Games.

The Games will be held in Konya, Turkey from August 9 to 18.

"Iran will send 18 sports to Konya. Archery, athletic, basketball, cycling, fencing, gymnastic, handball, judo, karate, kick boxing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, volleyball, weightlifting, wrestling and football will compete in the Games," Rahimi said.

The 2021 Islamic Solidarity Games will be 5th edition of the event scheduled to be held from 9 to 18 August 2022 at Konya, Turkey under the aegis of Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF). It will be the first time in history that the event will be organized by the Turkish Olympic Committee.

The Games was formerly scheduled to take place from 20 to 29 August 2021 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sudanese striker Tito Okello joins Paykan

TEHRAN – Iranian football club Paykan completed the signing of Sudanese forward Tito Okello.

The 26-year-old forward almost joined Shahr Khodro from Kenyan team Gor Mahia in February but his deal was not finalized.

The 26-year-old player has penned an 18-month deal with Paykan.

Okello made his debut for South Sudan on October 10, 2020, against Cameroon B.

Paykan, headed by Mojtaba Hosseini, will play Persepolis on May 4 on Matchweek 25 of Iran Professional League.

Zahedifard chosen to officiate Hazfi Cup final

TEHRAN – Mohammadhossein Zahedifard has been appointed to officiate Iran's Hazfi Cup final match between Nassaji and Aluminum.

The match will take place in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Wednesday.

Zahedifard, 36, will be assisted by Yaghoub Hojati and Hadi Toosi in this match.

The Iran's Hazfi Cup was founded in 1975 and Esteghlal are the most successful club with seven titles, followed by Persepolis who have won six titles.

Ehsan Hadadi to retire after 2022 Asian Games

TEHRAN – Iranian discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi will retire from the athletic after the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

The 37-year-old is training in the U.S. under his American coach.

Hadadi, who has won four gold medals in the past four editions, wants to bring an end to the sport after the 2022 Asian Games.

Haddadi made history by becoming the first Iranian

athlete to win a medal at IAAF World Championships in Athletics, winning a bronze in 2011 World Championships in Athletics in Daegu.

He competed at the 2012 Summer Olympics and won a silver medal with a 68.18m throw.

Iranian athletes have participated in the Olympic Games since 1948 and before Haddadi's silver medal, had only attained medals in wrestling, Olympian weightlifting, and taekwondo. His achievement was a milestone in Iran's Olympic history in that it ended Iran's 64-year-old medal drought in events other than the aforementioned.

His personal best throw is 69.32 m, achieved on June 3, 2008, in Tallinn, Estonia. This is the current Asian record. Because of his good performance over the whole season 2008, he was considered a medal contender entering the 2008 Summer Olympics, but he ranked 17th with a 61.34-meter throw and failed to qualify for the final; Haddadi blamed his poor results on his injuries.

Persepolis midfielder Asadi linked with Buriram: report

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team midfielder Reza Asadi has been reportedly linked with a move to Thai side Buriram.

The 26-year-old player joined Persepolis from Austrian club St. Pölten at the beginning of the 2021-22 season but failed to meet the expectations.

Asadi will reportedly leave Persepolis to join Buriram at the end of the Iran Professional League (IPL) current season.

Buriram United Football Club are competing in the Thai League 1. The club were founded in 1970 as PEA FC (Provincial Electricity Authority Football Club) before being reformed as Buriram PEA and Buriram United in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

Their home stadium is Chang Arena, which has a capacity of 32,600.

Barnsley part company with Iranian coach Asbaghi

TEHRAN – Barnsley have announced the departure of head coach Poya Asbaghi after they were relegated from the Championship.

Assistant coach Ferran Sibila will also leave the club. Martin Devaney will be in caretaker charge for the remainder of the season.

Barnsley drop into League One having lost 2-1 to Huddersfield on Friday night. Peterborough were also relegated, while Derby County's demotion was confirmed last week.

Asbaghi, 36, only took over in November after Markus Schopp was sacked. Barnsley had reached the Championship play-offs in 2020-21.

The Iranian-born Swede had earned a reputation for developing young talent, having won six of his 10 games in charge of the Sweden Under-21s, leaving them top of their European Championship qualifying group, and pushed Italy impressively in October.

He previously coached at Dalkurd FF and Gefle IF in the Swedish lower leagues, before ascending to the head-coaching role at Goteborg in the top tier. He led them to the 2020 Swedish Cup, beating Swedish giants Malmo in the final. Asbaghi left Goteborg in September 2020.

However, he struggled to impress his ideas on Barnsley, with the club winning only six games all season. They are rooted to the bottom of the Championship.

Speaking after his departure was confirmed, Asbaghi said: "I want to thank everybody at Oakwell for their time and efforts over the last months, this of course includes players, fans and staff. It's been a real privilege to work in Barnsley and I wish everybody all the very best for the upcoming seasons."

Khaled El-Ahmad, chief executive officer added: "On behalf of Barnsley Football Club, I would like to thank both Poya and Ferran for their hard work and professionalism during a difficult time.

"Our search for a new coach has already started and an announcement will follow once that process is concluded."

Iran's annual exports to Russia rise 14%



From page 1 ► Iran and Russia have been taking serious steps for boosting their mutual trade over the past few years.

In late January, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that the Islamic Republic and Russia have reached an agreement to boost the trade between the two countries up to \$10 billion.

"We agreed to remove trade barriers and boost the economic exchanges between the two countries. Currently, the level of mutual trade is not acceptable, so the two countries

agreed to increase trade to \$10 billion a year," Raisi said on January 21, upon arrival to Tehran after a two-day visit to Moscow.

The president also noted that the two sides had also discussed monetary and banking issues during his talks with Russian officials.

"The two countries can take steps to break the dominance of the dollar over monetary and banking relations and trade with the national currency," Raisi stressed.

The two countries also agreed to identify mutual agricultural capacities as well as suitable areas for the exchange of agricultural products in order to increase the level of trade in the agricultural sector, according to the official.

He went on to say that the Islamic Republic of Iran has very good capacities in the field of transit and transportation, saying: "During this visit, it was agreed to activate the north-south corridor. This transit route will make the time and distance of transiting goods from Russia and different northern countries to the southern regions much shorter."

TEHRAN – As announced by a provincial official, 1,708 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of goods were loaded and unloaded in Shahid Rajaei port, Iran's largest and most-equipped container port, during the previous Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20).

Alireza Mohammadi Karajiran, the director-general of Ports and Maritime Department of southern Hormozgan province where the port lies, said that increasing the nominal capacity of the port by five million tons, and its container capacity by 500,000 TEUs, as well as boosting the investment attraction by 10 trillion rials (about \$37 million) in this port are among the main objectives defined for Shahid Rajaei port in the current year.

As the official has also announced, 58,992 vessels entered the ports of Hormozgan province in the past year, loading and unloading 1.839 million TEUs of commodities.

In the past year, more than 95 million tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded in the ports of province, indicating 16.7 percent growth year on year, he added.

Of the mentioned 95 million tons, 56 million tons were non-oil goods, and 39 million tons were oil products, the official announced.

Based on the data released by Transport and Urban Development Ministry, loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 17

Over 1.7m TEUs of goods loaded, unloaded in Shahid Rajaei port in a year



percent during the past year.

The ministry's data show that loading and unloading of goods in the country's ports reached 152.91 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year, while the figure stood at 130.69 million tons in the preceding year.

During the said year, loading and unloading operations in the container sector reached 2.1 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) with a weight of 24.57 million tons, which was 13.5 percent more than the 1.85 million

TEUs in the Iranian calendar year 1399, the report said.

The loading and unloading of goods during the previous year also grew by 12.8 percent in the dry bulk sector, while in the liquid bulk sector the figure increased by 12.6 percent, in the general cargo sector rose by 13.1 percent, and in the petroleum sector grew by 22.5 percent.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and

imports play a significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition, to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in a course of five years.

According to Ports and Maritime Organization, the capacity of the country's ports has increased from 180 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 250 million tons in 1399 (ended in March 2021).

Enjoying the most modern container terminals and port equipment, Shahid Rajaei accounts for 85 percent of the total loading and unloading at the Iranian ports.

Given its significant role in the country's import and export of products as well as transit and transshipment via Iran, the development of Shahid Rajaei Port has been among the most important development projects in the country.

25 new firms ready to be listed on stock exchange

TEHRAN – Head of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Majid Eshqi has said 25 new major companies are ready to offer their shares at the country's stock exchange.

"Many initial public offerings (IPOs) are going to be made in the near future, and now about 25 companies are ready to enter the market," Eshqi told IRNA on Sunday.

"Over the last six months, we have been preparing initial offerings in accordance with market conditions and the balanced entry of liquidity into the market. Currently, Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) and Iran Fara Bourse (IFB) officials and experts have made the necessary plans so that the initial public offerings can be made in accordance with the best conditions for capital to enter the market," he explained.

According to the official, the initial offerings will start in the current Iranian calendar week (ends on Friday) and will continue in accordance with the market conditions.

Eshqi further mentioned some of his



organization's programs for ensuring positive growth in the market, saying: "SEO's programs for this year include intelligent and electronic monitoring of the market. In this regard, we will strengthen the capital market monitoring center, which was launched in March, so that there is no violation in the market trading process. We will identify violations quickly."

Another program is to monitor financial institutions like brokerage firms, portfolio companies, and investment funds to ensure that they perform in accordance with the rules and regulations of the market, the SEO head added.

"These two measures are among the main programs of the Securities and Exchange Organization and to realize them, it is necessary to take serious measures to improve IT infrastructure, and to amend capital market regulations and laws or even apply new regulations," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eshqi mentioned SEO's plans for increasing the capital market's role in financing production units and projects, saying: "If we succeed to increase the capital market share in financing production units in the current [Iranian calendar] year (started on March 21), we have done a great job, it seems that this potential exists in the market and we will see it realized by the end of the year."

According to Eshqi, last year, due to capital increases from various sources, such as the issuance of bonds, the capital market only accounted for 25 percent of the mentioned fundings, but SEO plans to increase this figure as much as possible in the current year.

'Domestic producers meet 75% of Bid Boland Refinery's equipment needs'

TEHRAN – Managing Director of Iran's Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refinery Ali-Mohammad Pour-Reza has said 75 percent of the equipment and items used in the refinery are supplied by domestic manufacturers, Shana reported.

According to Pour-Reza, the refinery supplies its necessary items from domestic producers and manufacturers in line with the realization of the slogan of the previous year which was "Production: support and the elimination of obstacles", which in addition to supporting domestic production, has saved the country a significant amount of revenue.

The official also noted that his company has formed a specialized committee in order to identify capable knowledge-based companies and start-ups for cooperation in meeting the refinery's technological needs.

Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refinery in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan Province was officially inaugurated by the previous president Hasan Rouhani in mid-January, 2021.

The refinery, which had previously started its operation, is aimed at increasing the production of sweet gas, reducing the consumption of petroleum products, production of propane, butane, and gas condensate, the export of by-products, the supply of natural gas to urban areas, and supplying ethane required by petrochemical units in the region.

In 2020, Bid Boland Refinery project was nominated for the International Project Management Association (IPMA)'s Global Project Excellence Award at the energy sector; it was also awarded as Iran's top



mega project by the Ninth National Project Management Award.

As stated by Pour-Reza, Bid Boland project is leading in terms of benefiting from domestic capabilities.

It is playing a significant role in providing feed to the country's petrochemical plants and completing their output basket.

Bid Boland has also played a great part in materializing the old dream of zero-flaring in the country's oil industry, as in mid-October last year during an official ceremony, the project to end the gas flaring was inaugurated at this refinery.

The project to process associated gas from crude oil production, rather than burn it through flaring, was a big environmental event.

It was aimed to create value-added, prevent pollution resulting from gas flaring and serve public health and the environment.

Bid Boland Refinery had signed three deals worth €165 million with domestic companies for collecting and recovering flare gases of Rag-Sefid offshore oilfield in early April 2021.

Commodities worth over \$2b traded at IME in a month

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar month Farvardin (ended on April 20), the first month of Iranian calendar year, 7.231 million tons of commodities worth more than 599 trillion rials (about \$2.154 billion) were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 5.748 million tons of commodities valued at over 338 trillion rials (about \$1.215 billion).

Furthermore, the IME saw trade of 1.372 million tons of commodities on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical

trading floor valued at 248 trillion rials (about \$892.86 million).

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 110,781 tons of commodities traded on it.

As previously reported, the value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange rose 102 percent, and the volume of trades at the exchange increased 128 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), which was the highest level of growth in the history of the exchange since its establishment.

Statistical data show that in the past year, in addition to new records in the volume

and value of trades of different products, 10 major records in total value and physical market trades were registered. In a way that besides the total value of trades, the volume and value of physical market trades, the volume and value of industrial products and petrochemicals trades, the value of oil products trades, and the volume and value of side market trades all hit records.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Annual export from Fars province increases 92%

TEHRAN- The value of export from Fars province rose 92 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), from its preceding year, a provincial official announced.

Hamidreza Izadi, the head of the province's Industry, Mining and Trade Department, said that commodities worth about \$424 million were exported from the province in the past year.

As previously announced by the head of Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1400, as compared to its previous year.

Alireza Moqadasi put the country's non-oil trade at 162 million tons worth \$100 billion in the past year.

He said that Iran exported 122 million tons of non-oil products worth \$48 billion



in the previous year, which was \$14 billion (41 percent) more than the figure for its preceding year.

The country's non-oil trade record in 1400 was reached while the toughest sanctions were imposed on Iran, but thanks to God and the efforts of entrepreneurs, producers and the cooperation of foreign trade-related organizations, a historical record was achieved in the past year which was unprecedented in recent decades, the official underlined.

Kermanshah province's annual fishery output stands at over 21,000 tons

TEHRAN- The fishery output of Kermanshah province, in the west of Iran, stood at over 21,000 tons in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20), a provincial official announced.

Farzad Afzali, the director-general of the province's Fisheries Department, said that while the province's fishery production was expected to be around 23,000 tons last year, this goal was not achieved due to drought and declining water resources in the province, and

eventually 21,105 tons of fisheries were produced in the province.

Last year, 13,000 tons of cold-water fishes and 5,500 tons of hot-water fishes were produced in the province, and the rest of the products were related to fish farming in cages, aquatic production in natural and semi-natural waters, and so on, the official added.

As stated by an official with Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO),

production of 714,000 tons of fishery has been targeted for the current Iranian calendar year.

Morteza Afrasiabi, the acting head of the IFO's fishery development department, said that of the mentioned figure, 277,000 tons will be fishes bred in cages and 70,000 tons will be shrimps.

Achieving the targeted 714,000 tons of fishery requires infrastructure as well as credits and banking facilities, the official

added.

Fishery production has increased noticeably in Iran in recent years.

Enjoying high quality, Iran's fishery products were sold easily in the export markets, and also some new export destinations welcomed these products in the past three years; as new markets including China, South Korea, and the Eurasian Union nations opened up for Iranian fishery products.

TEDPIX gains 2,500 points on Monday

the second market's index gained 15,312 points.

TEDPIX gained 58,000 points (four percent) to 1.512 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported, the indices of Tehran Oil Refining Company (TORC), Iran Khodro Investment Development Company (IKIDO), Social Security

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 2,586 points to 1.507 million on Monday.

As reported, over 10.15 billion securities worth 55.26 trillion rials (about \$198.7 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index lost 1,372 points, while

Investment Company (SSIC), Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), Saipa Company, and Isfahan Oil Refinery were the mostly followed ones during the past week.

TEDPIX also rose 145,000 points (10.5 percent) in the past Iranian month Farvardin, the first month of the Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20).

US-Pakistan ties won't come at cost of strategic engagement with China: expert

From page 1 ► is concerned, a high-level commission is already formed by the incumbent government to investigate the matter and unearth the facts. Besides, Pakistan has consistently reiterated its commitment to avoid bloc politics and not join any camp in the global arena. Pakistan wishes to be a partner for peace with every country.

The new prime minister has emphasized that he and his party are friends of China. What are the implications of such a statement?

Pakistan is completely independent in making its foreign policy choices. We believe in establishing peaceful and friendly relations with all nations across the world which is also a guiding principle of our foreign policy. When it comes to China-Pakistan friendship, the two countries are enjoying an ironclad brotherhood that is based on seven decades of history. The incumbent government, led by Pakistan Muslim League (N) had good working experience with China, back to 2013-18 for the commencement and timely completion of early harvest



projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The focus now again is on reviving that spirit and re-energizing the relationship. In this regard, the commitment of the new government and the Chinese side is of greater importance to reinvigorate CPEC which is being considered a lifeline for Pakistan's economy.

Pakistan is well-known to bet on the U.S. more than other powers. But Imran Khan annoyed Washington. Do you think the new government would return to policies that are more aligned with America's wishes or it would return to China as a strategic partner?

Pakistan wants a good working

relationship with the United States. The U.S. remains Pakistan's largest export market and home to a vibrant Pakistani diaspora. Similarly, Pakistan remains engaged with the U.S. on peace and security in the region. While perspectives and interests of both Pakistan and the U.S. on regional issues often diverge, engagement is the key. The new government will definitely work to remain engaged with the U.S. and make the relationship functional. This, however, will not come at the cost of strategic engagement with China. Engagement with both is important, and this will continue.

How do you see Pakistan-India ties in the new government?

As the new Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took the oath, he was felicitated by his Indian counterpart. PM Sharif reciprocated the sentiment and called for improving relations between Pakistan and India. Progress, however, will be slow, as India would have to demonstrate good faith by reversing the illegal actions of August 5, 2019. The new government, like the previous one, will find it difficult to move forward in improving ties with India, until concerns on Kashmir are addressed by India.

Do you think Imran Khan will return to power, given the massive support he enjoys?

Imran Khan and his party will be one of the major contestants in the next elections, whenever they are held. He has certainly demonstrated popular support in recent weeks. Can Imran Khan translate this support into electoral victory? This remains to be seen. If he is able to chart a coherent strategy and gain support from candidates who are influential at the grassroots, then he certainly can make a return to power, after gaining the majority in the National Assembly.

German Chancellor Scholz: "There cannot be a nuclear war"

In an interview with Der Spiegel, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz discusses arms deliveries to Ukraine and growing calls for Berlin to supply heavy weapons. He also talks about why he has been hesitant to act in this crisis and addresses critical questions about his party's policies toward Russia in the past.

Question: Chancellor Scholz, are you a pacifist?

Answer: No.

Why not?

In the world we live in, it is necessary to ensure our own security with a sufficient defensive capability. As a member of parliament and a member of the government, I have many times approved Bundeswehr (the German armed forces) missions abroad. I could not have done that as a pacifist.

Is the SPD a pacifist party?

The SPD is a party of peace, but it has never been pacifist. The two great postwar Social Democratic chancellors, Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, made the security situation and Germany's defense capability their vital issues. Their policy of détente was based on integration into NATO.

Joschka Fischer, the former Green Party foreign minister, says German society needs to rethink its instinctive pacifism. Is he right about that?

Part of our country's tradition is the knowledge of the dramatic consequences of two world wars that originated in Germany, which forms the framework of our policy. But I do not see an instinctive pacifism. How else could Gerhard Schröder's government have supported the Bundeswehr's first combat mission? How could the Bundeswehr have engaged in Afghanistan after 9/11? There were heated debates about both, but there was also strong support.

So, let's be clear: Neither you nor the SPD, nor the Germans are pacifist. Why, then, are you not doing everything in your power to assist Ukraine militarily against Russia?

We are doing just that.

Fordays now, Kyiv and its allies and politicians in your government coalition, including the foreign minister, have been pressing for the delivery of heavy weapons. Why aren't you doing that?

Let's first talk about what we are doing. We have supplied anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft equipment, ammunition, vehicles and a lot of materiel from the stocks of the German armed forces, which has directly aided Ukraine in its battle to defend itself – just as dozens of allies have done. We can see this in the military successes of the Ukrainian army.

Weeks ago, the Ukrainians sent a list of weapons that they urgently needed. Why not work through that list as quickly as possible?

The Bundeswehr's options for supplying further weapons from its arsenal are largely exhausted. But we will certainly deliver whatever is still available – anti-tank weapons, anti-tank mines and artillery ammunition. That is why, in discussion with German industry, we have drawn up a list of military equipment that can be delivered quickly and we have discussed it with



the Ukrainian Defense Ministry. In other words, as before, defensive weapons and mortars for artillery action. We are paying for these arms deliveries. Germany is providing a total of 2 billion euros, a large part of which will directly benefit Ukraine.

"In the medium term, we will help Ukraine develop its defense capability, also with Western weapons."

Others are supplying heavy equipment, but Germany is pulling out its checkbook. Is that the distribution of roles in this war?

Wrong! We have delivered weapons for the upcoming fighting in eastern Ukraine in close cooperation with the U.S., France, Italy, the U.K. and Canada. Troop carriers and artillery are quickly deployable. That's why we are ready to help our allies in rapid training on these devices and to see if suitable equipment can still be obtained from our side. The military equipment must be deployable without lengthy training, without further logistics and without soldiers from our countries. The quickest way to do this is with weapons from the former Soviet stocks, with which the Ukrainians are well acquainted. As such, it is no coincidence that several Eastern European NATO partners are now supplying these weapons and that no alliance partner has so far supplied Western battle tanks. We can successively fill the gaps created by these deliveries by our partners with replacements from Germany, as we have just discussed in the case of Slovenia. In the medium term, we will help Ukraine develop its defensive capability, also with Western weapons.

So, when Ukrainian Ambassador to Germany Andriy Melnyk calls for German Marder tanks, he is ignoring the fact that his army can't even operate them?

Again: We are now helping the Ukrainian government to procure arms in line with the framework agreed to by our allies. And this as quickly as possible to stop Russia's massive offensive in the east. When I look around the world, I see that all partners are operating within the framework of our agreements, just as we are.

Canada, the U.S. and the Netherlands want to deliver heavy equipment to Ukraine quickly. Why are we falling behind?

A: You can only deliver what you have and can give away. You have to take a close look at how operational which materiel really is – and when. If I deliver a vehicle that can be shot through by any machine gun, then that does little to help the Ukrainian troops.

Kyiv is proposing that Germany continuously supply its deployable equipment from the Bundeswehr and then gradually replace it. What are the arguments against that?

The need to be able to defend alliance territory at all times. It is a difficult balancing act that we constantly have to conduct together with our partners, because the threat to NATO territory from Russia persists. This is what we are hearing from our Baltic partners, in particular, who are asking us for an increased Bundeswehr presence. We are therefore heavily engaged with units in Slovakia and Lithuania, among other countries. NATO's stated goal is that we must be able to hold out for 12 days with our ammunition and equipment in the event of a conventional attack. In the current threat situation, particularly, I will do my utmost not to forget this commitment.

The U.S. government says that it only took 48 hours from the time of Joe Biden's signature for weapons deliveries to Ukraine to commence. For us, it's more like 48 days.

I read that, too. Deliveries from our stocks also went quickly. The U.S. military has considerably larger inventories. The cuts made to the Bundeswehr in recent decades have left their mark. We are changing that now.

You have dismissed critics who are calling for the delivery of heavy weapons as "boys and girls" who have googled their knowledge.

You can see how tense the situation is when a remark in a radio interview is immediately taken as an insult. When it comes to an issue as contentious as arms deliveries, there are, of course, many who have a different opinion than mine and also express that publicly. That is part and parcel of a good democracy.

You seem to be constantly coming up with new arguments against the delivery of heavy weapons: Sometimes the Ukrainians aren't trained well enough, sometimes the weapons aren't ready, sometimes we can't deliver anything ourselves. Do you realize how confusing these changing messages are?

For Germany, it was a profound change of course when I announced that we would supply weapons to this war zone. I would like to once again state that fact. Many who categorically rejected this step in the past are now outdoing themselves with demands to deliver much more – without even knowing the exact facts of the matter. I take note of that. But in this situation, we need a cool head and carefully considered decisions, because our country bears responsibility for peace and security throughout Europe. I do not think it is justifiable for Germany and NATO to become parties to the war in Ukraine.

Kyiv is not asking for that at all – they are desperately asking for weapons. What are you afraid of?

Again: We are supplying weapons, and many of our allies are doing so as well. This is not a question of fear, it is one of political responsibility. Imposing a no-fly zone, as has been called for, would have made NATO a party to the war. I took an oath of office. I said very early on that we must do everything possible to avoid a direct military confrontation between NATO and a highly armed superpower like Russia, a nuclear power. I am doing everything I can to prevent an escalation that would lead to a third world war. There cannot be a nuclear war.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Macron secures second term in a divided French nation

From page 1 ► Despite becoming the first French President to secure two consecutive terms in two decades, Macron acknowledged the "anger" and "disappointment" in his victory speech saying the country was torn apart by "doubt" and "division".

As the vote-counting process began reports surfaced of people protest voting by casting a blank ballot. The number of spoiled votes coupled with the abstention rate were both alarmingly high.

The lead-up to this election was dominated by the rise of the far-right candidates in France, spearheaded by Le Pen. The Rassemblement National party leader, who previously said she would ban the Muslim headscarf in public and after three attempts for the Presidency's post, has never come so close to winning.

Many experts have criticized Macron's own anti-Muslim and xenophobic stances over the past couple of years in a country that has between five to six million Muslims (the highest in Europe) for the rise of the far-right by tapping into extremist ideologies.

Observers say the longer Macron governs, the more the ultra-right will grow in strength.

The polls and the evidence (such as the lowest turnout in modern history) suggest not only French Muslims are frustrated with the racist rhetoric.

The younger generation are also said to have been marginalized from the election with an increasing number staying away from the ballot boxes.

Perhaps not a surprise then that the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon came third in the first round of this election, where no candidate received more than the required 50 percent of the votes.

Macron acknowledged many people did not vote for him because of the French President's policies or popularity but rather to refrain Le Pen from entering the Presidential palace.

He said "I also know that many French people voted for me to block the far right. I also want to thank them, and tell them that their vote places me under an obligation," Macron also touched on "those who abstained, could not decide and those who voted for Marine Le Pen."

He pledged "to heal the divisions that have been expressed in these elections," claiming he would do this "by ensuring respect for everyone, every day. I want a fairer society"

But analysts argue the longer he stays in power the stronger the ultra-right would become with some saying the fact a far-right candidate came close to winning this time, it's very possible they will win next time.

In a central Paris neighborhood, riot police charged at and sprayed tear gas on demonstrators to break up a crowd of hundreds of mostly young angry protesters who had gathered to rally against both candidates.

In a short speech, conceding defeat, Le Pen said her result was "a striking victory" and that the ideas she represented "had reached new heights", adding "In this defeat, I can't help but feel a hope."

Le Pen also noted she will not be standing down from politics, as many pundits had suspected she would if she lost.

The other major issue of this election had been the state of the economy with inflation being a major factor. The rise in the prices of goods and services is being accelerated by the war in Ukraine.

This would suggest that French support for the conflict is fading among the French public, something Macron spent the campaign trail focusing on while Le Pen is said to have good ties with Russia and campaigned much more in different regions on the streets of France.

For the working class and the poor, the French economy has truly been staggered with the younger generation having a very difficult time finding employment.

Analysts say Macron hasn't accomplished much on the domestic front for these three



sections of society, leaving them angry and alienated. Polls indicate a large proportion of people are having trouble making ends meet and the cost of living became one of the key issues of the campaign.

The heavy-handed crackdown on the weekly yellow vest protests under Macron's tenure will go down in the history books for all the wrong reasons.

Nevertheless, this was a very important election for the European Union, the leaders of whom were watching very closely. Le Pen had regularly stated her dissatisfaction with the purpose of the EU and was expected to have been on a collision course with the bloc.

France holds the EU six-month presidency and had set its policies for the 27-nation Union, Macron is likely to continue with his previous five-year role of trying to lead Europe diplomatically. Whether that has been classified as a success or even achieving its desired results is open to debate.

Critics say the EU has failed to break away from Washington's dominance over Europe and continues to support U.S. international policies.

The European Council President Charles Michel, as well as the Prime Ministers of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany's chancellor, were among the first global leaders to congratulate Macron.

Also on the international front It's a major win for NATO whose members, analysts argue, like to militarily intervene in other countries or ignite the fire of a conflict and stand back watching as their military-industrial complexes make a profit.

A win for Le Pen would have pulled Paris out of the NATO integrated command structure. The French military would not have taken orders from NATO command dealing the Western alliance a major setback.

The major underlying challenge for Macron is reflected in the fact that while both contenders had their (smaller than expected) share of voters; a significant percentage of the ballots casted in France's 2022 presidential election were votes of rejection.

To say the country is deeply divided would be an understatement, as his second term begins Macron has a major challenge ahead to serve and unite not just the French population but also French politics.

Parliamentary elections take place on 12 and 19 June amid mounting political opposition. Macron's party and its allies need a majority of 289 MPs in the 577-seat lower house. The elections will outline the nature of Macron's government.

Macron has called for a "big new political movement" which observers say was an appeal to the far right and left to reach a majority.

Newly elected Presidents in France tend to easily achieve a parliamentary majority usually because of the lower number of votes for the opposition.

But this election is different, especially with Le Pen gaining more votes than had been predicted and not standing down from politics as had also been expected. She has pledged a strong opposition parliamentary bloc.

Despite a tough election process, the hard work is just about to begin for the French President.

Susa, a cradle of civilization



From page 1 ► Today Susa is made up of three archeological mounds and covers around a square kilometer. On top of the archeological site is the modern Iranian town of Shush. One may visit the excavated mounds and try to imagine what it was like during its heyday as the capital of what was then the largest Empire in the world. Furthermore, at the archeological site, one can see Ardeshir's palace, various excavated administrative, residential, and other monuments.

Very close to the ancient site of Susa is one of the best-preserved ziggurats in the world. Also in Iran is the Sialk Ziggurat which is one of the oldest known ziggurats dating from the early 3rd millennium BC. Most of these Mesopotamian Pyramids are in what is today Iraq, but some are in Iran.

The ancients believed that the ziggurats connected heaven and earth - shown in that the name of the ziggurat at Babylon (Etemenanki) means "House of the foundation of heaven and earth." It is thought that the famous tale in the Bible of the Tower of Babel is a reference to the ziggurats of Mesopotamia.

Unlike other temples, Mesopotamian ziggurats were not places for public worship or ceremonies. They were just the dwelling places for the gods. And the purpose was to get the temple closer to the heavens. The temple complex of which the ziggurats were a part included storage rooms, bathrooms, living quarters, and a courtyard.

Susa is part of a region often termed a cradle of civilization. The city appears in the very earliest Sumerian records and is one of the first recorded cities in human history.

Ancient plate seized from unauthorized excavator

TEHRAN – Iranian authorities have recovered an ancient clay plate from an unauthorized excavator in Neyshabur, northeast Iran.

The police seized the object from the home of the suspect after they received the news of his illegal digging, CHTN reported on Sunday.

In that regard, the police detained and surrendered the suspect to the judicial system for further investigation.

According to the news agency, the exact antiquity of the earthen object is under assessment by the cultural heritage directorate of Khorasan Razavi province.

Heaven for history buffs, Neyshabur (Nishapur) was once a prosperous town during the medieval times now situated northeast of modern Iran.

Situated some 70 km west of Mashhad, Neyshabur was founded around the third century CE. Narratives say "Nishapur" derived its name from its alleged founder, the Sasanian king Shapur I.

It grew to prominence in the eighth century and was ruined by invasions and earthquakes in the thirteenth century. After that time, a much smaller settlement was established just north of the ancient town, and the once-



bustling metropolis lay underground—until a team of excavators from the Metropolitan Museum arrived in the mid-twentieth century.

The town underwent rounds of excavation as of 1935 by experts from the Department of Near Eastern Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Hundreds of objects were discovered during the excavations. Each year, the Museum's share was shipped back to New York, where the objects were restored and placed on display.

Furthermore, Neyshabur was a significant hub for the manufacture of glass, metal, and stone vessels as well as textiles. However, none of the latter were found in the excavations, probably due to their highly perishable nature.

“Sari 2022” offers significant opportunities for Mazandaran: governor

TEHRAN – The international event “Sari 2022” provides important opportunities for Mazandaran province in terms of economy, politics, and the social scene, Sari's governor has said.

“Citizens, government officials, and the private sector must work together to make the most of the opportunities created by the even”, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Ali Nobakht as saying on Sunday.

Because tourism can be an effective factor in the field of social development, this event can be quite beneficial in various ways for the development of Mazandaran province, the official added.

“Sari 2022” is planned to be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian month of Ordibehesht (May 21).

The opening ceremony will be attended by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami as well as several ministers and representatives

from the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Back in February, Mazandaran's tourism chief announced that the successful organization of the international event is of high importance for the country, and Mazandaran in particular.

“The province must introduce the capacities of the region in the international arena, with the participation of all institutions, especially the honorable people of Mazandaran.”

Iranian cities of Sari, the capital of Mazandaran province, and Ardabil, the capital of Ardabil province, were selected in 2019 as the cultural capitals for the Economic Cooperation Organization for 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Sari was selected as the tourism capital of ECO during the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, preceded by the 5th High-Level Experts Group (HLEG) on tourism, which was held on October 3-4, 2019, in Khujand, Tajikistan.

“Sari 2022” is considered the best opportunity for cooperation between Iran and ECO member states and, given this opportunity, all potential can be used for the prosperity and branding in the field of tourism and economy.

Local officials believe Mazandaran, which is a top destination for domestic travelers, can be turned into a destination for foreign travelers as well through careful planning.

Sandwiched between the towering Alborz mountain range and the Caspian Sea, Mazandaran has a rich yet turbulent history. An early civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabarestan).

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but

Hundreds of engraved stones discovered in Persepolis

TEHRAN – Hundreds of engraved stones and fragmented bas-relief carvings have recently been discovered in the ruined Tachara Palace, located in heart of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, southern Fars province.

The discovery has taken place during the fifth season of an archaeological survey, probing a sophisticated water management system beneath the ruins of the Persepolis, archaeologist Ahmad Ali Asadi said on Monday.

The bas reliefs probably are related to the northern stairs of the H Place, Asadi was quoted as saying by CHTN.

Among the engraved stones there are pieces with human and plant motifs, and at least one of the stones has cuneiform inscriptions, and if the collection of stones is explored fully, it will probably discover more inscribed pieces, he added.

Tachara is one of the oldest and most interesting palaces of Persepolis that its charming structure is situated south of the Apadana and on a platform 2.20-3m higher than the level of the latter and the adjacent



courtyard.

Persepolis website says that Tachara was built on a rectangular plan, measuring 40m by 30m, and a north-south axis. It consists of the main hall with twelve columns, two smaller columned halls on the north, a columned portico on the south, and several guardrooms or storage chambers on either side. A stairway with two reversed flights leads to the portico from a courtyard on the south. The inner walls of these flights are sculptured with representations of servants and attendants, dressed alternately

in the «Median» and «Persian» costumes, carrying food and utensils.

A frieze consisting of several scenes is sculptured in the center of the facade of the staircase. In the upper part of the middle section is the winged circle (the Iranian Glory), flanked by two antithetic seated sphinxes who each raise a hand towards it in a gesture of veneration.

Behind each sphinx is a terrace of palm trees. Below this scene is two antithetic rows of nine soldiers in the «Persian» costume (fluted cylindrical

tiaras, flowing skirts, and three-strapped shoes). They are facing a cuneiform inscription in Old Persian carved by Xerxes in a rectangular area framed by bands of rosettes.

The main hall and other rooms are provided with rectangular niches, each of which is hewn from a single block of stone and is crowned with a vertically fluted architrave element known as the Egyptian covetto cornice. Originally, five doors pierced the walls of the main hall: two opening into the pair of four-columned northern rooms, one giving access to the southern portico, and two leading into the adjacent western and eastern chambers.

Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy) is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars province. The city was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge on the Persians because it seems Xerxes had burnt the Greek city of Athens around 150 years earlier.

Kermanshah preparing to get Taq-e Bostan on UNESCO list

TEHRAN – The tourism chief of Kermanshah province on Sunday said his directorate is preparing to apply to UNESCO for the listing of Taq-e Bostan on the World Heritage list.

“We aim to pave the way for the inscription of Taq-e Bostan on the UNESCO World Heritage list within the next 18 months,” Jabbar Gohari said.

Taq-e Bostan consists of a series of properties from prehistoric to historical periods such as Morad-Hassel Tepe, an ancient village, a Parthian graveyard, and Sassanid hunting ground. However, the most significant property of the complex belongs to the Sassanid one which comprises two porticos (large and small Ivans) as well as outstanding bas-reliefs from the same period.

“During the past years, illegal constructions and exploitations have been carried out near Taq-e Bostan. In this regard, we expect the regulatory bodies, including the Kermanshah judiciary, to solve this problem as soon as possible.”

Moreover, we have consulted with the visiting UNESCO evaluators and experts in order to come up with a clear solution, the official added.

According to Lonely Planet, the site's extraordinary Sassanian bas-reliefs of ancient victorious kings, which are inscribed



into the base of a towering cliff, divide opinions. Some travelers feel disappointed by the Taq-e Bostan experience, as there's a relatively high admission price for a few stone carvings and a duck pond, both of which are viewed easily from outside the fence. For Iranians, a visit is a joyous celebration of their incredible Persian heritage. Whether you immerse yourself or crank up the zoom lens is up to you.

Taq-e Bostan was originally the site of a Parthian royal hunting garden, but the Sassanians later added their own regal stamp. Its biggest alcove features elephant-mounted hunting scenes on the sidewalls and highlights the coronation of Khosrow II (r 590–628), beneath which the king rides off in full armor and chain mail (half a millennium before the European Black Prince made it fashionable).

Paris-Persepolis drivers arrive on Iranian soil

TEHRAN – Participants in a Paris-Persepolis eco-rally have entered the Iranian soil on their itinerary towards what was once the capital of Achaemenid Persia.

The rally drivers crossed into West Azarbaijan province, northwest Iran, on Friday, ISNA reported on Sunday.

With sixteen motorcycles and three cars, twenty people from France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands started the rally tour from Paris.

Organized in collaboration with the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the event aims to counter Iranophobia and introduce Iran's culture, civilization, monuments, and historical and tourist attractions.

Participants are scheduled to traverse Iranian soil in a 21-day itinerary that would culminate in the UNESCO-registered Persepolis.

They will stay in Shiraz for four days, and after visiting historical sites and tourist attractions of the city, on their way back, they will travel along with Isfahan, Markazi, Qazvin, and Gilan provinces before they leave for France.

Available data suggest that the same eco rally was held in 1971. The 6,000-km route of the rally runs through Europe,

Turkey, and Iran. It is divided into 11 intervals and ends in Persepolis.

Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy), was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. It is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars province.

The royal city of Persepolis, which ranks among the archaeological sites which have no equivalent, considering its unique architecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art, was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge against the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall ("Hundred-Column Hall").

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites.

Covid-19: Iran wary of Delta returning from Turkey

TEHRAN – The Delta variant of coronavirus may return to Iran from certain neighboring countries, such as Turkey, an official with the national scientific committee to combat coronavirus has warned.

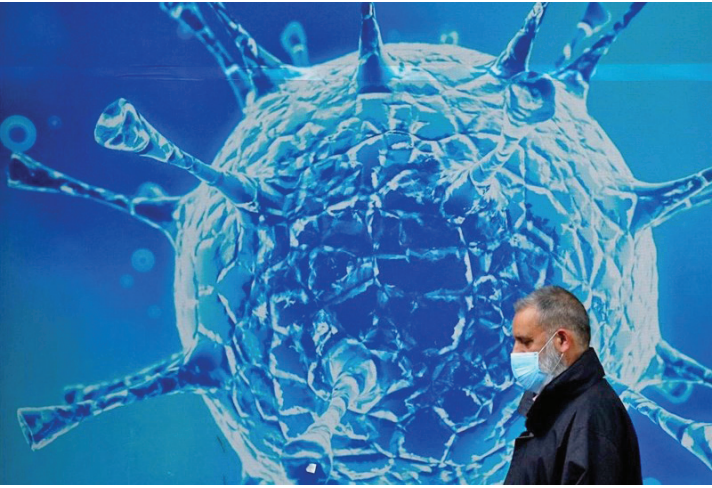
“In Turkey, the Delta accounts for three percent of the existing variants. So, there is a concern that subvariants such as XD and XF may return to the country considering travels and transactions between the two countries,” ISNA quoted Hamidreza Jama’ati as saying on Monday.

For the time being, the BA.2 Omicron is the main subvariant in the

country, he said, adding, that it is unlikely to face another wave of the virus until autumn this year.

Omicron is made up of several sublineages, each of them being monitored by WHO and partners. Of them, the most common ones are BA.1, BA.1.1 (or Nextstrain clade 21K), and BA.2 (or Nextstrain clade 21L).

In March, Masoud Mardani, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, had warned of a sublineage of Omicron variant, codenamed BA.2, which is highly probable to spread during the two-week Noruz holidays (started March 21).



“People should not travel to the regional countries, including Kuwait, Egypt, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates,” he stressed.

On Sunday, the daily death toll from the coronavirus in the country plunged once again to below 15 after around 26 months.

The figures released by the Iranian Health Ministry indicated that the total deaths from COVID-19 in the country reached 140,975, as the pandemic has taken the lives of 13 patients.

Moreover, 528 new cases of COVID-19 infection were reported, with 136 of them hospitalized, the ministry added.

Iran is the sixth country in the world and the first country in West Asia to gain the ability to produce the coronavirus vaccine.

Considering that five coronavirus vaccines have so far been produced domestically, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, the former head of the Food and Drug Administration, said in June 2021 that Iran is one of the few countries that has all vaccine production platforms.

A total of 21 knowledge-based companies are operating to produce 50 million doses of vaccine monthly and 600 million doses annually, IRNA quoted Bahram Daraei as saying on March 9.

Iran on final step to eliminate malaria

TEHRAN – No indigenous case of malaria has appeared in Iran for three years in a row, so the country is about to receive a certificate of malaria eradication from the World Health Organization.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease that affects humans and other animals; the disease is most commonly spread by an infected female Anopheles mosquito. The mosquito bite introduces the parasites from the mosquito’s saliva into a person’s blood.

It causes symptoms that typically include fever, tiredness, vomiting, and headaches. In severe cases, it can cause yellow skin, seizures, coma, or death. Symptoms usually begin ten to fifteen days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.



If a country passes three years with no indigenous cases, the World Health Organization will grant it a certificate of malaria eradication, Ahmad Raisi, head of the Malaria control department of the Ministry of Health, said on the occasion of World Malaria Day, celebrated annually on April 25.

All infected patients in the country are Afghans, Pakistanis, or possibly Iranians who traveled to these countries, he added.

World Malaria Day 2022 will be marked under the theme “Harness innovation to reduce the malaria disease burden and save lives.” Despite steady advances in lowering the global burden of malaria between 2000 and 2015, progress has slowed or stalled in recent years, particularly in high burden countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2020, there were an estimated 241 million new cases of malaria and 627 000 malaria-related deaths in 85 countries. More than two-thirds of deaths were among children under the age of 5 living in the WHO African Region.

In the [Iranian calendar] month of Farvardin

(March 21- April 21), unfortunately, the incidence of malaria in the country has tripled on average compared to last year, which may be due to conflicts in Afghanistan or other issues that occur in neighboring countries, Raisi noted.

Last year, 1,008 cases of malaria were identified, all of which were related either to Pakistan and Afghanistan or to Iranians living in border areas or are involved in smuggling fuel to those countries.

We have requested the WHO to start the evaluation process and grant a certificate of malaria elimination so that this year the first WHO delegation is scheduled to visit the country and evaluate the health system, he further stated.

Fortunately, the main route of transmission of the disease is still through the bite of the female Anopheles mosquito, he added.

There are about six species of Anopheles mosquitoes in Iran, of which there are no more than two or three species, which are actively involved in disease transmission in the south and south-east, and the rest are in the north of the Zagros, from which there is no malaria transmission, Raisi said.

Although the most common route of trans-

Iranian knowledge-based products to develop markets in Russia, Armenia

From page 1 ► diagnostic informatics products, nanotechnology, and medical innovations.

Moreover, the 29th exhibition of ‘Sundays for Exports’ was held at the Innovation and Prosperity Fund with the participation of domestic knowledge-based companies and the Russian business delegation.

In this technological event, Iranian knowledge-based companies exhibited various products and discussed with Russian marketers the issue of exporting their products.

In the previous 28 events, 15 companies succeeded to export their products to other countries.

Exporting technological products of Iranian knowledge-based companies is one of the important and key programs of the vice presidency for science and technology, and in this regard, five houses of innovation and technology were inaugurated in Kenya, China, Russia, Syria, and Turkey.



It is also planned to establish two innovation centers in Iraq and Armenia over the next six months.

Knowledge-based companies

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.

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.

Five houses of innovation and technology have so far been inaugurated in Kenya, China, Russia, Syria, and Turkey to boost export of knowledge-based products.

Water in Muslim Iranian culture

Part 2

Muslim tradition abounds in references to Ab-e Zamzam, Ab-e Kawthar, and Ab-e Hayat. Zamzam is a sacred well near Ka’ba. It is said to have sprung miraculously for Ismael, the son of Abraham, when he was thirsty as a little child. His mother, Hagar, went seeking water but could not find it, so she went up to the hillocks al-Safa and al-Marva, praying to God and imploring aid for Ismael.

God sent Gabriel, who with his heel hollowed out a place in the earth where water appeared. In the period of paganism, the well was filled in by Jorhomis; then the Prophet’s grandfather Abd-al-Motalleb was ordered by God, in a vision, to dig it out.

Performance of pilgrimage rites culminates in the drinking of Zamzam water, and the pilgrims carry it home to give it to the sick.

Kawthar, mentioned in the Quran (108, the Surat al-Kawthar), is described as a river (or water basin) in paradise intended for the Prophet and shown to him on his ascension there.

This river is said to have beds of pearls and rubies and banks of gold. Its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, its odor is more aromatic than musk, and its jugs are like stars in the sky. On the Day of Judgment the believers will drink from it, and one who drinks thereof shall never thirst.

Ab-e Hayat, also called Ayn al-Hayat or Nahr al-Hayat, meaning the fountain of life, is associated with Khezr, who is identified with the unnamed companion of Moses in the Quran (18:65-82). Khezr is the patron saint of wayfarers, appearing whenever a pious person is in need. He is immortal because he drank from the fountain of life which is hidden somewhere in the darkness.

The Shi’is, during Moharram, commemorate the sufferings of the Imam Hossein, his children, and his followers at Karbala, where they were martyred. In Shi’i lore, their greatest trial was thirst, because their enemies denied them water from the Euphrates. As part of Moharram observances, the faithful distribute drinking water in memory of Hossein’s thirst. A pious act is widely observed in Islamic countries is the foundation of saqqakhanas (q.v.), or public drinking fountains, again to commemorate the events at Karbala.

The Persian language is rich in proverbs and sayings alluding to water and the thirst of the martyrs of Karbala.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
Concluded

Barekat schools to reach 2,000 by Mar. 2023

TEHRAN – Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, will increase the number of schools in deprived areas up to 2,000 by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 20, 2023).

“We have so far built 1,800 schools for the deprived, and will construct 200 others this year,” Mohammad Torkamaneh, the CEO of Barekat Foundation said.

The foundation is committed to building 2,700 schools with 14,000 classrooms, of which 1,800 schools have been opened and completed to date, he noted, IRNA reported on Monday.

Some 3,750 villages across the country are covered by the Barekat Foundation’s school-building activities, he also said.

According to Torkamaneh, there

are currently 250,000 students in Barekat schools.

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

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

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

‘Salt particles raising from Lake Urmia contained by 80%’

Salt particles raising from the catchment basin of Lake Urmia has been contained by nearly 80 percent, Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program at West Azarbaijan has said.

In cooperation with the Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization, some saplings and shrubs have been planted in the catchment basin of Lake Urmia to slow down the wind giving rise to salt particles since past three years, which cost 600 billion rials (nearly \$14 million), Sarkhosh said.

He went on to say that the major salt particle hotspots in the West Azarbaijan province include Jabal Kandi village in Urmia County, Saporgh, Urmia, Choopanloo and Miandoab, which are highly contained by planting vegetation, ISNA reported on Saturday.

کنترل ۸۰ درصد ریزگردهای نمکی دریاچه ارومیه

مدیر دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه در آذربایجان غربی گفت: نزدیک به ۸۰ درصد از ریزگردهای نمکی حوضه آبریز دریاچه ارومیه کنترل شده است. فرهاد سرخوش در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایسنا با اشاره به اینکه حجم آب ورودی به دریاچه ارومیه باعث مرطوب شدن نمک‌های سطح دریاچه و کنترل ریزگردهای نمکی آن می‌شود افزود: خارج از بستر دریاچه ارومیه و در حوضه آبریز با همکاری منابع طبیعی و کاشت نهال و درختچه‌ها ریزگردهای نمکی کنترل می‌شود که از سال ۹۳ تا ۹۶ در این راستا ۶۰ میلیارد تومان هزینه شده است.

وی با بیان اینکه کانون بحرانی ریزگرد در آذربایجان غربی خاطرنشان کرد: کانون بحرانی ریزگردها در استان شامل منطقه جبل کندی در ۴۵ کیلومتری ارومیه، منطقه سیورغان ارومیه، چوپان لو سلماس، و میانداوب است که با نهال کاری تا حدود زیادی از این ریزگردها مهار شده‌اند. وی با اشاره به تراز دریاچه ارومیه اظهار کرد: امروز تراز دریاچه ارومیه ۱۲۷۰.۲۳ متر بوده که در مقایسه با مدت مشابه سال گذشته ۳ سانتی متر افزایش داشته است.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON APRIL 25

New cases	1,077
New deaths	21
Total cases	7,217,117
Total deaths	140,996
New hospitalized patients	180
Patients in critical condition	1,031
Total recovered patients	6,969,470
Diagnostic tests conducted	50,862,245
Doses of vaccine injected	148,688,755

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Blessed is the man who always kept the life after death in his view, who remembered the Day of Judgment through all his deeds, who led a contented life and who was happy with the lot that Allah had destined for him.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times» Noon:13:02 Evening: 20:07 Dawn: 4:45 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:17 (tomorrow)

Omar Khayyam: Impact on literature and society in the West

Part 2

In 1869, he published a laudatory article in the North American Review. The article aroused the interest of many fellow Americans and also drew the attention of readers in England.

Many people wanted to own a copy of the poem. A pirated printing of the 1868 edition appeared in Columbus, Ohio, in 1870, and in 1872 FitzGerald had a third edition printed by Quaritch.

This found its way to many admirers in America where, as in England, there was an increasing interest and demand for the work.

A further impetus to the book's popularity came from the artist Elihu Vedder, whose Rubaiyat edition, in an attractive cover and embellished with 56 drawings, caused a sensation when it was published in 1884.

The exhibition of the original drawings at the Arts Club, Boston, drew up to 2100 visitors a day. The book sold out in six days and was reprinted several times.

Other editions were reprinted many times as well: "Competing editions cropped up like dandelions all over the literary lawn" (Weber).

As John D. Yohannan points out, the adoration of FitzGerald and the epicurean vein that runs through his translation "produced the true agents of the fin de siècle cult of the Rubaiyat; namely, the Omar Khayyam Clubs of England and America" (Yohannan).

In 1892, admirers of the poem founded the Omar Khayyam Club of London. Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy, who had published his own Robaiyat version in 1889, was elected its first President.

Similar clubs were founded in other places but, with the exception of the American Club, left almost no traces. The main activity of the members of the London Club was (and still is) gathering twice a year to dine and to commemorate Omar, Fitz (as he is called as a term of endearment) and the Rubaiyat, in more or less serious and comic rituals.

A statue of Omar Khayyam Neyshaburi in Laleh Park, Tehran.

mathematical aspects of Omar Khayyam.

The club passed into oblivion around 1930, but from its publications, most notably Twenty Years of the Omar Khayyam Club of America (1921), one can appreciate its many contributions.

In the chapter "The Cult of the Rubaiyat", Yohannan describes how the Omar cult developed in England and America, and produced an anti-cult to combat it.

He gives a lively account of this strife. But Omar Khayyam, introduced to the public in the form FitzGerald had shaped him into, was not only the hero (or anti-hero) of scholars, men of letters and artists; for "Omaritis" had taken hold of businessmen, schoolgirls, and soldiers as well.

Especially in America, we find a real "Omar craze." In Potter's Bibliography, published in 1929, we find not only a long list of books and articles pertaining to Omar Khayyam, but also an enumeration of him in different arts and in commercial advertisements: music, drama, films, dances, bookplates, and also tobacco, cigarettes, cigars, fountain pens, coffee, chocolate, perfume, toilet soap, pottery, post cards and crossword puzzles, deriving their name and attraction from the old Persian poet.

Omar Khayyam had become an everyman's poet. Eminent men of letters, like Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain and Arthur Quiller Couch, had borrowed FitzGerald's quatrains in order to turn them into parodies.

After them countless versifiers made their own Robaiyat, in which almost every subject that moved people could be parodied. The Omar Khayyam craze began to fade away in the 1920s.

No doubt Omar Khayyam had the greatest impact on literature and society in countries where English was spoken. Among the writers who were deeply influenced by FitzGerald's Khayyam were T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound (D'Ambrosio, passim).

But Omar Khayyam was translated and discussed in other countries as well, especially in France and Germany. In his Bibliography, Potter lists 114 versions of Omar Khayyam's Robaiyat in 25 languages, of which 18 versions are in French and 37 in German. And an endless stream of editions and translations was to follow in the years after 1929.

(Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)
(To be continued)

Children's Book Council of Iran asks publishers to respect copyrights

TEHRAN – Children's Book Council of Iran on April 23, which is celebrated as World Book and Copyright Day, asked Iranian publishers of children's books to respect copyrights.

In a statement, the council celebrated the occasion and said, "Although Iran has not joined any international copyright convention, the country should respect copyrights."

"Over the past few years, some private Iranian companies have entered into negotiations with foreign writers or publishers to acquire the copyrights of their books," the statement added.

The council also said that all its satellite institutes highly respect copyrights.

Iranian publishers, writers, translators and some private cultural organizations have stressed the need for joining the international conventions on copyrights over the past

decade.

They have said that the lack of copyright protection in Iran is a major obstacle in the way of publishing translated books, spoiling numerous opportunities to take part in major international cultural events.

Arsalan Fasihi, a Persian translator of works by Turkish writers Orhan Pamuk, Aziz Nesin and Elif Safak, has earlier criticized Iranian translators for copying books already translated by their colleagues, and called this plagiarism.

Joining the Berne convention on copyrights will prevent plagiarism as well as having several translators working on the same foreign book, he noted.

Quoting the director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, Juergen Boos, Iranian Cultural Attaché Ali Mujani said in 2018 that Iran's absence from international conventions

A file photo shows a woman visiting the 32nd Tehran International Book Fair on April 29, 2019. (Fars/Mehdi Marizad)

on copyrights has thus far prevented the organizers of the fair from hosting Iran as a special guest.

UNESCO celebrates April 23 every year as World Book Day, also known as World Book and Copyright Day, to promote reading, publishing and copyrights.

The first World Book Day was celebrated in 1995, and continues to be recognized on that day. On the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day, UNESCO along with the advisory committee from the major sectors of the book industry, select the World Book Capital for one year.

In 2022, the Mexican city of Guadalajara is taking up the mantle of World Book Capital, with a year-long program that focuses on the role of books and reading in triggering social change, combating violence and building a culture of peace.

The original idea for celebrating an international day for books was conceived in 1922 by Spanish writer Vicente Clavel Andrés as a way to honor the author Miguel de Cervantes.

It was first celebrated on October 7, 1926, Cervantes' birthday, before being moved to his death date, April 23, 1930.

The celebration continued to enjoy great popularity in Spain, especially in Catalonia, where it coincides with the Diada de Sant Jordi, the patron saint of Catalonia. The Diada usually involves the exchange of gifts between loved ones, and, since the 1931 Book Fair in Barcelona, the customary gifts are a book and a rose.

In 1995, UNESCO decided that World Book and Copyright Day would be celebrated on April 23, as the date is also the anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, as well as that of the birth or death of several other prominent authors.

Farabi Cinema Foundation ready to do film on IRGC Aerospace Force's capabilities

Frome Page1▶ The meeting was organized to celebrate the 43 anniversary of the IRGC and to praise some crew members of "The Situation of Mehdi", a film that depicts part of the life story of Mehdi Bakery, the chief of the IRGC 31st Shura Division, which carried out several major operations during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, and his brother Hamid.

"I express my thanks to the cast and crew, and I hope you keep on making such valuable films, deeming it a jihad for yourself as it really is," Hajizadeh said.

Produced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), "The Situation of Mehdi" has previously been praised by high-ranking officials of the country, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

The film premiered in February at the 40th Fajr Film Festival and won Crystal Simorghs in several categories, including best film, at Iran's most important film

IRGC Aerospace Force chief Amir Ali Hajizadeh meets Farabi Cinema Foundation director Mehdi Javadi on April 22, 2022. (FCF)

event.

It also garnered the Crystal Simorghs for best directorial debut for Hadi Hejazifar.

"The Situation of Mehdi" also won prizes

at the National Will Manifestation Awards, a gala event that is a supplement to the Fajr Film Festival.

The awards are presented to those films that promote issues being pursued by public organizations and institutes. Juries from the organizations select winners from the films screened at the Fajr Film Festival every year.

The film was honored by the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, Municipality of Tehran, Municipality of Mashhad, Mostazafan Foundation, Public Culture Council and several other organizations and institutes.

The best film prize of the 11th edition of the Qoqnu Screen Awards was given to "The Situation of Mehdi".

The awards are presented by the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization to revolutionary films and cineastes every year.

Shahla Nazerian, voice of Ingrid Bergman in "Casablanca", deceased at 75

TEHRAN – Iranian dubber Shahla Nazerian who lent her voice to many characters in the world's acclaimed movies has passed away due to heart failure on Monday. She was 75.

She was the widow of Hossein Erfani, the renowned voice actor who died in 2018.

Their daughter, Mahsa, who is also a voice actor, confirmed her mother's death in reports published in Persian news outlets.

She said that the funeral will be held in the Artists' Section of the Behesht Zahra Cemetery in Tehran on Wednesday.

Nazerian began her career in dubbing in 1962 by voicing child

Voice actor Shahla Nazerian in an undated photo.

and minor characters.

Due to her great talent for dubbing, Nazerian was able to

convince her managers to exploit her for voicing leading characters. She did one of her greatest

Twelve impressive stories of General Soleimani

A note on the book "The White Soldier" by Ali Allah Salimi

Since the martyrdom of Qassem Soleimani until today, many books have been published about him, and "The White

Soldier," a collection of his memories compiled by Sasan Nategh and containing twelve short stories by twelve young Iranian and Afghan writers, is one of the best works on the subject so far.

Each of the writers in this book has tried to approach Martyr Soleimani's life and personality from a unique perspective, like in Vahid Hassani Hanzaei's story "Behind the Eyes," a member of the US Army expresses regret for participating in the operation that led to the assassination of General Soleimani.

According to the story, the American soldier goes to the Holy Father and begs for forgiveness, confessing that he is no longer peaceful and can't get rid of the

guilt he feels after participating in that tragic mission.

The following are the titles of all the stories and their writers in this book: "Behind the Eyes" by Vahid Hassani Hanzaei, "I Kneel Beside Him" by Davood Khodaei, "Moonlight" by Fateme Behbudi, "A Good Man" by Mahbube Hajian Nejad, "Smiles Can Also Be Colored, Like Green!" by Maryam Al-Sadat Mir Hosseini, "Disquiet" by Vahid Agha Karami, "A Selfie with a Special Guest" by Abulfazl Ashrab, "Companions" by Khodadad Heydari, "Rooted paintings" by Hossein Ghorban Zadeh, "Nobody touches my shoulder!" by Nazim Reza Zadeh, "Who is this gentleman?" by Mina Muhammad Hosseini, and "Man" by Mahdi Bataghva.