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Ayatollah Khamenei outlines enemy plot

Good Engineering Wrong Calculations

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Iranian FM meets top Lebanese authorities

TEHRAN- Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held separate talks on Friday with the top Lebanese officials during his tour to the country.

The chief Iranian diplomat visited Beirut early on Friday.

Amir Abdollahian visited Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, chief of the Hezbollah resistance movement, discussing recent regional and global developments.

The most recent events in the region, notably in Palestine and Lebanon, were discussed by the two parties.

They also reviewed the Zionist regime's threats and the Axis of Resistance's state of preparation regarding recent regional and global developments during the meeting.

Lebanese PM and Abdollahian discuss bilateral ties

In the meeting between Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Amir Abdollahian, they addressed shared interests.

Issues on bilateral, regional, and global levels were discussed by the two parties.

Amir Abdollahian and Lebanon's Parliament speaker Nabih Berri also discussed bilateral relations. Iran's top diplomat also shared views on regional and international matters.

Lebanese FM seeks Iran's help for security and stability

Amir Abdollahian spoke with his Lebanese counterpart, Abdallah Bou Habib, about bilateral, regional, and global matters. ▶ Page 2

Interview President Pakdel reveals secrets of Iran handball success

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - Alireza Pakdel, president of the Iran Handball Federation, believes that the National Team's victory against Chile is a big achievement for the country's handball.

Iran earned their first-ever win in the 2023 IHF World Men's Handball Championship, beating Chile 25-24 Thursday night.

"We won a hard game, which made the people of Iran happy," Pakdel said in his interview with Tehran Times.

"This is only the second time we are participating in the World Men's Handball Championship, while Chile are making their eighth appearance in this tournament.

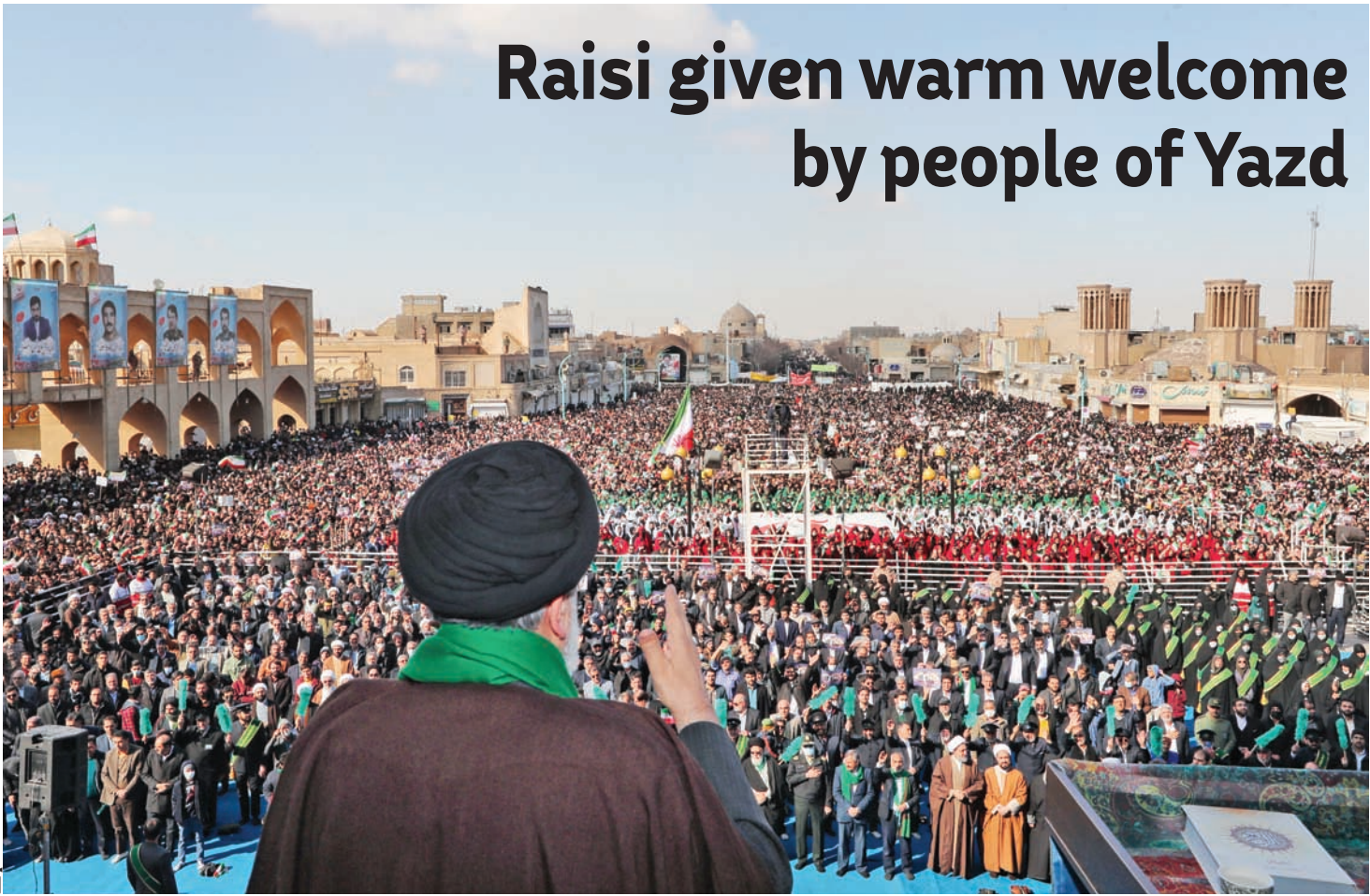
"Considering that three teams from each group will qualify for the next stage, winning the match was crucial for us. Iran won dramatically because, in the last five minutes, we fell behind by three goals. It isn't easy to battle back in handball. But after that, Iran conceded one goal and scored five to reach a big victory," he added.

Iran are drawn in Group A along with Spain, Chile, and Montenegro. Pakdel admitted that Iran's next two games are also tough.

"Spain are among the greatest teams in the world with many titles in the Olympics and Europe. On the other hand, over the past few years, Montenegro have been known as a phenomenon in European handball. However, Iran national team will do their best to get good results in two upcoming matches," said the president of the Iran handball federation.

When asked about Iran's handball recent successes, Pakdel explained: ▶ Page 3

Raisi given warm welcome by people of Yazd



TEHRAN – Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi arrived in the central province of Yazd as the second stop in the second round of provincial trips that started recently.

The two-day visit started on Thursday morning and included several activities rang-

ing from popular meetings to inaugurating industrial and construction projects.

Upon his arrival, President Raisi was welcomed by the representative of the Supreme Leader and Friday Prayer Imam of the province, the Governor-General and a group of

local officials.

"We hope that during this visit we will be able to understand the status quo on the issues of these regions by visiting the cities and villages," Raisi said upon his arrival. "Before our visit to Yazd, ▶ Page 3

President inaugurates major projects in provincial trip to Yazd

TEHRAN - In continuation of regular visits to different provinces, President Ebrahim Raisi paid a two-day visit to Yazd province, in center of Iran, on Thursday and Friday, when he inaugurated and visited a number of projects in the province.

During the trip, numerous projects in various sectors including housing, indus-

trial, water and electricity were inaugurated in the mentioned province, IRNA reported.

Participating in the Yazd Province Planning and Development Council meeting, meeting with the people of Yazd (capital city) and some other cities of the province, as well as a specialized meeting with different groups

were on the president's schedule during the visit to Yazd.

Some ministers and vice presidents, who accompanied President Raisi, also traveled to the different cities and towns in the province on behalf of the president to closely address the problems of the people living there. ▶ Page 4

Budget bill allocates \$85m for natural resources

TEHRAN - The national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1402, which starts on March 21, has allocated 35 trillion rials (about \$85 million) for conserving and protecting natural resources.

The largest amount of the budget is related to watershed management and aquifer management with a budget of 13 trillion rials (\$34 million), ISNA quoted Mostafa Jalili, an official with Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization, as saying.

Important issues such as employment, production and people's livelihood, water, agriculture and environment, watershed management, and aquifer management have been taken into consideration in the 1402 budget bill, he explained.

"Among other important issues that are specifically mentioned in the budget bill is the issue of drought. ▶ Page 7



"Questioning" drama "The Guard" named best at Ammar Popular Film Festival

TEHRAN – "The Guard", a telefilm whose producers claim is questioning about people's social and political rights, has been picked as best at the 13th Ammar Popular Film Festival. ▶ Page 8

Tehran museum exhibits 7,000-year-old mother and child figurine to mark Women's Day

TEHRAN – On the occasion of National Women's Day, the National Museum of Iran has put on show a 7,000-year-old clay figurine of a mother hugging her child.

Found in the late Neolithic site of Zagheh at the northwestern periphery of central Iran. According to organizers, the 7,000 years old figurine is the earliest representation of a mother and child discovered in Iran.

"This figure is the only discovered example of Iranian prehistoric art that shows a mother with a child in her arms," the director of the prestigious museum told visitors during the opening ceremony held on Wednesday.

Coinciding with Women's Day, the National Museum of Iran decided to expose one of the most important and unique works of its treasure in the form of a single exhibition, Je-

brael Nokandeh stated.

Archaeologists have unearthed this figurine from an engraved building called Niayeshgah ("Place of Worship", which is about seven thousand years old, in Tepe Zagheh of the Qazvin plain.

"It is made of baked clay and shows a mother with a child in her arms. The mother's head is elongated and almost ▶ Page 6

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Tehran Papers

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in Thursday's Iranian newspapers.

10 steps of the West to support chaos in Iran

In a commentary, the Iran newspaper listed the actions of the United States and Europe in supporting the riots in Iran, which include; ▶ Page 2

Tale of traitor: From fake stroke to espionage for MI6

TEHRAN- Alireza Akbari, who served as Iran's deputy defense minister, has been sentenced to death on spying for Britain.

In a televised-interview which was aired on Thursday, he touched upon how he was deceived and recruited by the MI6 to launch UK-orchestrated plans and ploys to infiltrate Iranian high-profile figures to obtain sensitive information.

During the video, he confessed that from the outset he was identified by the intelligence agent working in the British embassy in Tehran, saying, "In a diplomatic session, the UK ambassador along with another person approached me for an informal chitchat and then they gave me a card. After a while, I received a phone call from a person who told me the UK ambassador wanted to meet you."

Akbari furthered, "They offered me a long-term visa in case of having close contacts with the UK embassy." He added, "I accepted the offer and paid a visit to ▶ Page 2

Iran's storytelling festival unveils international jury

TEHRAN – The 24th edition of the International Storytelling Festival announced the international jury on Thursday.

The all-Iranian jury comprises writer Ali Khanjani, theater teacher Moslem Qasemi and children's book writer Mohsen Hejri.

The Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the organizer of the festival, also unveiled the national jury, which is composed of Hejri, Qasemi and writer Mohammad Simazari.

The performances in the ritual-traditional section will be judged by actor Mehdi Saffarinejad, writer Ali Mehdiqasemi and storyteller Mehdi Chayani.

A jury composed of director Farzad Zeidi, actor Sadeq Kiani-Moqaddam and playwright Mohammad-Ali Yazdanshenas will judge the storytellers in the 90-second performance competition. ▶ Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

10 steps of the West to support chaos in Iran

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in Thursday's Iranian newspapers.

from page 1 ► - Leaving the negotiation table

- Secret and unsuccessful meeting of the Security Council
- Unveiling new opposition
- Unsuccessful attempt to recognize the separatists
- Attacking Iranian embassies and cultural centers
- Letting to the counter-revolutionaries to demonstrate on the streets of Berlin and Vancouver
- Vote against Iran in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
- Media support for armed terrorist groups
- Sanctioning Iran in support of rioters
- Political sponsorship of the murderers of Iran's security forces

Hamshahri: Women's jihad for clarification

In the editorial, Hamshahri writes about the way Islam and the West look at women: "It is a must for all the educated women of Iran to explain with their scientific and media capabilities and by using the hashtag Western woman (#western_woman), to launch a discussion regarding the insulting view of Western civilization towards women and the lifestyle of Western women."

Arman-e Emrooz: Women's status in Iran

Farzaneh Torkan, a reformist political, and women's rights activist, says Iranian women have made considerable progress in areas of culture, science and education in the recent decades. She says this progress is chiefly due to the Islamic Revolution.

"A careful assessment of the progress and freedoms of women in recent decades shows that they have made good progress in culture, education, science, etc. and the women's literacy and their job opportunities in universities..." Farzaneh Torkan writes in Arman-e Emrooz.

She continues: "The reason for this growth and development is, first of all, the Islamic revolution, and secondly, it originates from global growth and development. But with the growth, some limitations and challeng-

es have also emerged, which has caused dissatisfaction among women in Iran."

For example, in government bodies and organizations, a "glass ceiling" is considered for women that they cannot and are not allowed to cross and grow.

Arman-e Melli: If parties fail to agree on JCPOA, they will consider plan B

The possibility of fully reviving the JCPOA is very weak, writes Arman-e Melli.

"Probably if the parties cannot reach an agreement regarding the nuclear deal and JCPOA, they will enter a new phase, Plan B. In that phase, Western countries intend to stop Iran's enrichment level. They also offer concessions to Tehran, for example, allowing the customers to buy oil from Iran in a limited way and pay the money for it. Although the domains of the agreement will be limited, it will strengthen Iran's economy because it will sell oil," the newspaper writes.

Vatan-Emrooz: Ex-US officials under shadow of revenge for martyr Soleimani

The U.S. government has again extended protection for former secretary of state Mike Pompeo and his top Iran aide due to persistent threats against them from Iran.

Vatan-Emrooz discussed the consequences of the assassination of Lt. Gen. Soleimani for the Americans involved in this crime and wrote that the 24-hour protection for Pompeo and Brian Hook costs \$2 million per month.

The newspaper said: "The third anniversary of the martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. terrorist army was held while the former U.S. officials, who were involved in the assassination of Martyr Soleimani, are still living with the nightmare of Iran's revenge.

Iranian authorities, including the president and military commanders, have repeatedly pointed out that the assassins of Martyr Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis cannot escape Iran's revenge. For this reason, Trump, the former president, Pompeo, and Hook, as the main perpetrators of the assassination of Martyr Soleimani, are most afraid of Iran's revenge, and that is why the United States has taken special measures to protect their worthless lives."

Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian meets with Hamid Nouri's children

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian visited with the children of Hamid Nouri, an Iranian citizen imprisoned in Sweden.

During the meeting, Nouri's family just talked about their father's concerns.

In reference to his most recent phone conversation with the Swedish foreign minister, Amir Abdollahian emphasized the efforts done by the Foreign Ministry to seek Nouri's release.

He also denounced maltreatment toward Nouri while in captivity.

The foreign minister vowed that the Iranian diplomatic apparatus will not spare any op-



portunity to provide political and consular assistance to the detained Iranian national.

Israel made 2022 deadliest year for Palestinians: Iran

TEHRAN- Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Thursday that the "racist Zionist regime" set a new record in 2022 by slaughtering 224 people in Palestine, making it the deadliest year on record for Palestinians.

Kanaani said in a Twitter thread that three Palestinians had been killed by gunfire from the occupying troops on the previous days, bringing the total of Palestinian martyrs in the first two weeks of 2023 to seven, including three youngsters.

The Zionist apartheid regime made 2022 the

deadliest year for Palestinian men, women, and children by leaving an unmatched record (224 martyrs), the Iranian diplomat explained.

In response to growing worries about the possibility of aggravating the Zionist regime's organized crimes, he stated that no hope can be laid in so-called human rights activists in Europe and the United States.

Kanaani stated that aiding the oppressed Palestinian people is a humanistic obligation that also contributes to world peace and security.

from page 1 ► embassy to hold talks with the UK ambassador along with another person who I finally found out he was working for the MI6."

"During the meeting, the MI6 agent got closer to me and said the whole story about the espionage by informing me about how to provide sensitive information to him. I was given a laptop, telling me if you open a page, we can trace you. In other words, they did this because of having a safe kind of communication," he added.

He also mentioned that during his time spying for the UK, several intelligence agents had changed but all of them had one thing in common: infiltration. To put it more clearly, the MI6 agents tried to get sensitive information by asking him invariably about the recent events and happenings in Iran. For example, they sought for all kinds of information regarding the JCPOA, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal.

"What they strived to get from me was pieces of information regarding Iran's top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrazadeh who was assassinated when his car was ambushed on a highway outside Tehran in November 2020," Akbari added.

In other words, he said, the MI6 agents wanted to get aware of events surrounding all Iranian key figures.

Akbari was once arrested by the Intelligence Ministry in 2008 on espionage charges but, afterwards, was



Tale of traitor: From fake stroke to espionage for MI6

released on bail and then left Tehran to London on medical grounds.

MI6 was in fear of his detention in Iran, and then did its best to orchestrate a plan of fake stroke for him to steer clear of any potential arrest.

He confessed that MI6 agents suggested him to pretend a fake stroke to stay more in London for the fear of his life. "They told me you will have a fake stroke, being carried to hospital and then you will be unable

to fly back. Therefore, the time of your stay in London will linger. After a while, your family will travel to Britain on the excuse of visiting you."

What is really interesting is that Akbari revealed some momentous points about UK intelligence agents, saying they comported themselves with great respect while knowing all details concerning his case.

He also underlined that all of those agents were aware of his personal

Iranian FM meets top Lebanese authorities

from page 1 ► The Lebanese foreign minister requested help from Iran for the security and stability of Lebanon during the meeting.

Amir Abdollahian said, "We are prepared to help repair the power plants in Lebanon and create new power plants."

He then went on to stress his nation's willingness to assist the Lebanese people with regard to the electricity and energy concerns.

In a joint press conference with the Lebanese foreign minister, Amir Abdollahian stated that the two parties had productive discussions with one another on a number of regional issues.

Amir Abdollahian also congratulated the Lebanese people on the Christian New Year and stated that Iran has been and will continue to be a friend during Lebanon's difficult times.



On his most recent trip to the Arab nation, he mentioned the newest Iranian economic initiatives in Lebanon and expressed delight with the pace of activities.

Amir Abdollahian suggested the Lebanese

I hope I can go to Tehran soon: IAEA's Grossi

TEHRAN - Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has expressed hope to visit Iran soon.

"I hope I can go to Tehran. I always say that the Agency is a place of agreement, a space, a platform for mutual understanding. So I am ready to travel and start again, if possible, as soon as possible," Grossi said in an interview with Vatican Media on Thursday.

Grossi, who had visited the Vatican on Thursday for talks with Pope Francis, also said there is an impasse in negotiations between Iran and its Western negotiating partners (the U.S., France, Germany and Britain) to revive the 2015 nuclear deal - JCPOA - and also between Iran and the IAEA.

"There is an impasse, the negotiations have broken down, there are many meetings and exchanges and that is why the Agency — and I personally — do not want to leave this political vacuum around such a vol-

atile and dangerous issue. There are two parallel paths: that of the overall agreement, the so-called JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action); and also the bilateral negotiation between the Agency and Iran. We have not been able to make progress," Grossi explained.

The IAEA chief acknowledged that Iran is making inroads in its nuclear industry, including manufacturing advanced centrifuges.

"Iran, at the same time, is making progress: progress in the process of uranium enrichment, [and] in the development and construction of more and more advanced centrifuges," Grossi said, according to Vatican News.

The root of all the existing problems is the reckless move by the Donald Trump administration in quitting the hard-won JCPOA.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Monday that Trump's decision to pull Washington

out of the nuclear deal was a "great strategic blunder".

"This (Joe Biden) administration considers the decision on the part of the last administration to withdraw from the JCPOA, one of the greatest strategic blunders of American foreign policy in recent years," Price told reporters at his daily news conference.

The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 between Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain), Germany and the European Union.

Under the nuclear deal Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, Trump left the multilateral agreement in May 2018 under his "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. He returned sanctions and imposed new ones.

The Trump administration also

beliefs, interests, and characteristics, respecting his religious beliefs.

Akbari concluded that he was swindled by MI6 agents and failed to comply with revolutionary slogans which were inscribed on his working place walls, saying, "One moment of negligence brought him misery."

In a reaction to the death sentence against Akbari, British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly requested his immediate release.

The British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, meanwhile, repeated requests for consular access to Akbari.

Akbari has been sentenced to death over disrupting Iran's internal and external security through the transmission of information to the UK which was confirmed by the Supreme Court.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Intelligence on Wednesday, it was emphasized that Akbari was considered as a leading agent working for the British spy service (MI6), collecting sensitive information from Iran in a bid to provide it to the service.

Akbari had worked in various positions since 1980s, including the deputy minister of defense under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami.

During the process of obtaining a visa from the British embassy in Tehran, he was flagged by the intelligence agents stationed there and then became a full-fledged employee for the British spy agency.

technical group to visit Iran to meet the country's fuel demands in relation to the fuel crisis there, adding the Islamic Republic is ready to assist Lebanon in any way.

The foreign minister also said, "Iran views the security of Lebanon as the security of its own and the region and that it fully supports the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon and Palestine."

He also stated that Iran does not meddle in Lebanon's domestic issues and that he believes the Lebanese political parties have the knowledge and skills necessary to choose a new president.

Iran FM meets Al-Nakhalah

Amir Abdollahian and Ziyad al-Nakhalah, the secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement, also met in Beirut to exchange views on shared matters of interest.

Iran slams Swedish government over Hamid Nouri case

TEHRAN- The Swedish government has been denounced for violating human rights in relation to Iranian national Hamid Nouri by the deputy chief for international affairs of the Iranian Judiciary and secretary general of Iran's High Council for Human Rights.

Speaking to national TV on Thursday, Kazem Gharibabadi stressed that the Swedish government presents itself as a defender of human rights, despite the fact that it often violates those rights.

Given Hamid Nouri's situation in Sweden, Gharibabadi stated that the Stockholm government and judiciary had continuously violated Nouri's rights in many ways, from the beginning of his detention through the trial and issuing of a decision against him.

Hamid Nouri had not seen a fair trial and had been denied communication with his family for a

considerable amount of time, Iran's human rights chief added.

He also mentioned how harsh his jail circumstances are and how Iranian citizen has been severely restricted in his ability to choose a lawyer.

Gharibabadi mentioned the lengthy process of indicting Nouri, which took more than a year, and said that the Swedish legal system had no evidence against the Iranian citizen.

Following Nouri's conviction and appeal, the Swedish legal system dismissed some of the lawyers he had brought and urged him to introduce additional lawyers, he added.

It is regrettable that the timing of the Swedish legal system to handle this issue is also unjust, given that Sweden purports to uphold human rights yet has rejected Nouri's lawyers on a variety of grounds, he remarked.

Iran's human rights chief emphasized that Nouri has not broken any laws and is an innocent man being held in Swedish jails.

The Swedish government should free Nouri as soon as possible and compensate him for his losses, he suggested.

Nouri said in an audio recording from a few months ago that he had been subjected to torture while in detention and that, despite having eye problem, he had been denied medical attention.

Approximately 60 members of the terrorist MKO group testified in front of a Swedish court, claiming that Nouri formerly worked as a prison guard nearly forty years ago.

None of the witnesses were permitted to testify in favor of the Iranian citizen in the court.

Nouri has been in detention in Sweden since October 2019.

Good engineering, wrong calculations

By Sadegh Fereydounabadi

TEHRAN – Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has reflected on how the enemy failed in achieving its goals during the recent wave of unrest that engulfed Iran.

In a meeting with panegyrists on Thursday, Ayatollah Khamenei addressed various issues, including how the enemies' efforts came to naught with respect to destroying Iran. He said the enemy hatched a comprehensive plot to undermine Iran, but it failed in doing so because of miscalculations.

Ayatollah Khamenei said many things began falling into place before the enemy staged the unrest. "There was an economic factor; of course, the economic situation of the country was not and is not in a good state, therefore people's problems with the costs of living provided the grounds for them to use this factor," he said, according to a readout by khamenei.ir. "Other elements of disruption included security factors, infiltrations, espionage teams and Iranophobic uproars by the Arrogance in the world via different ways and methods of propaganda. They also incited certain elements inside the country to accompany them, provoked different



ethnic, religious, political, and personal motives and made use of widespread propaganda. But despite this, they failed because their calculations were incorrect."

Unrest in Iran began in September last year in the wake of the death of Mahsa Amini. Iranian authorities have said that the ensuing riots that followed the death of Amini was stage managed by the U.S., Europe, and their regional allies.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the enemies based their anti-Iran plans on miscalculations. He said the enemy engineered the unrest in a relatively good way but their calculations were wrong. And that led to their failure.

The Leader said that they

imagined that because of economic problems, the Iranian nation would cooperate with their plans of subversion and separatism. The Leader also stated that the enemy imagined that by using foul language and insults they would be able to make the country's officials become passive, hoping they would get them out of the picture. They thought they could create differences of opinion among the country's high-level officials by using temptations and creating commotions.

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out that "the enemies imagined that they could undermine the Islamic Republic's determination by using the petrodollars of a mercenary country of the U.S.

and very good facilities of the country in the path of progress very important and said, "The enemy was trying to make us stop this path, but they did not succeed and they themselves admit it, why? Because there are steely wills that are not willing to surrender in the battle of wills and stop on the path of the country's progress".

Raisi also addressed the people of Yazd who gathered in huge numbers at Amirchakhmaq Square. Thanking the people of Yazd province for their magnificent welcome to the Popular Administration, the President stated, "This welcome is a message of presence and support for the values of the Revolution and protection of the blood of the martyrs, as well as the announcement of presence to the Imam of the Muslims, Ayatollah Khamenei, that the people of Iran are always ready in the field".

In another part of his speech, the President stated that despite all the economic pressures and heavy sanctions, the enemies have been defeated and economic growth and prosperity is going on in the country, according to the website of the Iranian presidency.

Raisi added, "Those who do not want the country's progress train to move, will bury this wish and they should know that the power and movement of the country's progress train will increase day by day".

Raisi added, "Those who do not want the country's progress train to move, will bury this wish and they should know that the power and movement of the country's progress train will increase day by day".

He said, "These people neutralized the sanctions by resisting the enemies and their presence in the stage, and they made the enemy hopeless".

the harmfulness of foreign interference."

Regarding the efforts to solve the Syrian issues, Raisi emphasized the centrality of the Astana Framework and announced the readiness of Iran to play an active and constructive role in ending the conflicts and establishing peace in Ukraine, according to a readout by the official website of the Iranian presidency.

Putin, for his part, welcomed Iran's initiative to establish peace in Ukraine and emphasized coordination to solve the problems of Syria within the Astana Framework.

Earlier in mid-December, the foreign ministers of Iran and Turkey had discussed the latest issues surrounding Syria. In the conversation, the top Iranian diplomat supported pursuing the political process in Syria, saying only through cooperation and coordination among regional nations can lasting security be established in the country.

In early January, Amir Abdollahian spoke with his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad over the phone. They discussed the latest state of bilateral ties as well as developments in Syria and the region.

Amir Abdollahian and Mekdad also underlined the resolve of the high-ranking officials of Iran and Syria to expand bilateral ties in different spheres more than ever before.

The top Syrian diplomat also thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for its constructive and effective role in fighting terrorism and helping resolve the crisis in Syria through political means including during the Astana peace process.

Mekdad stressed the need for Iran to continue its role in being involved in any political initiative regarding his country.

Also, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Sosan travelled to Iran last week for talks with Amir Abdollahian and his senior

National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, highlighted the religious, cultural and language commonalities with neighboring Azerbaijan, calling for efforts by the two countries to facilitate movements and activities of businessmen from the two sides, especially those residing in border provinces.

He called for reopen the Silk Road which passes from Arshaq District in Meshkinshahr to reach Baku, stressing the significance of the route for the region's economic and trade dynamism.

For his part, the Iranian foreign minister stressed the importance of reopening the Silk Road and said Tehran attaches significance to the enhancement of relations with the Azerbaijan Republic.

Amir Abdollahian briefed the lawmaker on Iran-Azerbaijan ties and the measures adopted

to remove the obstacles in the way of further cooperation between the two countries.

The Iranian foreign minister has recently exchanged views with his Azeri counterpart Jeyhoun Bayramov about the most important issues surrounding bilateral and regional relations during a telephone conversation.

At the beginning of the conversation, Amir Abdollahian congratulated the government and people of Azerbaijan on the beginning of 2023 and expressed hope that relations between Tehran and Baku will expand in various political and economic fields in the New Year.

The top Iranian diplomat also referred to Iran's readiness to boost transportation and transit ties with Azerbaijan Republic, saying cooperation in these fields must be increased and that we are ready to boost trade ties.

They thought that by inciting some mercenary elements to seek asylum in another country and by encouraging them to smear Iran, our youth would become discouraged. They were mistaken, for the will and determination of the Islamic Republic was stronger and more adamant than all the elements of their power."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution added that, "The enemy has been doing everything it can to act against the Islamic Republic for the past 40 years, but because their calculations have been incorrect, they have failed up until now and they will continue to face defeat in the future."

He underlined that even though there are differences in taste and opinion in the country, there is still a consensus among the people about Islam, the government and the Revolution. "So, it is important not to lose this unity and not to contribute to ethnic and religious differences and the provocation of feelings of one group against another," he said.

Despite widespread enemy propaganda, Iranians from all walks of life maintained unity and supported the Islamic Republic in the face of rioting. As the Leader said, that ensures that the enemy will continue to fail in its next endeavors against Iran.

SPORTS

President Pakdel reveals secrets of Iran handball success

From Page 1 ► "When I started my work as the president of the handball federation, handball in our country had suffered a decline for several years due to the instability of the management. In a five-year stint, the federation had seven presidents or acting presidents.

"However, we started planning especially at the junior levels to rebuild the Iranian handball. We did not stop our activities even during the Covid-19 crisis," Pakdel added.

Iran made history by winning a gold medal in the 2022 Asian Women's Youth Handball Championship. Iran youth beach team also wrote their name into the history books by booking a place in the 2022 IHF Youth Beach Handball World Championship semifinals.

"All this was the result of the strategic planning of the Iranian handball federation and following the methods of top handball countries of the world.

"The International Handball Federation (IHF) has praised Iran many times in recent years and has a positive attitude toward our country's handball, and this is a source of pride for us," concluded Pakdel.

Iran make history at 2023 IHF World Handball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran earned their first-ever win in the 2023 IHF World Men's Handball Championship, beating Chile 25-24 on Thursday.

Iran goalkeeper Mohammad Siavoshi was chosen the Man of the Match.

Siavoshi made the most crucial of his total of 17 saves right at the end, his stop from Luciano Scaramelli ensuring he ended his performance with a 43% save rate.

"The Chile players were amazing," said Iran coach Veselin Vujovic. "It was a really, really tough match from the beginning. I don't have an explanation about how we won this game [but] our goalkeeper was amazing."

Iran are drawn in Group A along with Spain, Chile and Montenegro.

Team Melli are also scheduled to play Montenegro on Saturday and face Spain two days later.

The 28th edition of the IHF Men's World Championship is being held in Poland and Sweden from Jan. 11 to 29.

Denmark are the two-times defending World Champions, having won the 2019 and 2021 edition.

The winners will seal an automatic spot at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Iran handed easy group at Paris 2024 Asian Qualifiers Round 1

TEHRAN – The path has been set for the 26 teams competing in the Women's Olympic Football Tournament 2024 Asian Qualifiers Round 1, and Iran have been handed an easy draw.

Round 1 of the Asian Qualifiers will be divided into five groups of four and two groups of three, with teams competing in a one-round league format in a centralized venue from April 3 to 11.

The hosts for the groups will be announced in due course.

The draw saw Uzbekistan, Jordan, Timor-Leste and Bhutan drawn in Group A while Myanmar, Iran, Bangladesh and Maldives will battle in Group B.

Group C has Vietnam, Nepal, Palestine and Afghanistan with Thailand, Mongolia, Singapore and Sri Lanka in Group D.

Philippines, Hong Kong, Tajikistan and Pakistan are the sides in Group E with Chinese Taipei, Indonesia and Lebanon set to vie for the sole automatic spot into the next round in Group F. Group G will see India, Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan facing off.

The winners of each group will advance to Round 2 where they will be joined by the five highest seeded teams – DPR Korea, Japan, Australia, China PR and Korea Republic.

Australia finished fourth in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics while Japan were eliminated in the quarter-finals by Sweden. China's campaign ended in the group stage.

Four teams from Round 2 – the three group winners and the best-ranked runners-up – will then face off in Round 3 where they will play two pairs of home and away matches with the eventual winners qualifying for the Paris 2024 Women's Olympic Football Tournament.

Esteghlal battle back to beat Tractor in Hazfi Cup

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team battled back from a 1-0 loss to defeat Tractor 2-1 in extra time in the Iran's Hazfi Cup Round of 32.

In the match held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium, Reza Asadi scored for Tractor in the 93rd minute.

Esteghlal French forward Kevin Yamga scored twice from the penalty spot in the 110th and 120th minutes. Tractor defender Hadi Mohammadi was sent off in the 119th minute.

Earlier in the day, Mes Kerman defeated Sanat Naft 2-0, thanks to goals from Amin Kazemian and Ali Tahami.

Nassaj are the defending champions.

WASL-West Asia: Zob Ahan defeat Orthodox

TEHRAN – Iran's Zob Ahan showed poise in sailing through rough seas to get past the gritty Orthodox Amman 89-81 for their second straight win in WASL-West Asia on Thursday night at the Azadi Basketball Hall in Tehran.

Zob Ahan's Arman Zangeneh top-scored for the winners with 25 points.

The Iranian side have now captured solo second in Group A with a 2-1 card after dealing Orthodox Amman their second loss in a row.

"The most important thing in WASL is to maintain concentration all over the game. I think my players had their concentration most of the time throughout this game and I think that is the main reason we won," Zob Ahan coach Farzad Kouhian said.

AEK Athens' Mohammadi on Persepolis' radar: report

TEHRAN – AEK Athens winger Milad Mohammadi has been reportedly linked with Persepolis football team.

The 29-year-old player, started his playing career in Persepolis youth academy in 2007.

Mohammadi has represented Iran national football team in two FIFA 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

Persepolis are reportedly going to sign the player in January transfer window on an 18-month deal.

Hossein Vafaei out of 2023 Masters

TEHRAN – Iranian snooker player Hossein Vafaei was knocked out of the 2023 Masters, losing to Jack Lisowski 6-4 in the quarter-final.

The Iranian debutant had previously made a history in the tournament by beating Mark Selby, the three-time Masters champion, 6-2 on Sunday.

"I felt comfortable at 3-3, but missed a yellow with the rest which was very expensive. All credit to Jack, he deserves to win the big titles and I hope he'll do that. I'm also knocking on the door, you have to gain experience and learn from the other players to win a big tournament. You don't just come off the streets, pick the cue up and do that. You need to lose until you learn how to win.

"I didn't want this tournament to finish for me because I have enjoyed every second of it. It's a pleasure to play in front of 2,000 people. I love them all and want to thank them for their support. Even when I lost they clapped for me. Soon I'm going to make them happy and proud. I'm going to practice as hard as I can because I want to be in these big events."

Lawmaker urges deepening of ties with Azerbaijan

TEHRAN – An Iranian lawmaker has underlined the need to expand relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The lawmaker, Mahmoud Abbas-Zadeh Meshkini, who represents the people of Meshkinshahr at the Parliament, exchanged views with Amir Abdollahian on the most important topics related to the Islamic Republic's foreign diplomacy in the Caucasus region, especially the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The lawmaker explained the expectations of the people and especially the elite community in the country's northwestern region, emphasizing the importance of broadening and deepening relations with the Azerbaijan Republic, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Meshkini, who sits on the Parliament's

Facilitating presence of private sector in global markets reviewed in TCCIMA meeting



TEHRAN - The 90th meeting of the dialogue council of the government and the Tehran Province's private sector was held on Wednesday, in which ways of facilitating the presence of Iranian companies in global markets were reviewed.

The meeting was attended by Governor-General of Tehran Province Alireza Fakhari and TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, as well as the representatives of the province's private sector, the portal of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) reported.

During the gathering, the government and private sector representatives also discussed issues and challenges faced by industries and economic enterprises in foreign markets.

Speaking at the meeting, Fakhari emphasized the significant role of the private sector in the country's economy and

considered government interventions in the market and the economy to be acceptable only in the field of policy-making and supervision.

He called on the private sector to be more active in developing export and entering new markets in different countries.

Stating that even in the current economic situation, it is possible to overcome the existing obstacles and challenges with proper planning, Fakhari pointed out the experience of Russia regarding the economic sanctions of the West and said: "Russia showed that it is possible to make good use of the existing economic capacities and not be seriously harmed by international pressures in the economic field."

He further emphasized the important role of the TCCIMA as a major representative of the country's private sector and said: "The Tehran Chamber of Commerce can provide the government with the necessary advice to facilitate the activities of the private sector and cover the weak points of the country's economy with feasibility studies and by promoting active diplomacy in other countries."

Khansari for his part welcomed the viewpoints of the newly appointed governor-general of Tehran Province and expressed hope that with his participation in the dialogue council, the problems and obstacles facing economic enterprises will be resolved.

Lorestan province annual pomegranate production stands at 65,000 tons

TEHRAN- The horticulture director of Lorestan province's Agriculture Department announced the production of 65,000 tons of pomegranates in the province per annum.

About the pomegranate orchards in Lorestan, Nasser Kiani said currently, the total pomegranate orchards in the province are 3500 hectares, of which 1,200 hectares are in Khorramabad, 1,800 hectares in Kouhdasht, and the rest are in other counties.

The total production of pomegranate in the province is 20,000 tons in Khorramabad, 35,000 tons in Kouhdasht, and the rest in other counties, he added.

The official further said that 30 percent of the pomegranates produced are consumed inside the province and 70 percent in the neighboring provinces.

As predicted by Zahra Jalili-Moqaddam, the director-general of the tropical and semi-tropical fruits office of the Agriculture Ministry, the annual production of pomegranates will reach 1.2 million tons in the country in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20).



She considered the quality and taste of Iranian pomegranates unique in the world and said one of the characteristics of Iranian pomegranates is the health of the product and on the other hand its medicinal properties, which are welcomed by other countries.

The director-general of the tropical and semi-tropical fruits office of the Agriculture Ministry further said that the country's average yield of pomegranate production is 14 to 15 tons per hectare and added that last year the exemplary gardeners saw a yield of 80 to 100 tons per hectare.

Iran's export to Turkey up 24% in 11 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's exports to neighboring Turkey increased by 24 percent to reach \$3.1 billion in the first 11 months of 2022, according to the figures recently released by the Turkish Statistical Institute.

Turkey had imported over \$2.5 billion worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic in the first 11 months of 2021.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran's imports from the country also marked a 12-percent rise to hit \$2.78 billion during the January-November period, in comparison with the same time span in 2021, when the figure was \$2.49 billion.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the trade between the two countries has registered an 18-percent increase in the said 11 months compared to the same period in the previous year.

The value of trade between the two neighbors reached \$5.88 billion in January-November 2022, while the figure stood at \$4.99 billion in the previous year's same time span.

Iran's trade balance with Turkey has been \$320 million positive in favor of Iran during the 11 months of 2022.

The latest data released by the European Union's statistics office Eurostat also indicates that Iran

exported 8,422 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas to Turkey in the first 11 months of 2022, which show 1.8 percent drop from 8,581 bcm of export in the same period of time in 2021.

In last July, Iran and Turkey discussed ways of expanding economic relations along with political ties in the Turkish-Iranian High-Level Cooperation Council in Tehran.

During the meeting, which was co-chaired by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the two sides negotiated the extension of the gas export contract between the two sides for the next 25 years.

In the meeting, President Raisi noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to expand economic relations with neighboring countries.

The president also evaluated Tehran-Ankara ties as positive and progressive, saying that the two countries should pursue appropriate policies to move towards increasing their annual trade exchanges to \$30 billion.

On the sidelines of the mentioned meeting, Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian also held talks with Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Fatih Dönmez in which the two sides exchanged views on cooperation in energy fields.

Creating production-consumption chain in medicinal plants market a necessity

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- Medicinal plants in Iran have been facing relatively high price fluctuations in the last two years, and according to those active in this sector, the recent droughts and the consequent decrease in production have played the biggest role in this increase in prices.

However, the of lack of water and recent droughts have caused, in a number of cases, some plants that are so-called "low water-loving" to have significant growth, and along with that, some water-loving plants also have a decreasing trend.

In fact, this fluctuation of production has always existed in the field of medicinal plants and is not a new thing.

But the point that should be considered is that before taking measures by the Agriculture Ministry to increase the production of medicinal plants, the consumption market should be determined so that the prices are controlled and the farmers are not harmed.

As announced by the chairman of the Union of Medicinal Plants Exporters of Iran, the value of medicinal plants exported from the country in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on



March 20, 2022) was nearly 600 million dollars, but in the first nine months of this year, the value of the export of medicinal plants has decreased by 50 percent compared to the same period last year.

Mohammad-Ali Rezaei Kamal-Abad said that having more than 11 climates out of 13 climates, Iran has 8,000 varieties of medicinal plants, which is at least twice as much as Europe.

According to global statistics, from 2020 to 2022, the turnover in the export of medicinal plants

was more than 30 billion dollars, but of this amount, the export of medicinal plants from Iran was less than five percent, he further lamented.

He pointed out that in many countries of the world, the use of medicinal plants has become popular among the people, and said countries such as the U.S., China, and Germany are the main consumers of medicinal plants, so 65 percent of the drugs produced in Germany are of herbal origin.

Complaining about the drop in the export of the country's medicinal plants in the current

year, Rezaei Kamal-Abad said, "Forex obligation, non-mechanization of agricultural systems, non-holding of the international exhibition, bulk export of medicinal plants, and cumbersome laws for producers are some of our most important weaknesses in the export of medicinal plants".

Despite what was said above, the secretary of the headquarters for the development of medicinal plants sciences and processing has said, "There is a great capacity in the field of medicinal plants in the country, and according to our goal, the current turnover of one billion dollars should be increased to 15 billion dollars per year."

In terms of medicinal plants, an ecosystem office should be created, Mehdi Seyf Sahandi stated and added, "One of our challenges in the knowledge-based economy is the commercialization of the market, and many products in the market do not have the possibility of wide distribution, so the technology should work based on the market condition and necessities."

"Today we have good knowledge-based companies, and structures should be created to facilitate the commercialization of knowledge-based products", he added.

Raisi inaugurates major projects in provincial trip to Yazd

from page 1 ► **Starting implementation of major water transfer project**

As the most important event planned for the president's visit to Yazd Province, Raisi ordered the start of a project for implementing the second line of the major water transfer pipeline from the Persian Gulf to Yazd, Isfahan, and Kerman provinces, in a ceremony held on Thursday.

The 720-kilometer pipeline is going to be constructed in a three-year period with an annual transfer capacity of 200 million cubic meters.

The main goal of this project is to supply water for industries and also households based in arid areas of the mentioned provinces.

Economic development of central provinces, growth of the country's mineral industries as an alternative to oil, supplying drinking water to cities and villages in the provinces of Yazd, Kerman, and Isfahan, agricultural development, prevention of drilling unauthorized wells and preservation



of underground water reserves, the development of petrochemical complexes and refineries in the mentioned region, prevention of migration, and job creation are among the benefits of the mentioned project.

Inaugurating several industrial, energy projects

President Raisi also inaugurated eight major industrial projects as well as 11 electricity supply projects during his visit to Yazd province.

The industrial projects include the

development plan of a yarn company with 24 trillion rials (about \$11 million) of investment and job creation for 250 people; an iron and steel complex with 385.7 trillion rials (about \$101.2 million) and job creation for 450 people; a tile and ceramic manufacturing company with 4 trillion rials (about \$10.5 million) of investment which is going to create jobs for 110 people.

Also, 11 electricity transmission and distribution projects were inaugurated on Thursday in a ceremony with the presence of the president, the minister of energy, and a group of officials from Yazd province.

The projects went operational in the cities of Meibod, Ashkdez, Mehriz, Ardakan, Bahabad, Saghand, Sadouq and Khezrabad.

Raisi also ordered the start of a project for the construction of 23,600 residential units in Yazd.

This was the second visit of the president to Yazd Province since he took office in August 2021.

Production of agricultural, mining machinery rises 100%



past and the accumulated need in this area, there is still a long way to meet the country's full demand in this sector, so part of the demand should be met through production and another part through imports," he added.

The official noted that a working group was formed in the Industry Ministry earlier this year to assess the demand and capacities in the field of mining machinery, and some contracts were also concluded between domestic manufacturers and some of the country's mining companies.

He further noted that there are 26 production units of agricultural, construction, and mining machinery active in the country, of which 15 units are major ones.

"Considering the demand for such machinery in the country, it is necessary to increase the production capacity of such units

in the country," Jamshidvand said.

In mid-July 2022, the deputy, industry, mining, and trade minister for mines and mining industries said that there are more than 15,000 mining machines, which are over 20 years old, in the fleet of mining industries of the country, which need renovation and replacement.

Reza Mohtashami said some of these machines can be renovated, but the rest should be replaced through imports.

He said the government has only allowed the import of mining machinery that cannot be manufactured inside the country.

The import of mining machinery without a history of manufacturing inside the country has been allowed by the government without restrictions, and in this way, a good prospect is expected in the mining industry equipment sector in the future, the official said, adding that in terms of the other machines that can be manufactured inside the country, the import will not be done.

Having 81 different types of minerals, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe. In this regard, the Iranian government is pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major

contributor to the country's economic growth.

But despite these programs, this sector is facing several challenges.

According to a report released in the past Iranian calendar year by the Research Center of the parliament, the challenges of the mining sector are 44 percent related to laws and the lack of a long and clear mining strategy, 33 percent are related to mismanagement and problems of miners, 13 percent to environmental and natural resources problems, and 10 percent are related to international problems.

Lack of machinery is also a major challenge in the mining sector.

A board member of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has said: "At present, due to the shortage of these machines, purchase prices have skyrocketed and, in addition, their rents have become very expensive. At these prices, it is not profitable for small and medium-sized mines to rent machinery and become active. Finally, the miner has the mine and the raw material, but it is not economical due to the expensive operation of the machinery".

South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol said for the first time Wednesday that if North Korea's nuclear threat grows, South Korea would consider building nuclear weapons of its own or ask the United States to redeploy them on the Korean Peninsula.

Speaking during a joint policy briefing by his defense and foreign ministries Wednesday, Yoon was quick to add that building nuclear weapons was not yet an official policy. He stressed that South Korea would for now deal with North Korea's nuclear threat by strengthening its alliance with the United States.

Such a policy includes finding ways to increase the reliability of Washington's commitment to protect its ally with all of its defense capabilities, including nuclear weapons.

Yoon's comments marked the first time since the United States withdrew all of its nuclear weapons from the South in 1991 that a South Korean president officially mentioned arming the country with nuclear weapons. Washington removed its nuclear weapons from South Korea as part of its global nuclear arms reduction efforts.

"It's possible that the problem gets worse and our country will introduce tactical nuclear weapons or build them on our own," said Yoon, according to a transcript of his comments released by his office. "If that's the case, we can have our



In a first, South Korea declares nuclear weapons a policy option

own nuclear weapons pretty quickly, given our scientific and technological capabilities."

South Korea is a signatory of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, or NPT, which bans the country from seeking nuclear weapons. It also signed a joint

declaration with North Korea in 1991 in which both Koreas agreed not to "test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons."

But North Korea has reneged on the agreement by conducting six nuclear tests since 2006.

Years of negotiations have failed to remove a single nuclear warhead in the North.? (American and South Korean officials say that North Korea could conduct another nuclear test, its seventh, at any moment.)

(Source: Japan Times)

Did Europe lie to Russia about peace?

On New Year's eve, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the nation. "For years," he said, "Western elites hypocritically assured us of their peaceful intentions, including to help resolve the serious conflict in Donbass." He then went on to charge that "[t]he West lied to us about peace while preparing for aggression, and today, they no longer hesitate to openly admit it."

Putin was referring to his European and Ukrainian interlocutors in the Minsk agreements, each of whom has recently publicly admitted that they lied to Russia about peace while preparing for aggression.

The Minsk agreements were the best chance for peace for the already serious conflict in Donbas. They were negotiated in 2014 and 2015 between Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande. They intended to solve the conflict in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine by peacefully returning the Donbas to Ukraine but granting it full autonomy.

After the US supported coup of 2014 that removed a democratically elected pro-Russian government and replaced it with a US selected pro-West government, Russia annexed Crimea. But they could have gone further.

Dmitry Trenin, professor at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, points out that when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, Putin was acting "on a mandate from the Russian parliament to use military force 'in Ukraine' not just in Crimea." But Putin stopped short of annexing the Donbas and agreed, instead, to autonomy for the Donbas within Ukraine under the Minsk agreement.

Putin, at the time, "believed that we would manage to come to terms, and Lugansk and Donetsk would be able to reunify with Ukraine somehow under the agreements – the Minsk agreements." Russian hardliners have criticized Putin for that restraint. They have long criticized him for stopping at Crimea and not annexing the Donbas as well. They have chastised him for trusting Germany and France's promise to ensure the implementation of the Minsk agreement.

In 2014, Russia had the motive and the means to incorporate the Donbas into Russia. They could have protected a largely Russian ethnic population, who wanted to follow Crimea back to Russia, from oppression from nationalist forces that had attained prominence after the coup. And they had, at the time, the invincible military capability to do it.

Putin's critics may have been right all along. They may have been right that Putin should not have trusted Germany and France to see to it that the Minsk agreements were implemented. All three of Putin's Minsk partners have recently gone public with the admission that the Minsk negotiations were a deliberate deception to lull Russia into a ceasefire with the promise of a peaceful settlement while buying Ukraine the time to build up an armed forces capable of achieving a military solution.

In a December 1, 2022 interview with Der Spiegel, German Chancellor Angela Merkel



seems to have made that shocking confession. According to Der Spiegel, Merkel said that she believes that "during the Minsk talks, she was able to buy the time Ukraine needed to better fend off the Russian attack. She says it is now a strong, well-fortified country. Back then, she is certain, it would have been overrun by Putin's troops."

Merkel had never made that shocking claim before. It amounted to the claim that Europe had simply been lying to Russia that there was a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine while they, under the cloak of diplomacy, prepared for a military solution. It suggests that Ukraine and the US intended to take back the autonomy seeking Donbas militarily all along.

It has been plausibly suggested that Merkel is engaging in an Orwellian act of rewriting the past. It has been suggested that "Merkel is under very harsh critique not only in the U.S. but also in her own conservative party. She is now out to justify her previous decisions as well as the current bad outcome in Ukraine." Fedor Lukyanov, professor at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, has made a similar point, suggesting that Merkel's claim is a rewriting of the past to fit a present in which "diplomacy with Putin itself, even in hindsight and seemingly for good purposes, is considered a criminal conspiracy."

The problem is that, if Merkel is rewriting the past, she is harming the present. Her narrative confirms what Russian hardliners had been telling Putin at the time and results in an even greater Russian distrust of negotiations to stop the current war. Hence, Putin's New Year's eve comment that "[t]he West lied to us about peace while preparing for aggression."

If Merkel's claim is an example of Orwell's mutability of the past, then it was not a slip of the tongue or an unrehearsed rewriting of history. Merkel had a week to think about her claim before claiming it again. On December 7, Merkel repeated that admission in an interview with Die Zeit. "[T]he 2014 Minsk agreement was an attempt to give Ukraine time," she said. Ukraine "used this time to get stronger, as you can see today. The Ukraine of 2014/15 is not the Ukraine of today."

It was also a well-coordinated claim. Merkel not only made the claim twice, but she was joined in the claim twice.

Discussing the Minsk agreement in his biography of Putin, Philip Short says that "Poroshenko said later he had agreed because it was the only way to stop the fighting, but he had known that it would never be implemented because neither the political establishment nor public opinion in Ukraine would accept it." There have also been reports that "the US, the

only party who could have really pressured him, told him not to follow up on the agreement." Others report that Merkel may even have advised Poroshenko not to sign it at the time.

But, in May 2022, Poroshenko went beyond the claim that he signed the Minsk agreement knowing there wasn't the political will to implement it and seconded Merkel's claim that the deception of Russia had been deliberate. He told the Financial Times that Ukraine "didn't have an armed forces at all" and that the "great diplomatic achievement" of the Minsk agreement was that "we kept Russia away from our borders – not from our borders, but away from a full-sized war." The agreement bought Ukraine time to build its army. Poroshenko told the Ukrainian media and other news outlets that "We had achieved everything we wanted. Our goal was to, first, stop the threat, or at least to delay the war – to secure eight years to restore economic growth and create powerful armed forces."

Poroshenko says not that the result of the Minsk agreements, but the intent of the Minsk agreements, was to offer Russia a deceptive peace in order to buy Ukraine time to create an armed forces powerful enough for a military solution to the loss of the Donbas.

Though it may not be surprising for Poroshenko to make the same claim as Merkel, a more shocking support was yet to come.

On December 28, three weeks after Merkel's statements to the German media, former French President François Hollande seemed to confirm Merkel's interpretation not as a rewriting of the past, but as an accurate report of the past.

In an interview with TheKyivIndependent that seems to have gone entirely unnoticed by the media outside of Ukraine and Russia, Hollande was asked if he "believe[s] that the negotiations in Minsk were intended to delay Russian advances in Ukraine." He responded, "Yes, Angela Merkel is right on this point." He then said, "Since 2014, Ukraine has strengthened its military posture. Indeed, the Ukrainian army was completely different from that of 2014. It was better trained and equipped. It is the merit of the Minsk agreements to have given the Ukrainian army this opportunity." Hollande's second sentence is open to interpretation, since it is on the "merit" of the Minsk agreements. The first, though, specifically says that Merkel is correct that the deception was the intent of the negotiations.

It is striking that, in a short time, all three of Putin's partners in the Minsk negotiations have gone public with the claim that the agreement was a deliberate deception intended to convince Russia that there was a peaceful solution to the crisis in Donbas while, all along, preparing for a military solution. If it is true, then that is an incredible admission with serious historical consequences that reach to the present war. If it is not true, if it is a rewriting of history to make it fit with the present, then it has equally serious consequences for the present war, since it seems to have substantiated and reinforced a Russian belief that the West is not to be trusted in negotiations.

(Source: antiwar.com)

WORLD HEADLINES

Beijing abandons belligerent rhetoric against Washington

China may appoint Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng as ambassador to the United States. The envoy's mission will be to improve bilateral relations affected by disputes over Taiwan and trade, as well as by mutual claims of supremacy at sea. The coronavirus pandemic has negatively impacted the Chinese economy so Beijing needs to normalize ties with the US, its largest trade partner. This is why China's Foreign Ministry has moved sharp critics of Washington to other positions, Nezavisimaya Gazeta notes.

Presidents Joe Biden of the United States and Xi Jinping of China held talks during the G20 summit in Indonesia in November. Sichuan University Professor Pang Zhongying pointed out. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is now expected to visit China to make another effort to prevent a rise in tensions. His trip will pave the way for meetings between US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, Climate Envoy John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Chinese officials. Eventually, this can cause a major sensation as Xi Jinping is expected to visit San Francisco in November for an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) event.

How real are the changes in Beijing's policy? "The change of ambassadors should not be overestimated. They are appointed in accordance with the Foreign Ministry's rules. Trends in this field are rather determined by the fact that the economic situation in the country is not particularly positive," Scientific Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of China and Contemporary Asia Alexander Lukin pointed out.

"Still, policy changes are indeed taking place. Xi Jinping used to talk about the need to act tough, seeking to strengthen his position inside the party and increase public support as people welcome determination and firmness on the issue. However, after Xi was reelected for his third term at the party congress, the problem of power was solved and it's now more reasonable to pursue a softer course, making sure that direct Western investment once again starts pouring into China," the expert concluded.

French leftist, Green parties blast first lady's support for compulsory school uniforms

French leftist and Green politicians are criticizing the first lady coming out in favor of compulsory uniforms for elementary and high school students.

Speaking to French daily Le Parisien, Brigitte Macron on Wednesday voiced support for requiring school uniforms.

The interview was published online on Thursday, the same day France's parliament rejected a proposal by the National Rally party to reintroduce uniforms. "I wore uniforms when I was a student, navy blue skirts and sweaters for 15 years," said the president's wife. But leftist and Green party members criticized her remarks.

On Twitter, Thomas Portes, a France Unbowed parliamentarian, accused "the far-right and Macron supporters" of working "hand-in-hand."

Cyrielle Chatelain, a member of the greens Europe Ecology party, accused Brigitte Macron of supporting the National Rally's "retrograde proposition."

The requirement to wear a uniform was removed from French public schools over a half-century ago, in the 1960s.

Brigitte Macron cited standard arguments for uniform proponents, arguing the standard dress helps eliminate the differences between students and also saves time and money.

Amhara forces withdraw from northern Ethiopia's Tigray region

Forces from Ethiopia's Amhara region who fought in support of federal troops during the two-year civil war in neighboring Tigray have withdrawn in line with an African Union-backed ceasefire, the army says.

"The Amhara regional special force, which was in a national mission along with the ENDF, has withdrawn from the area, as per the deal," the Ethiopian National Defense Force said in a statement late on Thursday.

The withdrawal is a key step towards implementing the agreement reached on November 2. Another key component is the disarmament of Tigrayan forces, who began to hand over their heavy weapons on Wednesday.

The agreement was signed by Ethiopia's federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, a party that dominates the region.

The conflict broke out in November 2020 over disagreements between the federal government in Addis Ababa and Tigrayan authorities. It has created famine-like conditions for hundreds of thousands of people and killed tens of thousands.

According to the United Nations, the war has displaced more than two million Ethiopians and left more than 13.6 million people in the north dependent on humanitarian aid.

The restoration of basic services in Tigray, resumption of humanitarian aid and withdrawal of troops from neighboring Eritrea, who fought alongside Ethiopia's army, are central to the deal.

Eritrean soldiers began to pull out of several important towns in Tigray late last month. However, they have not left those towns entirely, residents say, and it is not clear whether they intend to leave.

Eritrea, which was not a party to the truce, has declined to comment on whether its troops will leave Tigray.

Tigrayan rebels this week began handing in their heavy weapons in the town of Agulae, about 30km (18 miles) northeast of the regional capital Mekelle, in a move overseen by a monitoring team made up of members of the two sides and a regional body, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Suspect charged with murder in assassination of Japan's Abe

Japanese prosecutors formally charged the suspect in the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with murder, sending him to stand trial, a court said Friday.

Tetsuya Yamagami was arrested immediately after allegedly shooting Abe with a homemade gun as the former leader was making a campaign speech in July outside a train station in Nara in western Japan. He then underwent a nearly six-month mental evaluation, which prosecutors said showed he is fit to stand trial.

Yamagami was also charged with violating a gun control law, according to the Nara District Court.

Police have said Yamagami told them that he killed Abe, one of Japan's most influential and divisive politicians, because of Abe's apparent links to a religious group that he hated. In his statements and in social media postings attributed to him, Yamagami said he developed a grudge because his mother had made massive donations to the Unification Church that bankrupted his family and ruined his life.

One of his lawyers, Masaaki Furukawa, told The Associated Press on Thursday that Yamagami will have to take responsibility for the serious consequences of his alleged actions and that his defense lawyers will do their best to reduce his sentence.

Japanese law allows capital punishment for murder, but experts say the death penalty usually is handed down for multiple killings and Yamagami could get life in prison if convicted.

No date is set for the trial, which is expected to have a panel of civil jurors in addition to the usual bench judges, as is typical in murder cases and other serious criminal trials in Japan. There are no pretrial hearings in Japan and defendants generally undergo trials.

Due to the complexity of the case, it will take months before his trial begins, Furukawa said.

Police are also reportedly considering adding several other allegations, including producing weapons, violating the explosives control law and causing damage to buildings.

Iran one of world's safest destinations, MP says

TEHRAN – Among the world's top tourist destinations, Iran is one of the safest and most peaceful, a member of the Iranian parliament has said.

Iran is a safe, calm, and beautiful tourism hub in the world, which is always exposed to conspiracies and schemes against it, CHTN quoted Seyyed Ali Yazdikhah as saying on Thursday.

It has been a great deal of effort and attention in recent years to develop tourism in various fields, especially religious tourism, in order to benefit from its income in cultural and economic areas, he added.

But due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, tourism development has been slowed and damaged, he mentioned.

However, the new team in the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has raised hopes for a more prosperous tourism industry, he stated.

He also noted that it is very important to continue the fight against Iranophobia and introduce a safe and beautiful Iran.



Long shunned by Western travelers, the Islamic Republic has steadily stepped-up efforts to use tourism, over the past couple of years, to help promote its international image battered by endless opposition mostly from the U.S.

Experts believe even before the pandemic, Iran's tourism was already grappling with some challenges, on top of those Western "media propaganda" aimed at scaring potential travelers away from the Islamic Republic. They say Iran is still somehow "unknown" to many potential travelers due to such a "media war."

Sassanid architecture discussed at Rey meeting

TEHRAN – A number of Iranian archaeologists and cultural heritage experts discussed the architectural achievements of the Sassanids at a meeting held in Rey on Thursday.

The experts exclusively turned the spotlight to the elaborate stuccowork, and intricate interior and exterior decorations excavated from Chah-Tarkhan and Tepe Mil, which are two Sassanid sites in Rey, CHTN reported.

20 students of restoration and conservation of cultural properties attended the event which

reviewed many illustrious ruins and relics of the ancient city, the report said.

Rey is considered to be the oldest town in the central Iranian plateau with a history of human settlement that stretches back in time for over 8,000 years, according to Qadir Afrovand who is a senior Iranian archaeologist. "The ancient hill of Cheshmeh-Ali (literally meaning 'Spring of Ali'), which is now a popular tourist destination in the heart of Rey, southern Tehran, bears testimonies to being a seat of power for various governments and dynasties throughout history," Afrovand said.

Tehran museum exhibits 7,000-year-old mother and child figurine to mark Women's Day

From Page 1 ► cone-shaped, and her eyes are represented by several grooves. The child was made separately from shot clay and added to the body," Nokandeh explained.

"This figure is the only discovered example of Iranian prehistoric art that shows a mother with a child in her arms."

The sculptor has shown the child in the mother's arms so artistically that despite its small size, it evokes a mother's emotional feeling towards her child to the viewer, and perhaps to emphasize this issue, the artist creatively crossed the border of naturalism by showing this mother with four hands, he said.

This very small ancient historical work tells the story of more than seven thousand years of Iran's rich culture and civilization, Nokandeh said.

The exhibition will be running through January 20, he said.

Situated in the Sazgabad



district of Boueen Zahra county in Qazvin province, c. 60 km south of Qazvin city and 140 km west of Tehran, Tepe Zagheh is one of the key sites of the transitional period from Neolithic to Chalcolithic in the Qazvin plain.

The settlement at Zagheh existed for a considerable amount

of time, roughly nine hundred years, from 5200 to 4400 or 4300 BC, according to absolute and relative chronology.

Nearly three thousand years had passed by this point, during which the village had been established and agriculture had advanced since tokens had

become known and recognized and had started to be used in the system of reckoning and accounting.

Evidence from numerous excavations and interdisciplinary studies suggests that Zagheh had a ranked society where social stratification was institutionalized and that the society was in the Chalcolithic to Neolithic transitional period.

The Neolithic, also called the New Stone Age, is the final stage of cultural evolution or technological development among prehistoric humans. It was characterized by stone tools shaped by polishing or grinding, dependence on domesticated plants or animals, settlement in permanent villages, and the appearance of such crafts as pottery and weaving. The Neolithic followed the Paleolithic Period, or the age of chipped-stone tools, and preceded the Bronze Age, or the early period of metal tools.

Iranian passport holders can travel visa-free to 43 countries

TEHRAN– Iranian citizens have visa-free or visa-on-demand access to 43 destinations around the world.

Iran's passport has been granted visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 43 destinations in the first quarter of 2023, according to the latest Henley Passport Index.

The Islamic Republic has ranked 99th on the list of the world's most powerful passports revealed by the index compiled by immigration consultancy Henley & Partners, which compares the visa-free access of 199 passports to 227 travel destinations.

Azerbaijan, Qatar, Lebanon, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Oman, Syria (Middle East), Sri Lanka, Maldives, Macau (China),



Cambodia, Malaysia, and Nepal are among the countries that Iranian nationals can enter without a visa.

A trio of Asian passports offers their holders greater global travel freedom than those of any other countries, according to the quarterly report released by the

London-based global citizenship and residence advisory firm.

Japanese citizens enjoy visa-free or visa-on-demand access to a record 193 destinations around the world, just ahead of Singapore and South Korea, whose citizens can freely visit 192.

Visa-free countries include those where entry is possible without a visa, and with a visa on arrival.

The Henley Passport Index is based on 17 years' worth of data and is designed to aid governments and wealthy individuals in determining the value of citizenship in various nations around the world by assessing which nation's passport offers the most visa-free or visa-on-arrival access.

Soltanieh seen boosting budget spending on cultural studies

TEHRAN – A budget has been allocated for the study plans of the UNESCO-registered Soltanieh, which supports the third-largest brick dome in the world.

There has been an allocation of one trillion rials (\$2.5 million) for the study plans and preservation projects of the 14th-century masterpiece in Zanjan province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Over the next three years, the budget will be spent on the related projects, Seyyed

Saeid Safavi explained on Friday.

Meaning "Town of the Sultans", Soltanieh was briefly the capital of Persia's Ilkhanid dynasty (a branch of the Mongol dynasty) during the 14th century. It is situated in Zanjan province, northwest Iran.

Experts believe that the brick dome is the earliest extant example of its type and became an important reference for the later development of the Islamic dome. Similarly, the extremely rich interior

of the mausoleum, which includes glazed tiles, brickwork, marquetry, or designs in inlaid materials, stucco, and frescoes, illustrates an important movement towards more elaborate materials and themes.

The 14th-century building, which is also famed as the Mausoleum of Oljaytu, is highly recognized as an architectural masterpiece, particularly due to its innovative double-shelled dome and elaborate interior decoration. The

very imposing dome stands about 50 meters tall from its base. A great-grandson of Hulegu, founder of the Il-Khanid dynasty, Oljaytu was a Mongol ruler who, after dabbling in various religions, adopted the Shia name Mohammed Khodabandeh.

Soltanieh's decoration is such impressive that scholars, including A.U. Pope, described it as 'anticipating the Taj Mahal.' It is the earliest existing example of the double-shelled dome in Iran.

Falak-ol-Aflak testament to Iran's rich history, expert says

TEHRAN – Traces of Iran's rich history and civilization can be seen at Falak-ol-Aflak fortress, an imposing monument of Sassanids, which dominates the city of Khorramabad in western Lorestan province, the director of the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies has said.

As a testament to Iranian history and civilization, Falak-ol-Aflak fortress possesses a large architectural design that can be used as a source by archaeology students, Musa Najafi

explained on Friday.

Because of its central location in the country, this magnificent castle has never been attacked by foreigners, and its architectural size and volume point to its history of security, he added.

As this area has been a safe region throughout history, its people could address their secondary needs, which is why architecture, music, and other arts have been prominent in Lorestan and still thriving today, he noted.

The unmissable eight-towered

Falak-ol-Aflak Castle dominates the city as one of the most visited travel destinations in the region for both domestic and foreign sightseers.

The fortress dates from the Sassanid era (224–651). It seems particularly imposing and dramatic when floodlit at night, offering picturesque views of its encircling crenelated battlements.

The Sassanid era is of very high importance in Iranian history, under which Persian art, and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

Historical core of Maku to be revived

TEHRAN – The historical core of the northwestern Iranian city of Maku in West Azarbaijan province is planned to be revived in the near future, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The historical texture of Maku is one of the most beautiful in the province and needs to be revived and restored for its residents' welfare and comfort, Morteza Safari explained on Thursday.

Countries today strive to raise their per capita

incomes by strengthening their tourism infrastructure and providing for the welfare of their citizens, the official added.

Even though West Azerbaijan has a lot of tourism and historical potential, its people are not very familiar with these resources, he noted.

Maku is located northwestern province of West Azarbaijan and enjoys a unique geographical and natural location.

In a valley that passes through which the Zangmar River divides Maku into two parts, the city is located 1294 meters above sea level.

The city is surrounded by the Qarasu River and Turkey from the north, the Aras River (the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Armenia) from the east, Khoy from the south, and Turkey from the west.

Due to the surrounding stony mountains, this city has a moderate climate in

winter and a hotter climate in summer.

Mountainous landscapes, flourishing pastures, hot water springs, waterfalls, protected areas, and hunting grounds are some of the tourist attractions of this area.

Maku is located on the main Tabriz-Bazargan road and has an excellent strategic location.

Second Announcement



Khouzestan Steel Company

IN THE NAME OF GOD

EXTENTION OF INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER IN TWO STEPTS

No. :460138

**KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE
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Real Density:	2.22 – 2.25 g/cm³
Porosity:	21 – 27 %
Ash Content:	0.2 % Max.
Specific Resistance:	4.5– 6.5 mΩm
Bending Strength:	110 -140 Kgf/Cm²
Young's Modules:	7.8 – 11.8 GPa
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Budget bill allocates \$85m for natural resources

From page 1 ► Considering the location of the country in the arid and semi-arid region and the impact of climatic conditions on the state of water resources, this vital element is very important," he added.

In the current year, some 26 trillion rials (\$65 million) has been allocated to protecting natural resources in the fields of watershed management and soil protection, protection and sustainable exploitation of forests and pastures, and desertification, he noted.

President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1402, which starts on March 21, to the Majlis on Wednesday.

The proposed budget amounted to about 52.616 quadrillion rials (about \$131 billion), with a 40 percent rise from the current year's budget.

The president mentioned stable economic growth, people's livelihood, observing justice, and efficiency of the government system as the main approaches of the budget bill and stated: "In this bill, the establishment of a progress and justice fund in all provinces is foreseen so that the development credits of the provinces are paid systematically."

On January 8, Hossein Mir-Rajabi, an official with Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization, said the Organization plans to benefit



from the experiences of knowledge-based companies toward preserving natural resources.

Utilizing the capacity of knowledge-based companies in the field of making systems smart, stopping the unauthorized change of use in agricultural lands and natural resources, and implementing projects to revitalize pastures have been considered, he added.

Seven programs namely smart controlling and monitoring of natural resources, formulating and implementing the revitalization plan, enriching pastures, creating a comprehensive natural resource management system, launching a national dis-

patching center, manufacturing firefighting equipment domestically, developing the Internet of Things, and smart irrigating of plantations have been prepared in this regard.

The Ministry of Agriculture has allocated 311 billion rials (about \$775,000) to the projects, the official added.

Meanwhile, a roadmap for environmental protection has been developed, Rouhollah Naqdipour, the secretary of the strategic council of the Department of Environment, has announced.

The document presents 13 national macro strategies and 46 cross-sectoral measures for five main environmental challenges,

he said, IRNA reported.

The 7-chapter book also suggests reforms for systematic purposeful solutions and policies to solve environmental issues including the water crisis, he explained.

He listed the five major environmental challenges of the country as the imbalance between water resources and consumption leading to drought, soil erosion, waste and sand and dust storms, air pollution in metropolises, destruction of biodiversity and genetic resources, and imbalance between the environment and industrial and civil development.

Some 2,000 health projects to be inaugurated by March

TEHRAN – By the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), some 2,000 health projects will be inaugurated across the country.

The priority will be given to underprivileged and rural areas, ISNA quoted Amir Saki, an official with the Ministry of Health, as saying.

Improving the infrastructure for providing healthcare services, especially in border areas is among the main goals of the projects, he added.

In the past 20 years, the health indicators of the rural population have grown significantly, Mostafa Rezaei, head of the primary healthcare network of the Ministry of Health, said in October last year.

"For nearly 20 years, we have been providing first-level services to 29 million people in the form of an insurance program for rural areas and cities with less than 20,000 people. These services include service packages for age groups plus services for vulnerable groups," he explained.

"The good situation we have in rural areas compared to urban areas is people's access to PHC (Primary health care) services. This means that health care and treatment are provided to all villagers and the rural family physician program has been implemented and pursued for almost 20 years."

Primary health care is provided to rural residents by 31,000 health care providers



(called Behvarz) nationwide.

Over six years (1984 to 1990), the PHC system was fully developed throughout the country. In rural areas, Health Houses are established in villages with over 300 residents, which are under the supervision of a rural comprehensive health center.

Each health center takes control of five Health Houses.

Two healthcare providers are providing primary care in each health house, including preventive care, health promotion, screening, and basic medical services for predefined conditions, to an approximate population of 1,100 people.

Currently, 18,000 health centers are providing services to over 20 million villagers nationwide, with 630 health care providers, Rezaei highlighted.

In 2005, Family Physician (FP) program was started, which targeted almost 25,000,000

citizens residing in rural areas, and was piloted in two provinces of Fars and Mazandaran.

Based on the program, a physician and a midwife offer services in rural areas, every 3,300 villagers have a physician and there is a midwife per 5,200 people in villages.

Some screenings and diagnoses regarding the common cancers of men and women are also offered actively and free of charge to the rural community and cities with less than 20,000 people, Rezaei also said.

People living in villages are covered by free insurance and benefit from all service packages without paying, he stated, highlighting that all rural care services are free.

In October 2021, World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran Jaffar Hussain, said that Iran's health system can be a model for other countries in the region, especially in the field of health and the use of valuable forces such as healthcare providers.

They have also played an effective role in improving life expectancy, reducing the death of pregnant women, improving the health status and disease index in the last 40 years, etc.

The World Health Organization believes that the improvement of health indicators in the villages of Iran and the reduction of the gap between the health indicators in rural and urban areas are due to the activity of health care providers.

Knowledge-based companies hold 25% share of medicinal herbs market

TEHRAN – Some 25 percent share of the medicinal herbs market in the country is held by knowledge-based companies.

For several years, the field of medicinal plants and natural products has been seriously favored by knowledge-based and technological companies.

Thanks to the support of the headquarters for promoting medicinal herbs at the vice presidency for science and technology, talented figures are increasingly entering the medicinal herbs industry, IRNA reported.

In addition to these measures, the law for knowledge-based production leap seriously facilitates the entry of talented figures and knowledge-based companies into various industries.

Accordingly, more than 800 companies are active in the value chain of medicinal plants and natural products industry.

The export revenue of medicinal plants is estimated at \$700 million, the head of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, Rouhollah Dehghani, has said.

Stating that out of 2,500 medicinal plants, 1,800 of them are endemic to Iran, he emphasized that Iran with its own strong history of traditional medicine and a rich ecosystem of medicinal plants has a huge opportunity for increasing share in the national and global market.

According to the document approved by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, it is predicted that there is at least \$3 billion of capacity in the country in this field, and it can reach \$15 billion by focusing on the peripheral technologies, he noted.

In this regard, the biggest support measure for knowledge-based companies is market building, in which we can develop domestic and foreign markets, he also suggested.

Iran ranks fourth worldwide in the production of science in the field of traditional medicine, and the remarkable achievement will improve in the coming years, Nafiseh Hosseini Yekta, the director of the health



ministry's Persian medicine office, has announced.

Over 17,000 books have so far been published about Persian traditional medicine, which has been recognized by the World Health Organization, she noted.

Iranian traditional medicine strongly focuses on prioritizing health maintenance and disease prevention over treatment.

It is one of the most ancient forms of traditional medicine. It is grounded in the concept of four senses of humor: phlegm (Balgham), blood (Dam), yellow bile (Saфра'), and black bile (Sauda'). The concept of the four senses of humor is based on the teachings of Rhazes and Avicenna in an elaborate medical system.

So far, about 30,000 plant species have been identified in the world, with Iran's share of about 8,000 species which is more than the whole of species found in Europe.

The per capita consumption of medicinal plants in Iran is about one kilogram of dried plants, in other words, 83,000 tons of medicinal plants worth 1.2 trillion rials (around \$3 million) are consumed in the country, while in Europe this amount is 900 grams and in the United States is 2.5 kilograms.

Over 7,000 knowledge-based and 1,600 creative companies have so far been registered and started operations.

The fields of biotechnology, agriculture, food industries, chemical technologies aircraft maintenance, steel, gas, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and medicine, oil, electronics and telecommunications, information technology, and computer software are among the sectors in which researchers in technology companies are working.

RAMSAR SITES IN IRAN

Part 40

Miankaleh Peninsula and Gorgan Bay

Miankaleh Peninsula, Gorgan Bay, and Lapoo-Zaghmarz Ab-bandan are located in the northern Mazandaran province.

They are biosphere reserves and wildlife refuges. A brackish bay almost completely cut off from the sea, which supports freshwater marshes and seasonally flooded woodland, and a freshwater lagoon supporting extensive reedbeds.

An extremely important for area for breeding, and passage, nesting and wintering waterbirds including pelicans, cormorants, egrets, flamingos and geese.

Rising sea levels have permanently inundated former flats and marshes, reducing bird habitat.

Principal crops in the surrounding area are cotton and wheat.

Overview

Gorgan Bay is a shallow, brackish embayment, almost cut off from the Caspian Sea by Miankaleh Peninsula, a 60 km long sand dune ridge, partly covered by grassland and scrubs.

The bay receives freshwater inflow from a number of small rivers and streams rising on the humid northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains.

Some freshwater marshes occur at the western end of the bay, where freshwater input is greatest.

There are extensive tracts of seasonally flooded tamarisk woodland on that side of the bay, too.

The Lapoo-Zaghmarz Ab-bandan are long, narrow freshwater lagoons located at the landward end of Miankaleh Peninsula, about 10 km west of Gorgan Bay.

Source: Ramsar.org

To be continued

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

'Water transfer from Sea of Oman entails no considerable environmental risk'

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

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

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

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

شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان مشکل زیست محیطی ندارد

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست کشور گفت: شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان به استان های مختلف به شرط رعایت الزامات محیط زیستی، جانمایی مناسب در ساخت آب شیرین کن و رهاسازی پساب آن مشکل و مانع زیست محیطی ندارد و از نظر این سازمان بلا مانع است.

عیسی کلانتری دوشنبه شب در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: برای تامین آب کشاورزی، آشامیدنی و صنایع کشور چاره ای جز استفاده از آب دریا نداریم و باید چه اکنون و چه آینده به این منابع بیکران و بسیار فراوان رجوع کنیم.

وی افزود: ایران کشور پر آبی نیست و سالهای سال با بحران بی آبی، خشکسالی و مسائل زیست محیطی، گرد و غبار و ریزگردها مواجه است.

معاون رئیس جمهوری تصریح کرد: ۱۳۰ میلیارد مترمکعب آب تجدید پذیر ایران در ۴۰ تا ۵۰ سال گذشته به کمتر از ۸۰ میلیارد و مصرف آب از ۵۰ میلیارد مترمکعب به بالای ۹۵ میلیارد مترمکعب رسیده است.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JANUARY 13

New cases	75
New deaths	1
Total cases	7,562,446
Total deaths	144,723
New hospitalized patients	39
Patients in critical condition	178
Total recovered patients	7,336,655
Diagnostic tests conducted	54,869,658
Doses of vaccine injected	155,281,837

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JANUARY 14, 2023

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The best among you is the one who doesn't harm others with his tongue and hands.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times» Noon:12:13 Evening: 17:33 Dawn: 5:45 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:14 (tomorrow)

Jami and Sufism

Part 5

Among the new biographies he includes are those of numerous Naqshbandis and their immediate ancestors, beginning with Yusuf Hamadani (d. 1140) and ending with Ahrar, who was still alive at the time of writing; the inclusion of a living figure in a work of this type was unusual, and it may be taken as another mark of Jami's esteem for Ahrar.

He allots even more space to the other order important at the time in the eastern Persian world, the Kobrauiya, together with its Sohrawardi antecedents.

Remarkable, too, is that he includes towards the end of his work notices of eleven poets, ranging chronologically from Sanai (d. ca. 1131) to Hafez.

It is by no means certain, as Jami would have it, that Sanai was a disciple of Yusuf Hamadani, or that Attar (d. 1221) followed Majd ad-Din Baghdadi (d. 1220), still less that some of the poets he refers to can with confidence be identified as Sufi.

Jami's efforts to make a Sufi of Khaqani (d. 1199) are particularly unconvincing; but to his credit he confesses to uncertainty whether Hafez "ever stretched out the hand of discipleship to an elder". In all, what have been termed "eight clusters" of entirely new entries can be discerned in the Nafahat.

Copious mention in the Nafahat of one's near ancestors was evidently a matter of prestige for some of Jami's contemporaries in Herat, for they complained to him that he had not written enough concerning them.

He was, however, deliberate in his exclusions as well as inclusions, and he claimed to rely only on the most trustworthy authorities. He was particularly adamant in excluding from the Nafahat Mohammad Nurbakhsh (d. 1464), eponym of the Nurbakhashieh, an offshoot of the Kobrauiya, and a claimant to Mahdihood, despite the appeal of the son, Qasem Nurbakhsh, that he make mention of him; were he to do so, Jami responded, Qasem would find the result highly displeasing.

The absence from the Nafahat of Shah Nematollah Wali (d. 1431), an undeniably eminent figure, cannot be ascribed to any

Jami: Life and works

Part 1

Though born in the hamlet of Kharjerd, Jami would take his penname from the nearby village of Jam (lying about midway between Mashhad and Herat), where he spent his childhood.

Before coming to Khorasan sometime in the 14th century, the family resided in the Dasht district of Isfahan, with which Jami's father, Ahmad Dashti, was still identified.

In Jam, Ahmad was a prominent member of the community, and his house was frequented by the learned and the pious.

One of Jami's biographers, Nezami Bakharzi (p. 50), relates that the renowned Naqshbandi Shaikh khajeh Mohammad Parsa stopped there on his way to Mecca, showing special favor to the five-year-old Abd al-Rahman.

Though this story was probably invented to explain Jami's later spiritual affiliation, it does indicate that his father had the learning and wherewithal to provide Jami with his earliest education in Persian and Arabic letters.

doctrinal deviance comparable to that of Mohammad Nurbakhsh, for he was indubitably a Sunni.

The fact that Nematollah's descendants had moved in the direction of Shiism must, however, have sufficed for Jami—bitterly hostile to all manifestations of that creed—to expunge him from the roster of the Sufis.

A similar explanation might be advanced for the omission of Safi ad-Din Ardabili (d. 1334), were it not that his immediate successor, Sadr ad-Din (d. 1393), is respectfully mentioned in the context of Jami's notice of Qasem-e Tabrizi (d. 1433), better known as Qasem al-Anwar.

Some three years after the death of Jami, Alishir Navai translated the Nafahat into Chaghatay Turkish as Nesayimu'l-Mahabbe min Semayimi'l-Futuuvve (ed. Kemal Eraslan).

On the one hand, he abbreviated some of the entries found in the original, and on the other, he expanded it by including material on Jami himself as well as his companions, some Indian Sufis, and, most importantly, numerous Turkic shaykhs of Central Asia.

In 1520, Lami Chelebi completed a translation of the Nafahat into Ottoman Turkish. His version was originally entitled Futuhu'l-Mucahidin li Tervihi Kulubi'l-Müşahidin because its completion happily coincided with the Ottoman conquest of Belgrade but it became popularly known simply as Nefehat Tercemesi (first printed Istanbul, 1872); and includes entries on early Ottoman Sufis, including those who brought the Naqshbandieh to Anatolia and Istanbul.

A still unpublished Arabic translation of the Nafahat was made by Taj ad-Din Zakaria Osmani (d. 1592), an Indian Naqshbandi shaikh resident in Mecca.

In sum, whether by design or not, with his affiliations and enthusiasms, his original works and his commentaries, Jami represented a summation of the learned and spiritual traditions of the Persian-speaking world, especially Khorasan, on the eve of the transformations wrought by the Safavid conquest.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
Concluded.

“Questioning” drama “The Guard” named best at Ammar Popular Film Festival

From Page 1 ► Directed by Hamid Bayat, the story of the film revolves around the problems coming after a security guard at a funfair decides to declare his candidacy for membership in the city council.

The closing ceremony of the festival, which was launched in 2010 to honor revolutionary films, was held at Tehran's Felestin Cinema on Thursday.

“Asma” directed by Mostafa Aqmohammadlu was selected as best short. The film tells the story of a renowned nurse who makes sacrifices to bring back a newborn to life.

No winner was announced for the TV series category, while “Mr. Judge” by Sajjad Mehregan was awarded an honorable mention.

This series portrays some true legal cases on public issues fictionalized by 12 young screenwriters.

The Lantern for best documentary went to “New Jersey” by Ali Zoheiri.

Several other films were also awarded in the sideline section of the festival, which also paid tribute to its former president, Nader Talebzadeh, who died in April 2022.

“Hajji Nader was the sole person I knew in my life, whose behavior was more eloquent than his words,” new festival president Edgardo Robin, who is an Argentinean Muslim cleric, said

Director Jamal Shurjeh (C) accepts an award for his lifetime achievement during the 13th Ammar Popular Film Festival at Tehran's Felestin Cinema on January 12, 2023. (Mehrfaraz Razavi)

in a short speech after calling Talebzadeh his “spiritual father”.

He also described Talebzadeh as a “charismatic figure” who could even attract people, which were against him ideologically.

The festival also honored filmmaker Jamal Shurjeh, who is suffering from a brain disease.

“I was once one of Mr. Shurjeh's disciples. When he was working I was his second assistant, and aside from filmmaking, I was learning lessons on faith,

morality, and sacrifice from him,” said Cinema Organization of Iran director Mohammad Khazaei.

“We pray for his health and hope he would return to work; he is a role model for those in younger generation, who are working in the revolution's cinema,” he added.

Sitting in his wheelchair, Shurjeh thanked the organizers and said, “I hope the festival would take in all the world, and Iranian cinema would enjoy a

lofty international status so that other countries envy us.”

Shurjeh is most famous for his movies on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, however, he was selected for his collaboration as an assistant director in “The Men of Angelos” and “Prophet Joseph (AS)”.

He is also the director of “33 Days”, a film on the Israeli 33-Day War of 2006 against Lebanon, and “Ahmed Bey” about the last Ottoman Bey who ruled Algiers during the 19th century.

Iran's storytelling festival unveils international jury

From Page 1 ► Ten storytellers from across the world will attend the festival to share tales from their folk cultures during the Iranian event, which will open in Yazd on Sunday.

Deepa Kiran, a founder of the Story Arts Foundation in India, is one of the storytellers to participate in the festival, which will take place from January 8 to 12, 2023 in Yazd.

She is also a professional writer and educationalist, engaged with employing story arts as a pedagogical intervention, deeply impacting both the learner and the teacher.

Divya Sarkar, a member of the Mumbai Storytellers Society, will join her fellow storytellers to give her own performance, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults – Kanoon,

the organizer of the festival, announced on Saturday.

She is also a phonics teacher, a special needs educator and the founder of the Word Power Activity Center.

Kenyan storytellers Grace Wangari and John Mukeni Namai, Canada's only traditional Palestinian storyteller Sarah Abu-Sharar, Sila Topcam and Suheda Sahin from Turkey, and Argentinean storytellers Mily Ponce and Claudia Montesino, and Mauricio Patino from Colombia have been invited to give performances at the festival.

Fifteen Iranian narrators, including Mehri Khosravi, Mahmud Kharaqani, Shadi Pakzad and Mohsen Karimi, have also been selected to tell stories in the international section of the festival, which will run for five days.

A combination photo shows jury members for different categories at the 24th International Storytelling Festival.

Iranian publisher takes readers to John Steinbeck's “Forgotten Village”

TEHRAN – John Steinbeck's story “The Forgotten Village” has recently been published by the Taq publishing house in Tehran.

Originally published in 1941, the book has been translated into Persian by Yusef Najafi Jablu.

The novelist who wrote “The Grapes of Wrath” and the director who produced “Crisis and Lights Out” in Europe combined their superb talents to tell the story of the coming of modern medicine to the natives of Mexico.

There have been several notable examples of this pen-camera method of narration, but “The

Front cover of the Persian edition of John Steinbeck's book “The Forgotten Village”.

Forgotten Village” is unique among them in that the text was written before a single picture was shot.

The book and the movie from which it was made have, thus,

continuity and a dramatic growth not to be found in the so-called “documentary” films.

Headed by Kline and with Steinbeck's script at hand, the camera crew spent nine months off the trails of Mexico recording this narrative of birth and death, of witch doctors and vaccines, of the old Mexico and the new.

They traveled thousands of miles to find just the village they needed; they borrowed children from the government school, took men from the fields, their wives from the markets, and an old medicine woman from her hut by the side of

A romantic story of the life of a martyr's wife in “Mrs. Moon”

In the beginning, she explained how she chose the narrative of this woman's life and said: The life of this lady was fascinating to me, as a writer, I usually choose subjects with which I can empathize more, that's why I chose the life of Naz Alinejad.

“Despite her young age, Mrs. Alinejad faced many challenges in her life. At the age of 27, despite having 5 children, she lost her husband in the Beit-ol moqaddas operation. After her husband's martyrdom, she had to handle life all on her own, especially since he had bequeathed her not to receive help from any institution after his martyrdom,” she added.

Pointing out that it took about 5 years to conduct the interview, write the book, and editing, this author said: “I tried to adhere to the interview and not add imagination to it while writing the book.”

“The story of this lady's life can inspire the girls and young women of our society. It's amazing how a woman makes progress in a rural environment, in the absence of her

husband despite numerous financial, social and other problems,” said Sajedeh Taghizadeh.

She emphasized that our society needs role models in every field. According to his author, successful women in various social, cultural, scientific fields should be introduced as role models so that girls and teenagers can be inspired by their lives.

Referring to the various interpretations of the slogan “Women, Life, Freedom”, she said that if the youth in our society get involved in the sedition of the enemies, it is because we failed to introduce good role models of women to them.

She continued that “Mrs. Moon” narrates the life of Mrs. Naz Alinejad in 3 chapters in the form of short and continuous stories.

A small part of this 300-page book is dedicated to the time of her husband's presence and narrates a romantic, simple, carefree life, but the main part of the book is the narration of her life after her husband's martyrdom and how she handled life alone.