

# TEHRAN TIMES

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# The Prudence of Ayatollah Khamenei

Why negotiation with U.S. not a solution to Iran problems? Page 5

**Op-ed**  
**Ukraine first, Iranian diaspora second and Dutch people maybe the last!**

**By Ehsan Etesam**  
TEHRAN – Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte along with some other officials of the country, including Minister of Justice and some members of the Parliament, had a meeting on March 16 with one of the most infamous Iranian diaspora members, Masumeh Alinejad Qomi Kollaei, aka Masih Alinejad, and made some remarks in regards to recent events in Iran.

The most important comment of Rutte which got Masih Alinejad as excited as a baby opening a Christmas gift, was his promise to persuade the EU to put the IRGC on the list of terrorist groups. Before anything else, there is a question to be answered: does Rutte even have enough time to pull this off? The short answer is: probably not!

Rutte's rhetoric about Iran popped up just a few hours after what was called by many "a political earthquake" in the Netherlands. Page 3



**Happy Noruz: a celebration for 300 million people**

**By Afshin Majlesi**  
TEHRAN – On March 21, over 300 million people worldwide start celebrating Noruz – an ancient festival that marks the Persian New Year and the official beginning of spring.

Noruz, which means "new day", is a universal celebration of new beginnings: wishing prosperity and welcoming the future, and escaping from the past.

You may compare it to Christmas celebrations. However, there is much more to it than that; family gatherings, street performances, fire festivities, and delicious Persian dishes, to name a few.

The millennia-old festivity is primarily observed in Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, the Kurdish regions of Iraq as well as in those countries, where there are significant diaspora populations of Parsis, including India. It is celebrated by tens of U.S. communities as well. Page 6

**Report**  
**White House snubs Netanyahu**

**By Ali Karbalaee**  
More than eleven weeks into his third term as prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu has yet to receive an invitation to visit Washington.

Many reports have pointed out that before Netanyahu's latest return to power, new Israeli leaders had always visited the United States or met U.S. President by this point in their premiership.

While reports say this signals apparent U.S. unhappiness over the policies of Netanyahu's right-wing cabinet, the reality is global outrage over the new Israeli cabinet's statements and remarks would simply make a meeting disastrous for the U.S. at this moment in time. Page 5

**Op-ed**  
**China emerging as a flexible peacemaker in West Asia: Foreign Affairs**

TEHRAN – In a commentary published on March 15, Foreign Affairs analyzes how China has emerged as "flexible peacemaker" in West Asia (Middle East).

The analysis followed after China brokered an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia after seven years of estrangement.

Foreign Affairs suggests that Washington's interests would be better served if it stopped taking sides with some Western Asian states at the cost of others.

"U.S. interests would be better served if Washington stopped taking sides in regional disputes, got back on talking terms with all key regional players," it notes.

Following is part of the commentary titled "How China became a peacemaker between Iran and Saudi": Page 2

## Bank loans to economic sectors increase over 38%

TEHRAN – Iranian banking system has paid 36.69 quadrillion rials (over \$79.7 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022–February 19, 2023), registering a 38.1-percent rise from the same period in the previous year.

According to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), over 83.4 percent of the mentioned facilities have been provided to owners of businesses and the rest have been paid to natural persons, IRIB reported.

As reported, 75.3 percent of the total facilities paid to the owners of businesses have

been in the form of working capital loans.

During the mentioned period, businesses active in the mining and industry sector received over 8.53 quadrillion rials (about \$18.55 billion) in the form of working capital loans, accounting for 37.2 percent of the total such facilities. Page 4



**Iran, China, Russia conduct joint naval operations**  
TEHRAN – During a coordinated naval war exercise in the northern Indian Ocean, the armed forces of Iran, China, and Russia have conducted a variety of tactics and operations, including rescuing hijacked vessels.  
On Friday, the Iranian, Chinese, and Russian navies participated in the major stage of the 2023 Maritime Security Belt naval drills in the northern Indian Ocean. Page 2

## Clean Air Law allots budget to public transport development

TEHRAN – Some 8.4 trillion rials (about \$18 million) has been allocated within the framework of the Clean Air Law to the development of public transport fleet in the country.

The income from the Clean Air Law in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2021–March 2022) hit 2.88 trillion rials (about \$6.5 million), but this year it decreased to 1.6 trillion rials (about \$3.5 million), IRNA quoted Darioush Gol

Alizadeh, head of the national center for weather and climate change affiliated with the Department of Environment, as saying.

The Clean Air Law, enacted in July 2017, has defined responsibilities for the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the

Department of Environment, the police, the municipality, the National TV, and some other organizations.

In this regard, according to the three-year plan of the Ministry of Oil, which was presented to the Department of Environment, the amount of sulfur in diesel fuel is supposed to be reduced to a great extent, in order to meet the national standard. Page 7

- From Inside**
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## Tehran Papers

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

### Bin Salman's tactics

Although Saudi Arabia took the initiative to talk with Iran, Tehran also welcomed the proposal, Sharq said in a commentary.

These conversations show that Saudi Arabia has Rational Actor Model in foreign policy. Due to Iran's current internal situation, Page 2

## Enemy seeks to sow despair and hopelessness in society: Raisi

TEHRAN – Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has said that the enemy seeks to induce despair among the Iranian people.

Speaking at an inauguration ceremony in Tehran on Saturday, President Raisi said, "Today, the enemy seeks to induce despair and hopelessness in the society, but we, the Iranian nation, believe in culture of 'we ca,'" according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

He made the remarks at the ceremony for inaugurating 5 stations and operating 11 kilometers of subway tracks from the middle sections of lines 6 and 7 of the Tehran Metro.

Raisi said, "Today, the atmosphere of work and effort prevails in the country, and such an atmosphere is sure to bring people's satisfaction and trust and generate strength for the country." Page 3

## Iran's top security official to visit Iraq

TEHRAN – Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, is set to travel to Iraq, after visiting China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Iraq is Iran's second trading partner. Iran's trade with Iraq stands at \$10 billion and maintaining this volume of trade requires addressing some "security challenges" imposed on the relations between the two countries, accelerating economic agreements, and facilitating banking cooperation, IRNA said.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian had said that Shamkhani would pay a visit to Iraq.

Amir Abdollahian implied that the visits by Shamkhani to the United Arab Emirates and Iraq were done in full coordination with the foreign ministry.

"The trips by Admiral Shamkhani to the UAE and Iraq are being done within the existing security framework. They are not a new phenomenon. A representative from the foreign ministry is accompanying him during the visits," the foreign minister said on Twitter. Page 3

## "Autumn Girl" composer receives nomination at HIM Awards

TEHRAN – Iranian composer Mohammadreza Ajdari has received a nomination for his piece "Autumn Girl" at the Hollywood Independent Music Awards.

The single has been recorded with guitarist Firuz Veisanlu, saxophonist and flutist Hadi Jdari, bass guitarist Babak Riahipur, and drummer Peyman Latifi. Mix and mastering have been done by Omid Asghari. This composition also features Ajdari on piano.

His album "Miracle of Love" and singles, including "Nil", have won great acclaim.

Ajdari is also a music teacher, whose students Selina Sadat Shekrabi, Barsam Akbari and Roham Abdolhosseini have recently won prizes at the 2023 American Music Talent Competition.

Fifty-seven other musicians have been nominated for the HIM Awards, which will announce winners in different categories on August 17, 2023. Page 8

## Bin Salman's tactics

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

from page 1 ► it could have waited for a better opportunity, however it chose China to mediate as Riyadh knew that Tehran would rarely say no to China, and that China also has the authority to be a mediator.

By accepting the proposal, Iran showed that it is not stubborn.

If Saudi Arabia wants to secure its future, it has to get rid of American support.

China's initiative is unprecedented in its history as China does not interfere in any challenge that is not directly related to it. This action showed that Beijing is trying to de-hegemonize the U.S. in the region.

On the other hand, the Chinese are thinking about long-term business in the region, which can only be done by resolving the dispute between Riyadh and Tehran.

Through the negotiation, Saudi Arabia gave a serious warning to America that Riyadh has other friends.

In this short time, Mohammed Bin Salman has shown that he will seek any tactic to make his wishes come true. On the other hand, these talks show that Iran is a powerful country and without interaction with it, no project in the region will be implemented.

**Arman-e-Melli: Tehran-Riyadh-Cairo triangle**

"Undoubtedly, relations with Saudi Arabia can benefit Iran, and if Tehran can normalize its relations with Cairo, it will have tremendous effects on the Islamic world," former MP Mohammad Reza Khabaz writes in Arman-e-Melli.

That is, the triangle of Tehran, Riyadh, and Cairo will give new greatness to the Islamic world.

Khabaz went on to criticize the elements who broke the relations between the two countries by storming the Saudi embassy seven years ago and said: Reestablishing the relationship took seven years and it caused a lot of damage to our country.

The former parliamentarian also emphasizes the need to revive the JCPOA agreement and writes: The JCPOA will definitely be very effective in reducing the economic problems, and inflation and also will increase investment in the country.

But with these two or three moves, the country's economic situation will not be improved.

In the end, to improve the situation, Khabaz asked for clarification in the field of economy, so that experts can help the government to improve the economic situation.

**Etemad: Rectifying the mistakes**

Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume their cooperation after many years.

## Iran, China, Russia conduct joint naval operations

TEHRAN- During a coordinated naval war exercise in the northern Indian Ocean, the armed forces of Iran, China, and Russia have conducted a variety of tactics and operations, including rescuing hijacked vessels.

On Friday, the Iranian, Chinese, and Russian navies participated in the major stage of the 2023 Maritime Security Belt naval drills in the northern Indian Ocean.

Rear Admiral Mostafa Tajoddini, a spokesman for the exercises, said that the naval forces of the three nations had trained under realistic circumstances in a coordinated effort to free two trade boats that had been seized in international seas by pirates.

An Iranian Navy SH-3 helicopter was dispatched for reconnaissance and search after the two target liners sent mayday signals to the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) of Chabahar port in southeast Iran, he added.

The Iranian Navy's "Sahand" destroyer then acted as the command ship to undertake the operation.

The spokesperson underlined that the Iranian Army and IRGC special forces partnered



with Chinese and Russian airborne commandos to parachute themselves onto the target trade ships and apprehend the pirates.

The joint exercise seeks to boost multilateral cooperation among the three nations, strengthen regional security and its foundations, and show each nation's willingness and capacity to support international peace, maritime security, and the development of a maritime community with a shared future.

Iran, China, and Russia are participating in their fourth joint drill in recent years.

## European Parliament morphed into platform for slamming Iran: Foreign Ministry

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani on Friday called the claims by the European Union regarding poisoning of a number of students in certain Iranian school "baseless," underlining that the Strasbourg-based parliament had become a forum for Iran-hatred.

Censuring the "suspicious events" in schools, Kanaani said, "While the Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously and at the highest level pursuing the issue and expert teams of the Iranian Health Ministry are doing a field and scientific investigation, the European Parliament's move to issue a resolution and repeat baseless accusations against our country is surprising and regrettable."

It is shameful that certain countries, utilizing mercenary attacks, are bound to damage Iran's reputation and launch a propaganda campaign against the Islamic Re-



public, he remarked.

Kanaani also noted that certain nations are also exploiting the issue as a "new subject" to maintain their unending animosities towards Iran.

The European Parliament, regrettably, has become a venue for these dubious and radical indi-

viduals who want to incite hatred against the Iranian people and further the Iranophobic project.

In a statement released on Thursday, European legislators urged the UN Human Rights Council to launch an impartial investigation into a spate of poisonings that have affected Iranian schoolgirls.

With 516 votes in favor, 5 against, and 14 abstentions, the resolution was approved.

Several Iranian students have reported experiencing poisoned symptoms while attending class since November 2022.

The outbreak originated in the central city of Qom before extending to some other cities.

Most frequently, students had breathing issues, nausea, exhaustion, and dizziness; some even required hospitalization.

Additionally, he underscored that some of the culprits of this crime have been identified based on the preliminary findings of Iranian judicial authorities.

The highest-ranking Iranian authorities, according to the spokesman, denounced the cruel act and demanded a full inquiry into the matter as well as the most severe penalties for those responsible.

## China emerging as a flexible peacemaker in West Asia: Foreign Affairs

*If US continues to make itself part of the problem rather than the solution, its room for diplomatic maneuvering will become more limited*

from page 1 ► While U.S. President Joe Biden's Middle East team was focused on normalizing Saudi-Israeli relations, China delivered the most significant regional development since the Abraham Accords: a deal to end seven years of Saudi-Iranian estrangement. The normalization agreement signed on March 10 by Riyadh and Tehran is noteworthy not only because of its potential positive repercussions in the region—from Lebanon and Syria to Iraq and Yemen—but also because of China's leading role, and the United States' absence, in the diplomacy that led to it.

Washington has long feared growing Chinese influence in the Middle East, imagining that a U.S. military withdrawal would create geopolitical vacuums that China would fill. But the relevant void was not a military one, created by U.S. troop withdrawals; it was the diplomatic vacuum left by a foreign policy that led with the military and made diplomacy all too often an afterthought.

The deal represents a win for Beijing. By mediating de-escalation between two archenemies and major regional oil producers, it has both helped secure the energy supply it needs and burnished its credentials as a trusted broker in a region burdened by conflicts, something Washington couldn't do. Chinese success was possible largely because of U.S. strategic missteps: a self-defeating policy that paired pressure on Iran with supplication to Saudi Arabia helped China emerge as one of few major powers with clout over and trust with both of these states.

Yet Washington does deserve some credit for the agreement—if not the kind of credit it would want to claim. In inadvertent ways, its conflicted approach to the region spurred Saudi Arabia's shift from confrontation toward diplomacy with Iran and thereby opened the way to Chinese mediation. As long as U.S. partners such as Saudi Arabia believed they had carte blanche from Washington, they had little interest in regional diplomacy. Once Riyadh believed that the carte blanche had been withdrawn, diplomacy became their best option.

After four days of negotiations in Beijing, a joint trilateral statement announced an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran to reopen embassies and resume diplomatic relations within two months. The two countries affirmed respect for each other's sovereignty and noninterference in each other's internal affairs and revived old security cooperation and trade agreements. The deal included a future meeting between the Saudi and Iranian ministers of foreign affairs to implement the agreement and discuss means of enhancing

bilateral relations.

Iraq launched efforts to defuse Saudi-Iranian tensions in 2020. At first, the Iraqis were passing messages between the two sides. By April 2021, Iraqi facilitation had turned into mediation, eventually yielding six face-to-face meetings in Iraq and Oman between Iranian and Saudi officials.

While Trump's gravitation away from the Middle East pushed Saudi Arabia toward diplomacy, Biden's subsequent "back to basics" approach also helped pave the way for China's emergence as the new peacemaker. Even as it sought to shift the focus of U.S. foreign policy to other challenges and pledged to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" for the murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the Biden administration also set out to reassure regional partners that it remained committed to Middle East security. An earlier Biden plan to significantly reduce U.S. troop levels in the region was shelved. In large part, this was motivated by a global view of great-power competition, which reinforced the need to shore up partnerships that could counter Chinese influence. "Let me say clearly that the United States is going to remain an active, engaged partner in the Middle East," Biden said in a speech during his visit to Saudi Arabia last year, adding, "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran." As Defense Undersecretary Colin Kahl put it in a speech at the Manama Dialogue forum in Bahrain last November, the U.S.-China struggle "is not a competition of countries, it is a competition of coalitions."

Beijing has worked to strengthen its relations with all regional powers without taking sides or getting entangled in their conflicts.

As a result, Washington believed it needed to keep its partners close lest they "defect" to China or side with Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. With Saudi Arabia, Biden went from his "pariah" pledge and efforts to promptly end the war in Yemen to visiting the kingdom and pressing it to increase oil production. But Saudi Arabia sided with Russia in its war on Ukraine when it led a two-million-barrel OPEC+ production cut, refused to join Western sanctions on Russia, and welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping for a historic Chinese-Arab summit in Riyadh. Washington was left in a worst-of-both-worlds position, not entirely trusted by its

own partners but far too close to one to maintain any pretense of impartiality, leaving a vacuum that China has now begun to fill.

Beijing has worked to strengthen its relations with all regional powers without taking sides or getting entangled in their conflicts. It has managed to maintain good relations with Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia while remaining fully neutral on the squabbles among them. China has no defense pacts with any Middle Eastern power and does not maintain military bases in the region, relying on economic rather than military influence. This approach has enabled it to emerge as a player that can resolve disputes.

Washington's response to the deal has been, on the one hand, to welcome the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement (praising "any efforts to help end the war in Yemen and de-escalate tensions in the Middle East region") and, on the other, to downplay the importance of Chinese mediation. "What helped bring Iran to the table was the pressure that they're under, internally and externally—not just an invitation by the Chinese to talk," stressed John Kirby, the spokesman for the National Security Council. Yet Saudi-Iranian talks on normalization have been ongoing for several years now, long before the protests in Iran broke out last year or the additional sanctions Biden has imposed on Iran since taking office.

At the end of the day, a more stable Middle East where the Iranians and Saudis aren't at each other's throats also benefits the United States: If nothing else, instability jeopardizes the flow of oil from the region and adds a hefty risk premium to gas prices. But while not exactly worrying about China's role, Washington should take it as a warning—and a lesson. If the United States continues to embroil itself in the conflicts of its regional partners, making itself part of the problem rather than the solution, its room for diplomatic maneuvering will become more and more limited, ceding the role of peacemaker to China. Instead, U.S. interests would be better served if Washington stopped taking sides in regional disputes, got back on talking terms with all key regional players, and helped develop a new security architecture in which a reduced American military presence encouraged Middle East powers to share the responsibility of their own security.

The United States should not leave Middle East states with the perception that America is an entrenched warmaker while China is a flexible peacemaker. Fortunately, it is entirely in Washington's own hands to prevent such a scenario.

## Turkey applauds Iran-Saudi partnership

*Turkish FM says Iran-Saudi reconciliation would strengthen position of Muslim world*

TEHRAN - The recent agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to repair their ties after seven years of estrangement, according to the Turkish foreign minister, would bolster the Muslim world and enhance cooperation among Muslim governments to assist tackle regional issues.

Mevlut Cavusoglu appreciated the deal between Tehran and Riyadh in a telephone call with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Friday.

The top Iranian diplomat noted that constructive interactions



between adjacent and regional nations will pave the way for the emergence of regional peace and security as well as worldwide cooperation.

Iran and Saudi Arabia eventually reached an agreement on March 10 to reestablish diplomatic ties

and reopen embassies and missions within two months after several days of intense discussions in China.

In a joint statement, Iran and Saudi Arabia stressed the need to uphold national sovereignty and refraining from meddling in one

another's internal affairs.

It stressed that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China reiterated their unwavering intention to exert their greatest efforts to advance regional and global peace and security.

The senior diplomats from Iran and Turkey also discussed ways to deepen ties and matters of mutual concern in the region.

According to the website of the Foreign Ministry, Amir Abdollahian and Cavusoglu also spoke on the most recent status of relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

# Official calls on UK, Germany to respect Iran's sovereignty

TEHRAN - Abbas-Ali Kadkhodaei, a member of Iran's Guardian Council, has called on the UK and Germany to respect Iran's sovereignty under international law.

In an opinion piece for The New Arab published on Friday, Kadkhodaei said London and Berlin has long pursued policies that contravene Iran's sovereignty. "The governments of Germany and the UK's declared policy with respect to Iran has long been in breach of the principle of the sovereignty of the Iranian government as they continue to unilaterally impose their illegitimate will on the independent government of the Islamic Republic of Iran through interference, funding its enemies and promoting hostile propaganda against it," he wrote.

He added, "The Munich conference this year hosted some anti-Iran figures instead of the Iranian government. By inviting individuals affiliated to Iran's former dictator regime, whose pathetic crimes against the Iranian nation are known to all, to participate in the 2023 Munich Security Conference, the German government can be held liable under international law."

Kadkhodaei, also an advisor to the Iranian foreign minister, criticized a visit by British representatives to the People's Mojahedin Organization (MKO). "Both the invitation by Berlin and visit by British Parliamentarians were wrongful acts that fall within the scope of the State responsibility as they took place under the two



government's direction, provocation, and control. Additionally, under Article 4 of Draft articles on Responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts, Berlin and London are responsible for its internationally wrongful act," he continued.

The Iranian official stated, "Organizing the so-called security conference and holding talks with members of the terrorist cult, under the effective role of the German government, constitute an intervening act and pave the way for the continuation of the dissident elements' international criminal activities."

Kadkhodaei said, "Engaging with the promoters of violence and ter-

ror whose intervening acts threaten global international peace and security- in the midst of Germany and the UK's active support for them- is a wrongful act that holds the two regimes internationally liable for the violation of the United Nations Charter."

He noted, "Articles 49 to 52 of the Draft articles reserve the right for the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to assert its rights. Accordingly, Iran's reciprocal and proportional action in response to Germany and the UK - depending on the level of the German government's actions- could be evaluated. This will bring about the Islamic Republic of Iran's firm and legiti-

mate proportionate response."

Kadkhodaei concluded, "The principle of sovereignty is of primary importance in international law, and it can't be violated with impunity by states and international organizations. States and international organizations are obliged to perceive the principle of sovereignty as an inalienable right of the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to be able to stop the dissident elements and their interference. The international community needs to respect this principle and recognize it as one of the obligations of the international community towards the Islamic Republic of Iran."

## Iran's top security official to visit Iraq

From Page 1 ▶ He added, "There is coordination in foreign policy. Everything is within the framework of the establishment and is under the supervision of the president. Enemies should know that there is no disagreement."

Shamkhani paid a visit to the UAE on Thursday and met with several Emirati leaders, including President Mohammad bin Zayed, UAE National Security Advisor Tahnoun bin Zayed, and ruler of Dubai Mohammad bin Rashed.



Iran's top security official and the UAE president reviewed the latest regional and international developments, according to Iran's official news agency IRNA.

Referring to the enhanced politico-economic relations between Iran and the UAE, Shamkhani said that the two countries can take major steps in expanding mutual cooperation and boosting the neighborhood diplomacy.

## Enemy seeks to sow despair and hopelessness in society: Raisi

From Page 1 ▶ He added, "The enemy does not want the country to progress and the people to hear good news, and therefore tries to understate

the strengths that are not seen and magnify the weaknesses that exist in every corner."

Raisi also said, "Managing

and providing services in Tehran metropolis is not an easy task, but with the high motivation, effort, sincerity and spirit of patriotism of our loved ones

in Tehran Municipality, great work has been done in this field, which could not be easily done with the existing facilities and credits."

## Ukraine first, Iranian diaspora second and Dutch people maybe the last!

From Page 1 ▶ Earlier that day, the results of the Dutch regional elections was published which proved to be a political humiliation for Rutte and his party, as they lost the elections to a party which didn't even exist in the elections four years ago!

In sum, given all the complications in the political structure of the Netherlands, it is not unlikely that Rutte would have to leave the office after the Senate elections in May. And he owes this chance of early dismissal to some of his most controversial policies which have sunken the country deep into daily struggles.

The Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD-RE) of Prime Minister Rutte has set some very rough policies to reduce carbon dioxide level in the country. The problem is that the party has been laser-focused on a very sensitive section of the country's economy: agriculture.

While the Netherlands has enjoyed the title of the second biggest exporter of agricultural products in the world for decades, Rutte's party has recently drawn the conclusion that limiting this industry is the most convenient shortcut to achieve the emission reduction expectations set for the near future. And this has angered most of the Dutch people, especially farmers.

Ever since the decision of the government to force-purchase a number of industrial-size farms was broadcasted, farmers all over the country have gone on strike and held demonstrations with the hope to save their businesses and livelihood from complete destruction. Every now and then, they block highways; they march in the streets of different cities on foot or with their tractors; Netherlands' flag hung upside down can be seen in all pictures; and on March 11, farmers arranged a huge demonstration in The Hague which forced the government to resort to the army for keeping the situation under control.

Despite the deafening silence of the mainstream media about what has been happening in the Netherlands for months, there are many footages showing misbehavior and suppression of the protestors by the police. One of the characteristics of the Dutch version of police suppression which distinguishes the Netherlands from many other EU countries is use of plainclothes agents to arrest the protestors. It is not the intention of this article to analyze the socio-economic complications caused by the political decision of the government. It's enough to say that this decision helped the new Farmer-Citizen Movement party (BBB) win the regional elections and bring a wide dark shadow of doubt over the political future of Rutte and his party. Needless to say that this party's main intention is to support farmers and agriculture industry.

It is safe to say that destroying the agriculture as the most important competitive advantage of the country is not the only reason for frustration of the nation. Ukrainian refugees have flooded the country and enjoy unlimited privileges coming straight from the government and funded by taxpayers' money. This is while many Dutch nationals are struggling to make the ends meet.

The country is suffering from a severe housing crisis. Not only the housing prices have increased dramatically, but also the quantity of the available houses is nowhere near the market's demand. In some instances, there are up to 20 candidates for renting an apartment. This has provided the landlord with the option to choose from!

The fuel sector has been experiencing unprecedented turbulences since the war began in Ukraine and the prices have almost doubled. The poverty line has increased to a point never been before and is hovering around a thousand eu-

ros per month. Energy prices in both industrial and domestic sectors have skyrocketed, not only pushing households further down towards the poverty line, but also forcing many minor businesses into permanent shutdown. Then there is the inflation. Although the annual inflation rate was announced 8 percent in February 2023, the official inflation rate for food was reported an all-time high of almost 18 percent.

All these come beside the government's support for Ukraine in the war, which does not meet the public's unconditional praise anymore. More and more Dutch people are joining the army of anti-war movement every day, while the government is going the exact opposite direction.

Given circumstances described above, the question is how the administration can open up space for something as irrelevant as what is happening thousands of miles away in a country in another continent? Why Rutte and some other Dutch politicians find it important to meet with someone whose affiliation with American intelligence community is now searchable in google?!

The truth is that Rutte's administration spared no effort to fan the flames of recent unrest in Iran in full compliance with policies dictated to the government directly by the United States. For these Dutch officials, Masumeh Alinejad Qomi Kollaei is just another fella backed by the "Big Brother" for reasons some of which Rutte and his friends don't even know!

Think about it for a moment: what good can ever come from the Netherlands' hostility with Iran? What can be earned? And more important than that, what will be missed?

Maybe it's time for the Dutch nation to elect a more independent government to lay out the road to future after all.

## SPORTS

### Iran learn fate at Paris volleyball qualification

TEHRAN - The drawing of lots for the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) qualifying tournament for next year's Olympic Games in Paris was held at a ceremony in Lausanne, which revealed the three pools of national teams for men and women.

For the men's section, in pool A, due to take place in Brazil, the hosts will face off against world champions Italy, Iran, Cuba, Ukraine, Germany, Czech Republic and Qatar.

Pool B, scheduled for Japan, will see the hosts face the U.S., Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt and Finland.

Pool C, set to be held in China, will be featuring the home country, Poland, Argentina, The Netherlands, Canada, Mexico, Belgium and Bulgaria.

France are defending Olympic champions after defeating Russia at Tokyo 2020 in the final and qualify as the host country.

The men's qualifiers are scheduled to take place from September 30 to October 8.

### Ghalenoei announces Iran squad for two friendlies

TEHRAN - Newly-appointed head coach of Iran national football team Amir Ghalenoei invited 32 players for two matches against Russia and Kenya.

Team Melli will meet the Russians on March 23 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium and play Kenya five days later in the same stadium.

Ghalenoei was appointed as Iran coach on Sunday.

#### Goalkeepers:

Alireza Beiranvand (Persepolis), Payam Niazmand (Sepahan), Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal), Hossein Pourhamidi (Aluminum)

#### Defenders:

Shaoja Khalilzadeh (Al Ahli), Hossein Kananizadegan (Al Ahli), Armin Sohrabian (Gol Gohar), Mohammadamin Hazbavi (Foolad), Aref Aghasi (Foolad), Ehsan Hajisafi (AEK), Milad Zakipour (Sepahan), Vahid Amiri (Persepolis), Sadeq Moharrami (Dinamo Zagreb), Ramin Rezaeian (Sepahan)

#### Midfielders:

Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Saeid Ezatollahi (Vejele), Reza Asadi (Tractor), Mohammad Karimi (Sepahan), Milad Sarlak (Persepolis), Omid Noorafkan (Sepahan), Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (Charleroi), Mehdi Hosseini (Mes Rafsanjan), Ahmad Nourollahi (Shabab Al Ahli), Mehdi Torabi (Persepolis), Mohammad Mohebbi (Esteghlal), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (Feyenoord), Ali Gholizadeh (Kasmpaa), Mohammadhossein Eslami (Zob Ahan), Reza Shekari (Gol Gohar)

#### Strikers:

Mehdi Taremi (Porto), Sardar Azmoun (Bayer Leverkusen), Shahriar Mughanlou (Sepahan)

### Jahanbakhsh scores As Feyenoord advance to Europa League QFs

TEHRAN - Feyenoord reached the quarterfinals of the Europa League after a 7-1 victory over Shakhtar Donetsk in De Kuip.

Feyenoord won the match 8-2 on aggregate.

Last week in Poland, the Eredivisie side was held to a 1-1 draw. In Rotterdam, Santiago Gimenez quickly gave the host in the ninth minute.

Orkun Kokcu netted a brace in the 24th and 38th minutes.

Oussama Idrissi also scored two goals in the 49th and 60th minutes.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh scored the sixth goal in the 64th minute and Danilo made it 7-0.

Kevin Kelsy pulled back a consolation.

### Gol Gohar to play Persepolis in Hazfi Cup quarters

TEHRAN - Gol Gohar football team defeated 9-man Foolad 1-0 in Iran's Hazfi Cup Round of 16 on Friday.

In the match held in Sirjan, Mohammadamin Hazbavi scored an own goal in the injury time.

Foolad midfielder Vahid Heydari was shown his second yellow card in the 53rd minute and defender Aref Aghasi received a straight red card in the 68th minute.

Gol Gohar will play Persepolis in the competition's quarterfinals in Tehran.

### Iran into 2023 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup semis

TEHRAN - Iran defeated Uzbekistan 11-2 on Saturday to book their place in the semifinals round of the 2023 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup.

Mohammad Mokhtari scored a hat-trick while Ali Mirshekari, Movahed Mohammadpour and Moslem Mesigar netted a brace each.

Reza Amirzadeh and Mahdi Shirmohammadi also were on target for Team Melli.

Jamshid Rasulov and Mallaev scored Uzbekistan's goals.

Iran, who have qualified for the semifinals, will meet the UAE on Monday.

The competition is being held in Pattaya, Thailand from March 16 to 26.

### Handball coach Vujovic pens contract extension

TEHRAN - Iran handball head coach Veselin Vujovic has penned a one-year extension.

Vujovic, 61, was named as Iran coach in March 2022.

Under leadership of the Montenegrin coach, Iran finished 24th in the 2023 World Men's Handball Championship and made history by qualifying from group A after Spain and Montenegro.

### Iranian teams discover opponents at 2023 AVC Championships

TEHRAN - Iranian teams discovered their opponents at the 2023 Asian Volleyball Championships.

The drawing of lots for the remaining six events was organized at the AVC Headquarters in Bangkok, with representatives of all participating teams joining on Zoom.

A total of 12 teams confirmed their participation in the 2023 AVC Challenge Cup for Women from June 18 to 25 in Gresik, East Java, Indonesia.

Iran are drawn in Pool B along with Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong. Indonesia are in Pool A with Macao and Philippines.

Pool C comprises India, Australia and Kazakhstan, with Uzbekistan, Mongolia and Vietnam in Pool D.

The first edition of the Asian Men's U16 Volleyball Championship during July 22 and 29 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, which serves as the Asian qualification tournament to secure top three teams in the next year's FIVB Volleyball Men's U17 World Championship, sees a total of 15 teams chase their dreams of winning the historic title.

Kazakhstan and Hong Kong China joined hosts Uzbekistan in Pool A, while Pool B features Bahrain, India, Thailand and Australia. Pool C consists of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Japan and China, with Kuwait strutting their staff with Pakistan, Mongolia and Chinese Taipei in Pool D.

On the opening day on July 22, hosts Uzbekistan are due to play Hong Kong, China. Thrills can also be expected in the tough match between Iran and Japan, Saudi Arabia against China and Chinese Taipei against Pakistan.

In the 1st Asian Women's U16 Volleyball Championship in Hangzhou, China between July 1 and 8, 2023, a total of 12 teams confirmed to strut their stuff in the eight-day event, which will see top three teams make the cut for the next year's FIVB Volleyball Women's U17 World Championship.

## Commodities worth over \$1.4b exported from East Azarbaijan in 11 months

TEHRAN - As announced by a provincial official, 2.649 million tons of commodities valued at \$1.436 billion were exported from East Azarbaijan province, in the northwest of Iran, during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-February 19, 2023).

Leli Orangi, an official with the province's customs department, said that the 11-month export rose four percent in weight, while fell three percent in worth, year on year.

She named all kinds of steel products such as rebars, sheets, pipes, plastic materials and objects, chemical products and petrochemical products, dry fruits such as dates, pistachios, raisins, petroleum products such as bitumen, industrial and mineral oils, copper products such as copper wire, cables, piping accessories and fittings, grain products such as wafers and biscuits, glass and glass products, machines and mechanical devices as the major products exported from the province in the said 11-month period, and Turkey, Iraq, Armenia, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Pakistan and Russia as the main export destinations.

The official further announced that 386,000 tons of products valued at \$1.207 billion were imported to the province during the first 11 months of this year, with one percent fall in weight, and 17 percent rise in value year on year.

She named machinery and mechanical devices, chemical products, tobacco, plastic materials and objects made of these materials, separate parts of road construction machinery and automobiles, wood and wooden objects, cast iron and steel, electrical machines and devices, and cocoa bean and powder as the main imported items, and Turkey, United Arab Emirates, China, Germany, South Korea, Italy, India, Georgia, Spain and Japan as the major sources of imports.

As previously announced by the official, the value of export from East Azarbaijan rose 16 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2022), from the preceding year.

Orangi said that commodities worth \$1.654 billion were exported from the province in the previous year.

In terms of the weight, the exports indicate nine percent annual growth, she added.

The official named carpets and handicrafts,

sweets and chocolates, glass and glass products, steel and cast iron, objects made of plastic materials, minerals and stones, nuts, petrochemical products, machinery and mechanical devices, components and parts, leather and shoes as the major exported items, and Turkey, Iraq, Armenia, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Georgia, Bulgaria, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Italy as the main export destinations.

As announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil exports rose 12.22 percent during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

According to Mohammad Rezvani-Far, Iran exported about 111.3 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$4.8 billion in the mentioned 11 months, registering a 1.16-percent decline in weight.

Liquefied natural gas was the main exported product in the said time span, accounting for 13.97 percent of the total value of the exports, the IRICA head said.

Major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were China, Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and India, according to the official.

The average value of each ton of exported goods has increased from \$386 in the first 11 months of last year to \$439 in the current year's same period, which indicates a growth of 13.54 percent.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic imported 33.6 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$53.7 billion in the first 11 months of the present year, with a 15.28 percent growth in value and an 8.61 percent decrease in weight, year on year.

The IRICA head noted that the import of basic goods in the 11 months of this year has reached 22.6 million tons worth \$17.8 billion, indicating a 6.33-percent growth in value and a 16.42-percent decrease in weight, year on year.

Corn, rice, soybeans, wheat, sunflower oil, barley, and soybean meal were among the items imported into the country in the said period, according to Rezvani-Far.

The United Arab Emirates was the top exporter to Iran in the mentioned 11 months, followed by China, Turkey, India, and Germany.

## TEDPIX jumps 84,000 points on Sunday

TEHRAN - TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 84,000 points to 1.905 million on Sunday.

As reported, over 17.685 billion securities worth 120.43 trillion rials (about \$287 million) were traded at the TSE.

TEDPIX lost 155,778 points (9.22 percent) in the previous Iranian calendar month Bahman (ended on February 19).

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has said the organization plans to facilitate the entry of knowledge-based companies into the stock market in the upcoming Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21).

"The financing of companies through various financial tools and accepting knowledge-based companies in the stock exchange are going to be on the agenda, and we will take measures in this regard," Majid Eshqi told IRNA last week, outlining SEO's major programs for the next year.

"This plan includes all knowledge-based companies, such as companies based on digital economy, as well as creative, and innovation startups, on the basis of which we will have the participation of these companies in the capital market according to a memorandum of understanding we have signed with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology," he said.

Eshqi also announced that a local stock trade portal is going to be launched next year.

"Over the past year, a comprehensive program was prepared for improving the market and the result was presented to the Supreme Council of the Stock Exchange; finally, it was decided to finalize the SEO's strategic plan for a period of three or five years; we are currently working on this long-term plan as well," the official further said.

According to the SEO head, financing companies is the most important program that the SEO is going to pursue next year; and it is supposed to be done through various financial and investment tools.

Eshqi also pointed to the SEO's programs for facilitating the entry of large companies in the stock market and their financing through this market and said: "In the meantime, the issue related to the admission of major companies to the stock market is supposed to be on the agenda and measures will be taken in this regard."

Iranian government has allocated 150 trillion rials (about \$375 million) to the country's Capital Market Stabilization and Development Fund (CMSDF) in the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1402 to support small shareholders, Tasnim news agency reported on January 1.

As reported, the government has decided to supply the mentioned fund from the shares of state-owned companies to protect small shareholders against the risks of the capital market.

Also, in order to strengthen the companies active in the market, a part of their profit which is allocated to increasing their capital is going to be exempted from tax; this will encourage such companies to increase capital and expand their activities.

# NIDC improves infrastructure in line with Oil Ministry plans

TEHRAN - The head of the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has declared the company's infrastructure improvement in line with the programs of the Oil Ministry as the most important achievement of NIDC in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), Shana reported.

Speaking at the company's annual board meeting, Hamidreza Golpayegani said NIDC's performance in various operational, technical, engineering, support, services, and headquarters departments has been significant and improved in the current year compared to the past two years.

"According to the statistics of our planning department, the productivity index [of the company] reached 62 percent this year, while this figure was 48 percent in 1400 [the previous year]," Golpayegani said.

Pointing to the company's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, the official stated: "Although this year's performance in all sectors shows growth and an upward trend, we should not be satisfied and try to get the company to an even better position next year."

Referring to the use of 64 drilling rigs out of the company's to-



tal 73 rigs in the current year, he continued: "According to the co-operation agreements reached between NIDC and National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC), and other companies, it is expected that all of the company's rigs will be used next year and in this regard, reconstruction and renovation of drilling machines and overhauling the equipment is on the agenda."

NIDC dug and completed the digging operations of 93 oil and gas wells during the first

11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-February 19, 2023).

According to Masoud Afshar, the deputy head of NIDC for drilling operations, during the mentioned time span NIDC managed to dig 22 wells more than the figure for the previous year's same period.

As reported, 72 of the drilled wells were in the operational zone of the NISOC, eight wells were drilled in the fields under the supervision of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC),

seven were in the fields under the operation of Petroleum Engineering, and Development Company (PEDEC), four in the operational zone of the drilling management department of the National Iranian Oil company (NIOC) and two wells were dug in fields developed by private contractors.

Since the beginning of this year, the drilling area of the wells has reached 63,486 meters, he said, and added that 19 drilling rigs are being relocated to the operational positions.

## Bank loans to economic sectors increase over 38%

From page 1 ▶ Over the past three years, CBI has been collaborating with the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry for implementing

a program based on which bank facilities are provided to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and semi-finished projects.

The mentioned facilities are mainly provided for renewing machinery, equipping production units, or completing semi-finished projects.

## Iran becomes world's 11th top fertilizer exporter

TEHRAN - Based on the latest data released by International Fertilizer Association (IFA), Iran has exported \$1.8 billion worth of chemical fertilizers in the 2021-2022 crop year to become the world's 11th biggest chemical fertilizer exporter, IRIB reported.

According to the IFA data,



Russia was the largest exporter of chemical fertilizers in the world during the mentioned period, exporting \$12.5 billion worth of the mentioned products.

China and Canada were ranked second and third with \$11.5 billion and \$6.6 billion worth of exports, respectively, followed by

Morocco with \$5.7 billion.

The IFA data show that the United States with \$4 billion, Saudi Arabia with \$3.5 billion, the Netherlands with \$3 billion, Oman with \$2.6 billion, Belgium with \$2.6 billion, and Qatar with \$2.1 billion were other top exporters of fertilizers in the mentioned crop year.

## Average daily gasoline consumption rises 20%

TEHRAN - Average daily gasoline consumption in Iran has reached 105 million liters in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20) which is 20 percent more than the figure for the previous year, according to the head of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC).

"On average, we have had a 20 percent growth in gasoline consumption compared to last year. Now consumption and production are almost equal; Since the beginning of the current year, an average of 105 million liters of gasoline has been consumed daily," Jalil Salari said in a televised interview.

According to Salari, gasoline production in the country has increased by 10,000 liters from 105,000 liters to 115,000 liters, however, if the consumption is not managed the country would soon face an imbalance between supply and demand.

The official noted that the surplus gasoline production is currently stored to be used in critical situations and peak demand periods.

Mentioning the significant consumption hike during the New Iranian Year (Nowruz) holidays, he said: "Despite the fact that we have had records of 120 to 130 million liters in daily gasoline consumption during the holiday season, there have not been any issues regarding supply."

Salari further mentioned a special consumption management program prepared for the Nowruz holidays, saying that the program will be implemented from March 21 until April 9.

He further stated that enough petroleum products are stored in 84 storage tanks across the country, and fuel supply is done through 14,000 kilometers of pipelines.

Touching upon the issues regarding the gasoline export and import in the current year, the NIORDC head said: "In the current



year, we did not import gasoline, rather, we swapped the product."

"Considering the current trend of car production in the country, more than one million vehicles are added to the transportation cycle every year, so we will need a billion liters of fuel annually," he added.

The International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (known as OICA), in its latest annual report, has ranked Iran as the world's 16th largest automaker in 2022.

According to the OICA report, Iran's position among the world's top automakers has improved by three places in 2022 compared to the previous year making the country stand above industrial countries like the UK, Russia, and the Czech Republic. The Islamic Republic was ranked 19th in the OICA list of the world's top automakers in 2021.

Based on the mentioned report, Iranian automakers managed to manufacture 1,064,298 vehicles in 2022 to register a 19-percent growth compared to the previous year.

Based on the OICA data, in 2022, more than 85 million cars were produced worldwide, indicating a six percent growth compared to 2021.

According to the data released by the Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, car manufacturing in Iran increased by 25 percent during the first eleven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2022-February 19, 2023), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Based on the ministry's data, over 1.126 million vehicles were manufactured in the 11-month period of this year.

Officials from the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry have repeatedly emphasized that car production will reach 1.6 million vehicles in the current year, however, the production this year is almost 30 percent behind the projected schedule.

As reported, the ministry's auto manufacturing target for the next Iranian year 1402 (begins on March 21) is 1.8 million vehicles.

# The prudence of Ayatollah Khamenei

## Why negotiation with U.S. not a solution to Iran problems?

By Faramarz Kuhpayeh

TEHRAN – The Chinese-brokered deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia once again drew the attention to a vivid description by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of U.S. negotiating principles.

After seven years of tensions, Iran and Saudi Arabia signed a joint statement with Chinese help to re-establish their diplomatic ties within two months. The deal took the world by surprise as it was made without any Western involvement.

Experts said the reason why China succeeded in clinching this deal is because China pay attention to the interests of all parties involved. In compassion, the U.S. would have only sought to dictate its demands on certain parties.

This American modus operandi was behind the failure of diplomacy with Iran. But instead of blaming America, some in the West pointed the finger of the blame at Iran, claiming that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, is opposing negotiation and diplomacy with the U.S.

The reality, however, is different. A few years ago when the concept of negotiation between Iran and the U.S. was in the news, Ayatollah Khamenei said that the U.S. does not negotiate. Instead, it often seeks to dictates its demands under the guise of negotiations.

"When America says let's negotiate, it doesn't mean that



let's find a fair solution. No, it means that let's sit at the negotiating table and we [the Americans] say something and you accept it. That's what they mean with negotiation," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader further said the Americans often demand ransoms and concessions during negotiations, not just once, but all the time.

That's may be the reason why Ayatollah Khamenei said time and again that negotiation won't solve Iran's problems with the U.S.

Fareed Zakaria, the famed CNN anchor, has addressed the American diplomatic inflexibility in an opinion piece for the Washington Post. Commenting on the Iran-Saudi deal, he wrote,

"The reestablishment of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia is not in itself a seismic event; they broke off relations only seven years ago. But last week's revelation exposes a deep-seated flaw in American foreign policy, one that has gotten worse in recent years."

According to Zakaria, Washington has lost the flexibility and suppleness that would inform a diplomacy built around fostering relations with all parties.

He added, "Our foreign policy today usually consists of grand moral declarations that divide the world into black and white, friends and foes. Those statements quickly get locked in place with sanctions and legislation, making

policies even more rigid. The political atmosphere becomes so charged that merely talking with a 'foe' becomes risky."

The American journalist concluded, "There is now a whole slew of countries with which the United States has either no relations or only limited, hostile contact — Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Myanmar, North Korea. You can make the case for opposing any one of these countries individually; collectively, though, the effect is to create a rigid foreign policy — one in which we're unwilling to talk to everyone in the room and unable to show flexibility, presumably based on the idea that it's best to simply hope for the overthrow of these regimes."

## White House snubs Netanyahu

From page 1 ▶ Calls by Netanyahu's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich for an entire Palestinian village to be erased from the face of the earth was met with strong condemnation from around the globe.

Bezalel Smotrich, the head of a pro-settler party in Netanyahu's extremist coalition, made the comments at a conference amid a series of deadly Palestinian retaliatory operations and Israeli settler violence in the occupied West Bank.

Asked about a weekend settler rampage through the Palestinian village of Huwara, which an Israeli general described as a "pogrom," Smotrich said: "I think that Huwara needs to be erased ... I think that the state of Israel needs to do it."

Other fascist statements being made in public by Israeli ministers has made the White House nervy about Joe Biden being photographed with the regime's premier amid shifts in world order.

That's not to say the U.S. has suddenly changed position and is now defending the rights of the Palestinians.

If the same statements were made in private, Netanyahu would be sitting in the Oval Office holding talks with Biden by now.

But with a presidential campaign on the horizon, Biden doesn't want to jeopardize his apparent bid for a second term with a PR campaign that can do exactly that.

The three to four billion dollars in military assistance to Israel at the expense of U.S. taxpayer's money will continue to flow this year. This is the same military assistance that Israel uses in its atrocious crimes against the Palestinians.

While the White House has declined to confirm whether Netanyahu has yet to be invited, a State Department spokesperson coincidentally referred reporters to the Israeli cabinet for information about the prime minister's travel plans.

David Makovsky at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy says "the message they (the U.S.) clearly want to send is: If you pursue objectionable policies, there's no entitlement to the Oval Office sit-down."

Reports have cited a senior Israeli official, who declined to be identified, as saying there was no surprise by the U.S. position since



the two sides have disagreed on issues for decades.

"These disagreements did not hurt and will not hurt the strong alliance between Israel and the United States," the official said.

Israel is currently facing two major crises.

Since the start of the year, demonstrators have filled the streets of the occupied Palestinian territories to protest the government's plan to curb the power of the so-called Supreme Court, which critics say would make Israelis themselves live under a form of dictatorship.

Rarely has there been images seen in Tel Aviv where police have fired stun guns and clashed with Israeli protesters?, among the latest being on a main road during a national "day of disruption".

The judicial overhaul has yet to become law but it has already affected the Israeli shekel currency. Businesses and economists say the planned reforms could harm Israeli interests in the occupied territories as an investment destination.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog has warned that Netanyahu's insistence on bringing about the so-called reforms had pushed the regime down "the depths of a real crisis" and the possibility of a looming civil war.

"A civil war is a red line," the Israeli president noted in a TV address.

This has nothing to do with the Palestinians as it was the so-called Supreme Court that legitimized all the crimes and atrocities against them.

This includes the ongoing expansion of settlements that are illegal under international law, but receives the green light of the U.S.

The United States opposes Israel's retroactive authorization of Jewish settler

outposts in the occupied West Bank, Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently said, adding that he was "deeply troubled" by the move that came less than two weeks after he raised U.S. opposition to such measures on a trip to the region.

But the U.S. continues to use its veto power at the UN Security Council to allow the flourishing of illegal Israeli settlements. It has shown no serious opposition to settlement expansions with the exception of public comments in a bid to appease the international community.

"We strongly oppose such unilateral measures, which exacerbate tensions and undermine the prospects for a negotiated two-state solution," Blinken claimed in a statement.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price has also claimed that Blinken had made his opposition to the legalization of settler outposts clear during his visit to the occupied territories that concluded on Jan. 31.

Washington is still under some delusional dream (or as many have put it more precisely is deliberately avoiding any peace), that the decades-old failed negotiations to form a two-state solution will somehow solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Supporters of the Palestinian cause say only a referendum on who has the right to rule over Palestine (with the votes of the Palestinian diaspora) as the only viable path to peace.

The second crisis facing Israel is the escalating violence in the occupied West Bank.

While young Palestinians have taken to armed resistance? since last year, there has been an uptick of retaliatory operations this year in the face of Israel's crimes against humanity.

The region's only regime with hundreds of nuclear weapons will always be the closest ally of the United States.

Iran's growing relationship with regional countries, who have now seen how Netanyahu's cabinet is treating the Palestinians, have caused another headache for Washington.

For now, it looks like Netanyahu has to wait by the postbox before an invitation letter arrives from Washington DC.

## WORLD HEADLINES

### How a teenager changed the West Bank equation?

By Saeed Ehtesham

TEHRAN- Ibrahim Nablusi's martyrdom is the beginning of the end of Israeli occupation.

At such a young age, the 18-year-old understood Israel's ethnic cleansing campaign more than the Palestinian Authority did in the occupied West Bank and launched the West Bank's armed resistance.

While the Palestinian officials hold talks with Israel or through mediators, more recently in Jordan with a view to defuse the escalating tensions in the West Bank, Israel has carried on with its massacres and land grab policy.

Nablusi comprehended these facts much more than the Palestinian leadership did, who continue to believe that talking with Israel, the international community or any third party will end the killings in the West Bank.

Decades of negotiations between the West Bank's political leaders and Israel failed to achieve that goal.

The Palestinian leadership is not even effectively negotiating for the end of the occupation anymore, only the de-escalation of violence.

Nablusi's life and martyrdom made the West Bank youth realize that dialogue with the Israeli regime only leads to one thing and that is the expansion of settlements.

Expanding the West Bank settlements will not only wipe out the future of the younger generation but the Palestinian Authority along with them. If Nablusi did not take part in the armed struggle there would be no Palestinian Authority left in five or ten years' time.

This is why he took the lead in armed resistance, which led to his death in August last year.

But he left behind a vast number in the younger generation across the occupied West Bank that have also accepted this fact and followed his leads.

The goal of Israel is clear. The regime is planning to ethnically cleanse all the Palestinians that reside in Palestine.

The measures that Israel is taking to make Palestinians leave their native land and replace them with settlers to squat in their homes comes in many forms.

Sa'd Nimr, a Professor of Political Science at Birzeit University in Ramallah, told Tehran Times that Israel is pressuring the Palestinians "economically, socially, politically and in every sense and every aspect in our lives to force us to leave our country."

"[Far-right Israeli finance minister Bezalel] Smotrich and his party made a paper that was discussed to form the fragile Netanyahu coalition majority in the Knesset, which put three options in front of the Palestinians.

The first option for the Palestinians is that they must accept to live under total Israeli military control in so many areas separated by the Israeli army. The second option under the paper is that Palestinians must leave their country and Israel will help them immigrate from their country even by obtaining visas for us and giving us some money to facilitate our departure. The third plan is if the Palestinians refuse the first two options, then there will be violence, according to the paper if the violence didn't work, more violence will work." Nimr explained.

However, the prospective of the young men, inspired by Nablusi, is to put those options in the dustbin of history and expand the armed resistance instead.

In other words, they will not accept money and visas to leave their homeland. Rather they resist and die for their homeland.

The new young resistance factions are growing across the West Bank



and according to Nimr this is not just limited to areas like Jenin, Nablus, the Balata refugee camp, Tulkaram and Aria (Jericho) but "there is now even talk of the armed resistance even including al-Khalil (Hebron)."

"In the face of more violent attacks by Israel, there will be more resistance by young Palestinians until the end of this regime" he says.

Nablusi like the younger resistance generation he left behind, have no hope for the future in terms of job opportunities or living in peace.

The daily and deadly Israeli attacks Nablusi witnessed left him with no option but to take up arms.

His legacy will be felt by the Israelis in the short and long term as he changed the equation in the West Bank and the entire occupied Palestinian territories.

No attacks or massacres under this new extremist Israeli cabinet will force the younger generation to leave their country.

On the contrary, according to experts, the younger armed Palestinian generation will happily face the raids of the occupation forces and take them on with their own bullets.

The new generation matured quickly, that's why they are the Lions' Den and not the Cubs Den.

Nevertheless, as young and as heroic as they may be, they are also on a learning curve.

Despite pledging no allegiance to more globally well-known and popular resistance movements, officials with the Palestinian resistance in the besieged Gaza Strip have been offering them advice and guidance on how to confront the regime's forces.

This will only make them stronger and the facts show that this young West Bank resistance movement welcomes martyrdom and refuses to surrender under Israeli arrest campaigns. Israel will never be able to kill all of them.

The facts on the ground show they are on the path to achieving something that a regime with nuclear weapons and the most advanced conventional weapons coupled with fascist approach is frightened of.

Nablusi's martyrdom was just the start of a new chapter in what is set to be a long and difficult path ahead for Israel.

This is a path that Netanyahu and his far-right coalition of extremist religious ministers did not anticipate.

## Historical properties being cleaned before Iranian new year



TEHRAN – Several cleaning projects have been commenced on various historical sites and tourist destinations across Iran before the Persian new year (Noruz), which officially begins on March 21.

The projects have been held in different cities and sites, including tourist attractions of the ancient town of Rey; near the Iranian capital, Haft-Tappeh and Tchogha Zanbil in Khuzestan province and UNESCO-registered Soltanieh Dome in Zanjan province, CHTN reported on Saturday.

The projects have been carried out in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and cultural heritage aficionados, the report added.

In preparation for Noruz, nationwide Iranians spring-clean every nook and cranny of their homes. The debris is swept away, carpets and curtains are washed, silverware is polished, and windows cleaned to a sparkle. The spring cleaning, known as Khouneh Tekouni in Persian, is preceded by decorating the house with fragrant plants such as daffodils, hyacinths and roses.

Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE) and it was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was rivaled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad.

According to Britannica, Islamic writers described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience (glazed earthenware). It continued to be an important city and was briefly a capital under the rule of the Seljuqs, but in the 12th century, it was weakened by the fierce quarrels of rival religious sects. In 1220 the city was almost destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.

Haft-Tappeh (literary meaning “Seven Mounds”) is located 15 kilometers to the south of the ancient city of Susa, itself

a highly significant archeological site in southwest Iran.

Early excavations in Haft-Tappeh conducted by the late Iranian archaeologist Dr. Ezzatollah Negahban yielded a large number of petroglyphs bearing cuneiform inscriptions in Akkadian, belonging to Elamite kings. The petroglyphs contain information on religious beliefs, trading methods, and the political, cultural, and social relations of the time.

A topmost tourist destination in Khuzestan province, the magnificent ruins of Tchogha Zanbil (Choghazanbil) are considered by many the finest surviving example of Elamite architecture in the globe. It was made a UNESCO site in 1979. Its construction started in c. 1250 BC upon the order of the Elamite king Untash-Napirisha (1275-1240 BC) as the religious center of Elam dedicated to the Elamite divinities Inshushinak and Napirisha.

UNESCO says that Tchogha Zanbil is the largest ziggurat outside of Mesopotamia and the best preserved of this type of stepped pyramidal monument. Tchogha Zanbil was excavated in six seasons between 1951 and 1961 by Roman Ghirshman, a Russian-born French archaeologist who specialized in ancient Iran.

The 14th-century Dome of Soltanieh, which supports the third-largest brick dome in the world, is also famed as the Mausoleum of Oljaytu and 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 a double-shelled dome in Iran.

## Over 27,000 people visit Qeshm in two days

TEHRAN – The Persian Gulf island of Qeshm has recorded over 27,000 tourist arrivals in two days, a local official has said.

On Wednesday and Thursday, over 27,000 travelers arrived on the island through Laft and Pohl piers, Mohammad Saied Akhundi explained on Saturday.

Tourist arrivals on this island increased by 75 percent compared to the same period last year, the official added.

This increase in tourist arrivals has been attributed to the improvement of the island's tourism infrastructure and increased promotion of its attractions, he noted.

Qeshm Island is heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines.

The island also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves, and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the



UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a haven for nature lovers.

Many travelers to Qeshm believe that the Stars Valley or Valley of Stars is a “MUST SEE.” It is home to bizarre-shaped gorges, tall pillars, canyon-like paths, hollowed-out spaces as well as smooth and round stones, which have been formed by the wind and rain eroding the soil, rocks and stones. Locals believe that a star once fell on this area, thereby creating the rocky shapes that make it seem as if from another planet.

# Happy Noruz: a celebration for 300 million people

From Page 1 ▶ From a wider perspective, it is celebrated in many regions from the Balkans to the Black Sea Basin and from Central Asia to the Middle East.

On the request of nations like Iran, Afghanistan, Albania, India, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan, March 21 was formally recognized by the UN in 2010 as International Noruz Day.

As mentioned by the United Nations, Noruz “promotes values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families as well as reconciliation and neighborliness, thus contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and different communities.” That’s why families use this time to deep clean their homes and closets and buy fresh clothing.

Traditionally, Iranians decorate a Noruz table with — among other things — goldfish, wheat grass, candles, and mirrors. In fact, the “Haft-Seen” table, embraces seven symbolic items starting with the Farsi letter “S.” The colorful items include herbs, dried nuts and fruits, wheat grass, and vinegar, all of which stand for different hopes for the new year, such as health, wealth and lavishness.

The Holy Quran or poetry books are frequently placed on the table to represent education and enlightenment, and a goldfish is frequently placed there for good luck.

It is not a coincidence that Noruz begins at the spring equinox when the sun crosses the equator and day and night are of equal length. The Iranian calendar is a solar calendar, which means that it uses astronomical observations to determine time-based



on Earth's rotation around the sun. As a result, the natural phenomenon of the vernal equinox always ushers in the new year.

Along with sparkling homes and new clothes, many people socialize with neighbors and friends, eat together, and throw events. The two-week celebration is filled with parties, craft-making, street performances, public rituals, and lots of food.

People go outside thirteen days after Noruz and plunge the wheat grass they've been cultivating and using to adorn Haft-Seen tables into moving water.

The custom is upheld on the 13th day following the start of the new year, a day that is typically associated with bad luck. Communities throw out wheatgrass, which is said to absorb all evil forces from home to ensure good fortune for the coming year.

Iranians also have the legends of Amoo Noruz and Haji Firooz, whose characters can be traced back hundreds of years. As a matter of fact, Amoo Noruz, or Uncle Noruz, can be regarded as their version of Santa Claus while Haji Firooz, who is depicted with blackface, pops up on the streets

to bring good wishes. On the last Wednesday of the year, many people hold a time-honored tradition, named Chaharshanbe Soori (or, “Red Wednesday”), to jump over bonfires to mark the final few days of the old year, singing traditional songs and repeating the phrase, “Give me your beautiful red color and take back my sickly pallor!”

Children run through the alleyways, loudly banging on pots and knocking on doors while pleading for candy or cash. It resembles Halloween in some ways.

Narratives say that fire represents a sign of light and good as people make wishes for happiness, health, and goodness for the new year.

This year — which in the Persian calendar is the year 1402 — will ring on March 21, 2023, at 12:54:27 p.m. in Iran.

It's possible to think of Amoo Noruz as a version of Santa Claus while Haji Firooz, who is depicted with blackface, pops up on the streets to bring good wishes.

## Tehran, Moscow plan to implement visa-free tours this year: Russian minister

TEHRAN – Russia and Iran plan to implement a visa-free tourist travel agreement between the two countries in 2023, Russian Minister of Economic Development Maxim Reshetnikov has said.

“We plan to shift toward implementing the agreement for visa-free group tourism. The list of tour operators intending to organize such groups among Russians [accommodating up to 50 persons for a tour length of up to 15 days - TASS] has already been approved,” Reshetnikov said on Friday.

He made the remarks at the MITT exhibition, Russia's premier B2B travel and tourism trade show, TASS reported.

“This document has already been passed on to [our] colleagues in Iran. We are now waiting for a similar [list] from you so as to let the tourist exchange process get underway,” Reshetnikov

said, addressing his Iranian counterparts.

Home to countless attractions, including 26 UNESCO World Heritage sites, Iran seeks to draw the attention of potential Russian travelers, as many domestic experts believe the majority of whom are unfamiliar with Iran's tourism market.

Last year, an Iranian travel expert said many Russian tourists were eager to travel to Iran, an Iranian travel expert said on Monday, recounting his Russian counterparts. “Many [potential] Russian travelers are motivated to visit novel and lesser-known destinations such as Iran that could be a safe and attractive destination,” said Mostafa Sarvari, who presided over the tourism marketing and advertising office of the Iranian Tour Operators Association.

The Head of the Iranian Tour Operators Association Ebrahim Pourfaraj believes the majority of potential Russian travelers are



unaware of the vast tourist attractions that exist in every corner of Iran. “The fact is that Iran's political and economic relations with Russia are considered good, but this has nothing to do with attracting tourists because it is directly connected with the Russian people. It is the Russian people who must choose Iran as their destination.”

## Women in Qazvin prepare Samanu to welcome Noruz

TEHRAN – For the celebration of Noruz, which officially starts on March 21, women in the west-central province of Qazvin province cook Samanu during a traditional ritual, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Samanu Pazan (cooking Samanu), as a spiritual heritage, is held annually around the Iranian new year holidays, the report added.

Samanu is one of the items included in Haft-Seen, an arrangement of seven symbolic items traditionally displayed in the Iranian new year, Noruz.

Setting a “Haft-Seen” spread

for Noruz is a custom that is being observed by almost all Iranians worldwide.

Seven items on the table start with ‘S’ in Persian language in addition to goldfish, colorful eggs, Quran, candles, and a mirror.

The seven items include sabzeh (wheat, barley, mung bean, or lentil sprouts growing in a dish), samanu (sweet pudding made from wheat germ), senjed (wild olive fruit), seer (garlic), seeb (apple), sumac (a spice) and serkeh (vinegar).

Qazvin was once the capital of the mighty Persian Empire, under

Safavids, from 1548 to 98. It is a major tourist destination with a wonderfully restored caravanserai-turned-arts precinct, some quirky museums and a handful of decent eating options. For most travelers, Qazvin is also primarily the staging point for excursions to the famous Castles of the Assassins and trekking in the sensational Alamut Valley.

Also known as the castle of the Assassins, the 12th-century Alamut castle is nestled on top of a peak. It was once a shelter for the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070–1124) who was a spiritual leader of an

Islamic sect. In the early 1930s, British-Italian explorer and travel writer Freya Stark described her exploration of the place in her book “The Valleys of the Assassins.”

Qazvin is also home to one of the biggest roofed caravanserais in the country, Sa'd-al Saltaneh caravanserai. Dating back to the Qajar era, it's a place for discovering tens of Hojreh shops, cafes, yards, and a stunning mosque. It's a place for visitors who want to experience the culture, cuisine, and hospitality of Iran.

## Tepe Bazgir's artifacts undergo restoration using Japanese expertise

TEHRAN – A group of Japanese cultural heritage experts have joined Iranian fellows to restore prehistorical metal artifacts previously excavated from Tepe Bazgir of Gorgan province in northeastern Iran.

In this project, Iranian and Japanese experts are currently engaged in preliminary scientific research aimed at restoring metal objects being kept in the Gorgan Archeology Museum, Golestan province's tourism chief said on Saturday.

Scientific examination and research will play an important role in the protection and better introduction of these relics, Mohammad-Javad Saravi said.

Metal objects discovered in Tepe Bazgir belong to the New Bronze Age (about 2100 to 1600 BC), the official said.

They constitute one of the large-scale metal



collections in the country, which are kept in the Gorgan Archaeological Museum and Minudasht Museum, Saravi stated.

In January 2011, archaeologists unearthed over 500 ancient metal artifacts in Bazgir Tepe. The artifacts, all of which are made of copper, comprise weapons, farming tools, drug tubes and pans, which date back to about 1800 years ago,

according to the provincial tourism directorate.

The artifacts are comparable to relics previously discovered in archaeological excavations on Gorgan's Turang Tepe and the Tepeh Hesar of Damghan in northern Semnan Province, and several ancient sites in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

In the lower stratum, they have also found several legged earthenware dishes of the Achaemenid era. The artifacts are similar to the pottery first unearthed at an archaeological site near the town of Aq-Qala in northern Golestan Province.

The diversity of the artifacts indicates that the region had enjoyed brisk commerce in ancient times.

Covering an area of two hectares, the Bazgir Tepe is located near the village of Bazgir, about four kilometers north of the city of Minudasht.

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations, extending bilateral cooperation to combat narcotics for another five years.

Eskandar Momeni, the secretary general of the Iranian anti-narcotics headquarters, and Ghada Fathi Waly, the director general of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) signed the MOU on the sidelines of the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) that was held in Vienna from March 13-17.

The agreement opens a new chapter in Iran's cooperation with the United Nations in the four areas of dealing with the supply and demand of narcotics, and offering treatment and rehabilitation services, Momeni said, IRIB reported.

"We firmly believe that international conventions are designed to respond to the challenges and issues facing communities," he said, adding that any interpretation aimed at legalizing or decriminalizing the illegal drug trade is a serious threat to the security of countries.

Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly supports the position and effective role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the main policy-making body of the United Nations in matters related to drugs and the role of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in facilitating legal access to scientific and medical needs, Momeni highlighted.



## Iran, UN extend anti-narcotics cooperation for five years

"Despite the repeated emphasis of the United Nations on the principle of shared responsibility in dealing with global problems, including drugs, we still, unfortunately, witness the selective and political approach of some countries, especially in the financing of projects, programs, and the provision of technical equipment."

Since 2017, the Islamic Republic of Iran has succeeded in discovering 5,372 tons of nar-

cotics, he added.

"Valuable measures to reduce the rate of infectious diseases such as HIV (AIDS) and hepatitis among addicts have been taken. Setting up healthcare, rehabilitation, and consultation centers, and empowering women and girls in cooperation with the UNODC and UNICEF offices in the cities of Tehran, Kerman, and Kermanshah were among the measures."

In February, Momeni said Iran spends about \$700 million to \$1 billion annually to fight against narcotics.

According to the reports of international institutions and organizations, about 92 percent of drug discoveries are made by Iran, he said, adding that the country is completely alone and the cost is borne by the government and the people.

Momeni emphasized that the international community should increase support to the Islamic Republic to fight against narcotics, especially to curb trafficking, IRNA reported.

The agreement focuses on dealing with the supply and demand of narcotics, and offering treatment and rehabilitation services.

"A significant part of the financial burden in the field of combating narcotics includes blocking the borders, dealing with smuggling, identifying and monitoring the transit routes, and offering treatment and rehabilitation services."

"However, Iran has not received any notable help from international organizations until today."

## Artificial language cannot replace the complexity of natural language, linguist says



By Mohammad Mazhari

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is currently a hot topic of discussion in the tech world, with many experts touting it as the future of technology.

One of the latest AI technologies to generate significant interest is Chat GPT, an OpenAI language chatbot that can help users learn about various topics and even gain knowledge from the user's questions.

However, Chat GPT has recently become embroiled in a major controversy; while some hail AI technology like Chat GPT as a step towards artificial general intelligence, others criticize its potential to outperform human intelligence.

Noam Chomsky, a renowned linguist, has even written a scathing indictment of Chat GPT and other similar programs, questioning their ability to match human intellect and creativity. As AI technology continues to evolve, its impact on society and human thought processes will undoubtedly remain a subject of intense debate and scrutiny.

The recent intellectual conflict surrounding the capacity and power of artificial intelligence and artificial language machines has been a topic of heated debate in the academic community. To shed light on this issue, the Tehran Times recently interviewed Ray Jackendoff, an American linguist and co-director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University.

During the interview, Jackendoff was asked about the ongoing debate surrounding the evolution of language and the idea of genetic mutation as opposed to an innate capability of humans. In response, Jackendoff confirmed that "most people think that an innate capacity has to develop through genetic mutation."

This conflict has prompted a new generation of linguists to attempt to find a compromise between the views of Noam Chomsky, who argues that language is a specific capability of humans, and those who believe in the mutation theory, which posits that language emerged through genetic mutations.

As the debate continues, linguists are working to deepen our understanding of the origins and nature of language, as well as its potential to be replicated through artificial intelligence and language machines.

When asked about whether there is a clear distinction between language and the mind, Jackendoff's response was "mixed" noting that while many species, such as chimpanzees and gorillas, have complex thoughts without language, there are certain concepts, such as numbers and history, that likely require the use of language.

Turning to the topic of artificial intelligence and language, Jackendoff was asked about the potential implications of recent advancements in these areas for linguistics. While some may argue that these advancements call into question the idea that language is an innate capability of humans, Jackendoff expressed skepticism about whether machines truly understand language in the same way humans do. He cited his doubts about Chat GPT and the creators' lack of understanding about how it works, stating that "he has no position" on the question of whether language acquisition is unique to humans or if machines are simply an extension of human intelligence.

As the field of linguistics continues to evolve alongside advances in technology, linguistic insights provide valuable contributions to our understanding of language and its relationship with the human mind and machine intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been a topic of much discussion and debate in recent years, with many experts and scholars weighing in on its potential to surpass human intelligence. In a recent piece for the New York Times, renowned linguist Noam Chomsky argued that AI and ChatGPT (an AI-based language model) are far from true intelligence. But can machines eventually surpass human intelligence, and how do we define "true intelligence"?

According to linguist and cognitive scientist Ray Jackendoff, AI has already surpassed human intelligence in certain domains. "AI has long ago surpassed human intelligence in things like playing chess and doing massive numerical computations," Jackendoff said. "From what I can gather, though, the most advanced humanoid robots are disastrously bad at such things as opening doors or slicing bread, activities that we find utterly trivial. I would consider this a form of intelligence too."

However, the question of whether AI can surpass human intelligence in a broader sense is still up for debate. There are also questions about what exactly we mean by "true intelligence." Should it be measured by ethical considerations or emotional intelligence?

Language is often considered a hallmark of human intelligence, leading some to question whether machines can ever truly learn and produce the same capabilities. When asked about the potential for machines to replicate human language, Jackendoff declined to speculate on the future. However, it raises the question of whether machines can learn and produce certain aspects of language, given that it is a product of human interaction with the environment over time. While machines have made significant advancements in language processing, it remains to be seen if they can fully replicate the nuances and complexities of human language.

According to linguistic expert Ray Jackendoff, advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning will not likely replace natural language. In response to the question of whether artificial language (AL) could produce a new kind of unified language that replaces natural language (NL), Jackendoff notes that language will likely maintain its character of present-day.

"While basic arithmetic expressions like  $2+2=4$  are universally understood, they cannot replace the complexity of natural language, which can ask questions, give instructions, and express emotions through poetry, history, and fiction," he added.

Although, creating a universal language remains a challenge, as seen in the failed experience of Esperanto, "English has already colonized much of the world, and some may argue that it has become a second unified language."

Despite the advancements in artificial intelligence, it seems that natural language will remain unique to human communication.

## Ninth wave of COVID-19 on the cards

TEHRAN –The ninth wave of the coronavirus may hit the country as the number of people being infected with the disease is on the rise.

It seems that the COVID-19 wave that happened in Europe is taking place in Iran, ISNA quoted Ahmad Tabatabaei, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, as saying.

"Considering the number of patients visiting clinics and hospitals, unfortunately, it seems that we are facing a new wave of coronavirus," he explained.

It is possible that this increase in cases is the beginning of the ninth wave of the disease, but this matter needs to be confirmed by the relevant laboratories, he added.

"However, compared to a month ago, the increase in the referrals is clearly visible."

In January, deputy health minister Hossein Farshidi said three new strains of BQ1, XBB, and BA2, have been diagnosed recently in patients, warning that the new wave of the disease may begin.

Fast-developing COVID-19 variants are spreading over Europe, and severely infected



It seems that the COVID-19 wave that happened in Europe is taking place in Iran.

France and Germany, he noted.

Emphasizing that the transmission power of XBB is five times higher than Delta, Farshidi insisted that borders should be monitored quickly and suspicious patients should be identified.

Within the next one to two months, the new wave of the pandemic will reach its peak, he further lamented, ISNA reported.

The rate of hospitalization of the new strains is the same as the Omicron, but the higher the number of patients, the higher the percentage of hospitalizations, he also said.

He further emphasized that people should be injected with booster doses.

Medical researchers announced the risk of an Omicron variant emerging in the world that is resistant to all existing therapeutic antibodies, and the findings indicate that new treatments must be identified to deal with this variant.

According to new research at a German institute, BQ11, is resistant to all approved antibody treatments.

Omicron escapes neutralizing antibodies and causes symptomatic disease even in vaccinated or convalescent individuals due to mutations in the spike protein. This is known as an immune escape and is dangerous for high-risk populations, including the elderly and people with weak immune systems.

## Clean Air Law allots budget to public transport development

From page 1 ▶ According to the Law, the Ministry of Oil is obliged to produce fuel, including gasoline, gas oil, fuel oil, and kerosene in accordance with approved national standards (Euro 4).

Also, the share of motorcycles in the production of gaseous pol-

lutants is about 21 percent and in the production of suspended particles is 10 percent.

In addition, each ten carbureted motorcycles emit as much particulate matter as an old diesel bus per kilometer, which is a major cause of air pollution.



## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### Afghanistan thanks Iran for free services to refugees during COVID-19

Afghanistan has appreciated Iran for offering health and treatment services to Afghan refugees infected with coronavirus free of charge.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry in a statement on Saturday announced its gratitude and appreciation to Iran for its humanitarian efforts to address the issue of Afghan refugees in the country.

All measures, especially the recent decree by the Iranian president to provide free medical treatment to Afghan refugees in Iranian public hospitals, have assured the Afghan government, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, providing transportation services to transit trucks and providing the necessary health assistance to vulnerable Afghan nationals are among the measures that are highly appreciated.

### افغانستان از همکاری ایران برای مداوای مهاجران مبتلا به کرونا قدردانی کرد

وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان از کمک و همکاری جمهوری اسلامی ایران به مهاجران افغانی مبتلا به ویروس کرونا و مداوای رایگان آنها قدردانی کرد. وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان روز شنبه در اطلاعیهای اعلام کرد: مراتب امتنان و سپاسگزاری خود را از جمهوری اسلامی ایران در رابطه به اقدامات بشردوستانه آن کشور درباره رسیدگی به مهاجرین افغان در آن کشور ابراز می‌دارد.

در این اطلاعیه آمده است: تمام اقدامات به ویژه صدور حکم اخیر رئیس جمهوری ایران برای درمان رایگان مهاجران افغان در بیمارستان های دولتی ایران موجب خاطر جمعی رهبری دولت افغانستان شد.

براساس اطلاعیه وزارت خارجه افغانستان، ایجاد تسهیلات در رفت و آمد کامیون‌های ترانزیتی و فراهم آوری مساعدت های لازم بهداشتی برای مهاجران در مناطق آسیب پذیر آن کشور اقداماتی هستند که از جانب دولت افغانستان به چشم قدردانی نگریسته می‌شوند.



Kindness is a mark of faith and whoever is not kind has no faith.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:12 Evening: 18:32 Dawn: 5:45 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:09 (tomorrow)

## Seljuk literature

Part 2

At Marv, Sanjar (r. 1117-57) also established himself as a great patron of belles-lettres.

Of the great number of poets described by the anthologies (tazkeras), and associated with his court, we have already mentioned Moezzi (formerly Malekshah's poet laureate) who was succeeded as the most important panegyrist by Anwari (d. ca. 1189) an erudite poet, scholar and astrologer, one of the greatest literary personalities of the time, and an unquestioned innovator of the form and content of the qasida.

Adib Saber (d. 1143-47) was another poet of fame and an excellent composer of quatrains, loyal to Sanjar, according to legend, to the point of sacrificing his own life for him.

His divan (divan) is a careful record of the political tendencies in the court and therefore also includes a series of panegyrics dedicated to Atsiz Garchai, the famous ruler of Kharazm, while he was an ally of Sanjar.

We might also recall the poet Abd al-Vase' Jabali (d. ca. 1160), who embarked on his poetic career under the patronage of the Ghaznavid Bahramshah, and later gained Sanjar's favor when the latter came to Ghazna by dedicating the final years of his life to him.

He composed most of his panegyrics for Sanjar's entourage, but also wrote in praise of the Seljuks of Kerman. Hasan Ghaznavi, known as Ashraf (d. 1160), had a similar destiny, passing from the initial protection of Bahramshah to that of Sanjar.

According to tradition, Mahsati of Ganja (12th century), the first Persian poetess to have left us a substantial corpus of poetry, was also associated with the court of Sanjar.

A controversial figure from the outset, she was almost exclusively a composer of quatrains whose formal refinement and richness of content are worthy of their place in the literary environment of the 12th century.

The rising political instability after Sanjar's death meant that the last representatives of the dynasty were only able to count in an occasional manner on the work of great panegyrists such as Asir Akhsikati (d. ca. 1174), Emadi Razi (d. between 1135-74) and Mojir al-Din Baylaqani (d. 1178).

A partial exception to this was the Isfahan court governed by the local Al-e Khojand and Al-e Sa'id aristocracy. It was here at Isfahan in fact, favored by their generous patronage, that Jamal ad-Din Esfahani (d. 1192) and his son Kamal ad-Din Esfahani (ca. 1172-1237), who was given the epithet khallaq al-ma'ani (creator of meanings) flourished.

The work of these poets constitute a landmark in the history of poetry at the time, in particular because of the stylistic innovations they introduced, giving rise to the transition from the Khorasan style to the Iraqi style.

The city of Konya, the capital of the sultanate of Rum from 1097, was the seat of a court that became culturally significant at a later period than the one considered here.

Seljuk rule in Asia Minor lasted until 1307 and this prolonged influence of Persian culture on the region left an indelible mark on the Ottoman civilization.

Khwarazm became part of the empire after the defeat of the Ghaznavids but

gained its autonomy in 1097 with Qotb ad-Din Mohammad who inaugurated the fourth dynasty to rule the land as Kharazmshahs.

Atsiz Garchai (r. 1128- 1156) was the most illustrious ruler of the Kharazmshahs, not only from the political point of view but also from that of the cultural life which flourished in his court; one century later the memory of his generous patronage was still alive as the historian, Jovayni (b. 1225), and the biographer, Awfi, praised his literary sensibility and the prestigious circle of intellectuals who attended his court.

Great poets such as Adib Shaber dedicated numerous qasidas to him but the most famous figure associated with his name and with that of his successor, Il-Arslan, is unquestionably Rashid ad-Din Watwat (1088-1177).

Poet, propagandist, critic and man of letters, he found himself engaged on several occasions in poetical contests with Anwari, the poet laureate in Sanjar's court.

Watwat was the head of the chancellery and a prolific author in both Persian and Arabic of correspondence, which he himself collected (entitled Abkar al-afkar fi'l-rasa'el wa'l-ash'ar in Arabic and Ara'ies al-khawater wa nafa'ies al-nawader in Persian).

His knowledge of Arabic literature and his own skill at poetry enabled him to compile not only a divan, but also a work on prosody, Hada'eq al-sehr fi daqa'eq al-she'r, the influence of which on the poetic canon lasted for many centuries.

Another outstanding man of letters and linguist at the court of Atsiz Garchai was Zamakhari (d. 1143) who dedicated his renowned monolingual Arabic dictionary, Moqaddamat al-adab, to the sovereign; nor should we forget the presence at that court of the physician, Zayn-al-Din Esmail Jorjani, believed to have been a pupil of Avicenna who composed the Aghraz al-tebb, one of the first medical treatises in Persian literature.

This work was based on his earlier Zakira-ye Kharazmshahi dedicated to the predecessor of Atsiz, Qotb ad-Din Mohammad (r. 1097-1127).

After the defeat of Masud at Dandanqan, the Ghaznavids continued to exercise power and cultivate literature in the lands remaining under their jurisdiction (present-day Afghanistan and much of Northern India).

The most illustrious of the late Ghaznavid sultans was unquestionably Bahramshah who ruled from 1117 to 1157.

His reign was defined as the 'Indian summer' of the dynasty and his court at Ghazna boasted of many significant poets and men of letters.

Hasan Ghaznavi had quite a difficult relationship with his illustrious patron and after a long period of understanding that lasted from 1118 to 1148, he found himself accused on several occasions of complicity with people hated by the sovereign.

Hasan Ghaznavi, who had celebrated Bahramshah's victorious military campaigns in numerous qasida, dedicated a famous sawgand-nama to the sovereign in the hope of regaining his favor.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

To be continued.

# ZagrebDox picks “Dream’s Gate”, “Subtotals”, “A Family Sentenced”

TEHRAN – “Dream’s Gate”, “Subtotals” and “A Family Sentenced” by Iranian filmmakers will compete in ZagrebDox, an international documentary film festival taking place in the Croatian capital of Zagreb from March 26 to April 2.

“Dream’s Gate” by Negin Ahmadi and “Subtotals” by Mohammadreza Farzad will be screened in the official competition and “A Family Sentenced” by Saeid Keshavarz has been selected for the State of Affairs category.

In “Dream’s Gate” co-produced by Iran, France and Norway, Ahmadi starts a personal journey into the combat zone of North Syria to question what it means to be a woman.

Alone with her camera, she decides to look for an answer to her questions by encountering the women who embody the strongest contemporary myth of female strength and freedom: Kurdish female fighters. The personal search and internal struggles turn into an intimate women’s diary written in the first person. Following, sharing and witnessing the life of these and other Kurdish women put into question the image that the director has of herself and of the cost of equality and freedom in this difficult region.

“Subtotals”, an experimental



A scene from “Dream’s Gate” by Iranian director Nazanin Ahmadi.

documentary co-produced by Iran, Poland and Germany, is a poetic essay meticulously constructed from clips of Iranian 8mm home videos from bygone days.

As we watch birthdays and wedding parties, people dancing, laughing, swimming or just relaxing, a narrator, in a contemplative, sometimes heavy voice, enumerates series of dry facts.

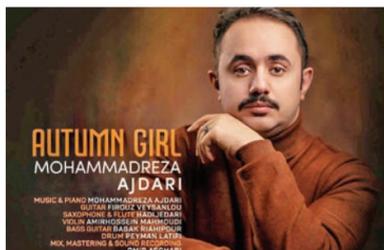
“A Family Sentenced” follows Reza, who is jailed on drug charges under mysterious circumstances and his wife is forced to uproot the lives of their four children. Under Iran’s strict drug laws, Reza faces execution if convicted—a harsh sentence made harsher still by the overwhelming economic and emotional toll it takes on his family. With the future uncertain and nowhere to go, Reza’s family members find themselves at the

mercy of actions taken far out of their control.

The audience will have an opportunity to see as many as 116 documentaries in 12 program sections of ZagrebDox.

Twenty films are competing for the official festival award The Big Stamp in the international documentary film category, and the same number of titles are running in the regional competition.

## “Autumn Girl” composer receives nomination at HIM Awards



A poster for Iranian composer Mohammadreza Ajdari and his single “Autumn Girl”.

From Page 1 ► The HIM Awards event will take place in Hollywood, California. The evening will feature live performances, a VIP dinner banquet, celebrity presenters, red carpet and award presentations.

Founded by Brent Harvey, executive producer of the Hollywood Music in Media Awards, the HIM Awards is the premier global platform for independent music. Emerging and established artists, songwriters, composers and audio recording professionals around the world are recognized for outstanding contributions and content creation.

The HIM Awards Advisory Board is comprised of some of the industry’s most respected and seasoned professionals. All personnel, resources and services under the HIM Awards banner are fully vetted and endorsed by the HIM Awards founder, assuring the highest marks in principles and standards.

HIM Awards seminars, panels and symposiums, both virtual and in-person, are created to inform and empower independent artists.

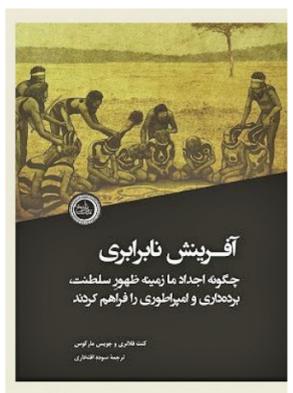
## “The Creation of Inequality” published in Persian

TEHRAN – “The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire”, co-authored by Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus, has been published in Persian.

Nedaye Tarikh is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Sudeh Eftekhari.

Our early ancestors lived in small groups and worked actively to preserve social equality. As they created larger societies, however, inequality arose, and by 2500 BC truly egalitarian societies were on the wane.

“In The Creation of Inequality”, Flannery and Marcus demonstrate



Front cover of the Persian edition of “The Creation of Inequality”.

that this development was not simply the result of population increase, food surplus, or the accumulation of valuables. Instead, inequality resulted from conscious manipulation of the unique social logic that lies at the core of every human group.

A few societies allowed talented and ambitious individuals to rise in prestige while still preventing them from becoming a hereditary elite. But many others made high rank hereditary, by manipulating debts, genealogies and sacred lore.

At certain moments in history, intense competition among leaders of high rank gave rise to despotic kingdoms and empires in the Near

East, Egypt, Africa, Mexico, Peru and the Pacific.

Drawing on their vast knowledge of both living and prehistoric social groups, Flannery and Marcus describe the changes in logic that create larger and more hierarchical societies, and they argue persuasively that many kinds of inequality can be overcome by reversing these changes, rather than by violence.

Flannery is a North American archaeologist who has conducted and published extensive research on the pre-Columbian cultures and civilizations of Mesoamerica, and in particular those of central and southern Mexico.

## The story of being unjustly imprisoned

A review session for the book “A Prison in a Prison”

On the last days close to the Nowruz holidays, the review session for the book “A Prison in a Prison” was held with the presence of the book’s author, Hamidreza Molazeinol, and the well-known critic, Golestan Jafarian.

At the beginning of the session, Golestan Jafarian said: “It is one of my interests to be present in programs based on the holy defense books, especially by people who have not seen the war and revolution, and their point of view must be different.”

“The book was very complex in terms of the subject. Maybe this book could have been more voluminous and the opinions about this person could have been different. I read the whole book non-stop in less than 4 hours and it was really interesting to me,” Jafarian said.

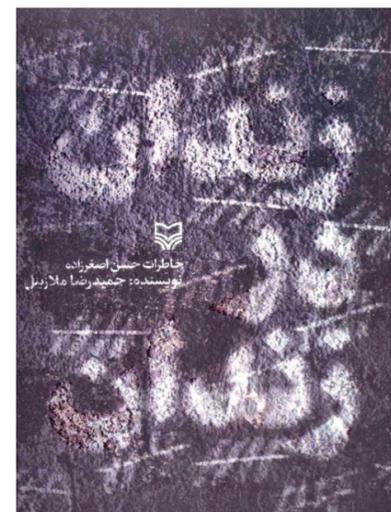
“For years, I have been saying that in the field of holy defense literature, for what reason do they go to such narrators, and in this book, more than any other book, I had a question mark as

to why the author went to Hassan Asgharzadeh, this strange and complicated narrator!” she added.

In response to Jafarian’s question, Hamidreza Molazeinol said: “We were working on a magazine with some friends in 2009. We interviewed different people, and one of those people was Hassan Asgharzadeh. I felt that he is a special person and has many interesting stories to tell.”

“He was a fighter who went to prison both before and after the revolution. My main question was why this happened to him. The last interview I did with him, was when he got his illness and the process became so difficult, and I had just become closer to him when he passed away,” said the author.

In the continuation of the session, the author of “A Prison in a Prison” said: If I wanted to write the book again, I would change its format. Now my belief in this field is to reach the heart of the story from the view of the main character. In my opinion, what is the thing that made the



character move and what happened to him is very important.”