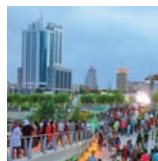


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# Prospects of Iran-Iraq ties



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## Iranian scientists develop system for real-time diagnosis of COVID-19

**TEHRAN** – Iranian researchers and scientists at the Institute of Cancer and the University of Tehran managed to develop a system for the real-time diagnosis of COVID-19.

They designed a simple electrochemical sensor to selectively detect the intensity of reactive oxygen species (ROS) in the sputum sample (with a volume of less than 500 µl), IRNA reported.

Comparing the results of the sensor

with clinical diagnostics of more than 140 normal and involved cases resulted in a response calibration with accuracy and sensitivity both 97%.

Testing the sensor in more than 4 hospitals shed promising lights in ROS based real-time tracking of COVID-19 from the sputum sample. More than 97% of true positive patients were detected while the sensor declares the diagnosis in less than 30 seconds. ➔9

## Domestic firms ink deal to develop South Azadegan oil field

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) and Petropars Group signed a deal on Monday for completing the development of South Azadegan oil-field as well as constructing a Central Treatment Export Plant (CTEP) with a capacity of 320,000 barrels per day (bpd) at the field.

The deal, worth \$961 million plus

11.83 trillion rials (about \$281.66 million), was signed by PEDEC Managing Director Touraj Dehqani and Petropars CEO Hamidreza Mahmoudi at the presence of Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Shana reported.

As reported, the deal is aimed at increasing the field's production capacity to 320,000 bpd over a 30-month period. ➔4

## Iran enjoys a golden generation: Afshin Ghotbi

By Masoud Hossein

**TEHRAN** — Former Iran national football team Afshin Ghotbi says that he cannot talk about Dragan Skocic since he is not familiar with him but he is sure the Iranian players can help their team qualify for the 2022 FIFA World Cup if the federation gives them the proper support and care.

The "Persian Leopards" need four wins to book a place in the next round of

the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification and Ghotbi, who has already headed Iran in the 2010 World Cup qualification, believe that the Iranian players can make it possible.

Iran will host Hong Kong on October 7, and will travel to Cambodia five days later. Iran will also face Bahrain and Iraq on November 11 and 16 respectively based on the new match dates scheduled by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). ➔11

## It is Iran that is genuinely fighting terrorism: Richard Falk

**Former UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine says Iran is fighting terrorist groups and Israeli and U.S. 'state terrorism'**

By M.A.Saki

**TEHRAN** — Richard Falk, the former UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine, says Iran as an Islamic system is the only country that is "genuinely" fighting terrorist groups such as Daesh and state terrorism exercised by Israel and the United States.

"If the facts are examined, we in the West would understand that it is the genuinely Islamic government of Iran that fights against terrorism whether Islamically oriented, as with Daesh and Taliban, or state terrorism as with Israel or the United States," Falk, currently a professor of international law at Princeton University, tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

The first part of the interview with Professor Falk was published on June 21. The core of the interview is about Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's letters to the youth in the West on January 21, 2015 and November 29, 2015. The letters followed the Charlie Hebdo shooting and terrorist attacks in France in January and November of the same year.

Following is the text of interview:

■ Discrimination or hatred toward non-Christians is ripe among certain groups of society and politicians in the West. This feeling of hatred, as mentioned in the Leader's letter, dated January 2015, is mostly directed against Islam. Why certain groups or politicians try to demonize Islam and present a distorted image of Islam?

A: Explaining the focus on Islam by the West in the contemporary period is not so difficult. Several factors can be mentioned. First, the legitimization in the West of Israel was accompanied by the demonization of Arabs as a race, Palestinians as a nation, and Islam as a religion. Secondly, the revolution in Iran was seen as a major geopolitical defeat for the West due to the collapse of the most significant pro-Western government in the region. ➔7

## Indian Muslim scholars oppose government's bid to ban Iranian movie "Muhammad"

**TEHRAN** — Muslim scholars in India have opposed Maharashtra government's attempt to prevent the release of "Muhammad, the Messenger of God", Iranian director Majid Majidi's 2015 movie about the childhood of the Prophet of Islam (S).

The government has requested the Center for Study of Society and Secularism to prevent the release of the movie, however, Muslim scholars and intellectuals have slammed the demand, the Mumbai Mirror newspaper reported on Saturday.

The movie is slated to be released globally on online platforms on July 21.

Objecting to the censorship, Irfan Engineer, the director of the Center for Study of Society and Secularism, has criticized the demand.

"I am against any kind of censorship. You may disagree with the movie or its content. So, there are ways to register the protest. You

can file a lawsuit, debate over the content, educate people or protest on the streets. The thought of banning the movie is wrong and it has happened several times in the past," Engineer said.

Writer and scholar on Islam, Abdul Kadar Mukadam questioned as to why an objection was raised if the movie narrates the life of Prophet. "Many Muslims are not aware of Prophet Muhammad's life, which is inspiring."

Terming the controversy unnecessary, editor of an Urdu newspaper, Sarfaraz Arzoo, questioned the objection to the movie.

"Does the movie have a historical misrepresentation or a wrong interpretation? One should first watch the movie to object to it. Instead of banning the movie, a panel of experts could give its opinion on the movie and delete the scenes if objectionable. Why be a wrench in the gears?" he said. ➔12

## U.S. protests: Troops 'kidnap' protesters into unmarked cars

Federal law enforcement officers in the U.S. have used unmarked vehicles to detain protesters in Portland, some on streets far from federal property they were sent to protect.

"Keep your troops in your own buildings, or have them leave our city," Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler demanded from President Donald Trump at a news conference on Friday.

Democratic Governor Kate Brown said Mr Trump is looking for a confrontation in the hopes of winning political points elsewhere, and also serves as a distraction from the coronavirus pandemic, which is causing spiking numbers of infections.

Governor Brown's spokesman, Charles Boyle, said arresting people without probable cause is "extraordinarily concerning and a violation of their civil liberties and constitutional rights".

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum

said she would file a lawsuit in federal court against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Marshals Service, Customs and Border Protection and Federal Protection Service alleging they have violated the civil rights of Oregonians by detaining them without probable cause.

She will also seek a temporary restraining order against them.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Oregon said the federal agents appear to be violating people's rights, which "should concern everyone in the United States".

"Usually when we see people in unmarked cars forcibly grab someone off the street, we call it kidnapping," interim executive director of the ACLU of Oregon Jann Carson said.

"The actions of the militarised federal officers are flat-out unconstitutional and will not go unanswered." ➔10

## Spy working for Mossad, CIA put to death: Judiciary

**TEHRAN** — Mahmoud Mousavi-Majd, a man who was convicted of spying for Mossad and CIA and was sentenced to death last month, was executed on Monday morning.

"This morning, the ruling that was handed to Mousavi-Majd, who was sentenced to death for espionage, was carried out," the Judiciary announced on Monday.

In early June, Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaeili announced that Mousavi-Majd had been sentenced to death.

"Recently an individual named Seyyed Mahmoud Mousavi-Majd, who had been connected with Mossad and CIA services and had collected and transmitted intelligence on the location of Martyr General Soleimani, has been given a death sentence by the Islamic Revolution Court," Esmaeili said.

The Judiciary later said the case of Mousavi-Majd has nothing to do with the American assassination of General Soleimani in Baghdad in early January.

Mousavi-Majd was arrested months before that incident and the court had issued an initial ruling on his case on August 25, 2019, the Judiciary said, explaining that the convict has never been released from custody since apprehension.

On January 3, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered airstrikes that killed General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), in Baghdad's international airport. ➔3



© Tehran Times / Samira Nazari

## Sa'd-al Saltaneh, a top tourist site in Qazvin

The 19th-century bazaar of Sa'd-al-Saltaneh is a top tourist site in the city of Qazvin, which was once the capital of the Persian Empire under Safavids from 1548-98.

Bazaars have traditionally been major economic and social centers in the ancient city which is also famed for carpets and seedless grapes.

The bazaar is located adjacent to a beautifully restored Qajar-era caravanserai of the same name. In April, Qazvin province's tourism department announced that it seriously pursues efforts to register Sa'd-al Saltaneh caravanserai on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

## Eco-friendly disinfectants produced in Iran

**TEHRAN** — Iranian researchers have succeeded in developing eco-friendly disinfectants based on natural resources to address the health hazards and pollution risks of synthetic disinfectants amid coronavirus, ISNA reported on Monday.

The disinfectants with the virtue of nonhazardous nature and biodegradability are produced by a team of chemists of Amirkabir University of Technology.

With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, demand for disinfectants has increased dramatically; the novel coronavirus has prompted many people to use more cleansers and disinfectants in their daily lives to keep themselves safe, Mehran Javanbakht, Faculty of Chemistry at Amirkabir University.

He went on to note that while effective at killing germs, disinfectants can build up levels of toxic chemicals over time that will reduce indoor air quality; when they contain anthropogenic substances, they can irritate the eyes and skin, and increase the risk of respiratory and central nervous system disorders and cancer.

Washing these accumulated toxins away can pollute groundwater and soil, he added.

The idea of producing disinfectants effective on harmful microorganisms especially the new coronavirus, based on natural and non-toxic substances, led our company to conduct extensive studies in this field to prepare three green disinfectants based on natural materials, he explained.

According to Javanbakht, these disinfectants do not leave any harmful substances after use. ➔9

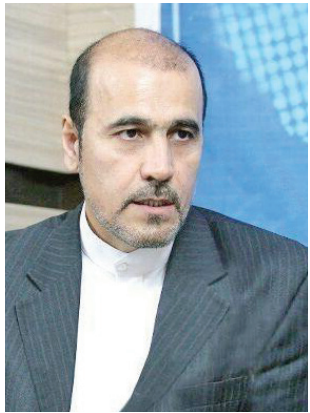


## Iraqi PM seeks balanced ties with Iran, S. Arabia and U.S.: analyst

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Amir Mousavi, an international relations analyst, has said that Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi seeks to create a balance in his country's relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

"In his visits to Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States, Al-Kadhimi makes efforts to create a balance among these three countries in Iraq. If he succeeds, it will be a great achievement for him," he told IRNA in an interview published on Monday.

Mousavi added that Kadhimi believes that balanced relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. will result in economic development, stability and security in Iraq.



He also noted that the Iraqi prime minister seeks to play a mediatory role between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The analyst said that a "political peace" between Iran and Saudi Arabia will benefit the region and in that case Iraq can benefit from Iran's scientific and technologic capabilities and Saudi Arabia's financial power.

Iraqi officials told The New Arab in June that Kadhimi was planning his first foreign tour with visits to and Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States in July.

Kadhimi was planning to visit Riyadh on Monday. However, his visit was postponed as the Saudi king was hospitalized. After his visit to Riyadh, the prime minister was scheduled to arrive in Tehran on Tuesday. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that the prime minister's visit to Iran will not be postponed.

Kadhimi formally took office on May 7. Prime Minister Kadhimi probably wants to mediate between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S., what his successor Adel Abdul Mahdi tried to do.

Iran has been open for dialogue with Saudi Arabia but Tehran has been a fierce critic of the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

However, Iran has rejected the notion of talks with the Trump administration, insisting that the U.S. must first make up for its illegal sanctions measures against Iran.

Moreover, some analysts and politicians are of the opinion that the U.S. killed off any chance of dialogue by assassinating Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in early January.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited Baghdad on Sunday. He held talks with senior Iraqi officials during his one-day trip to Iraq.

He met the Iraqi president, prime minister, speaker of the parliament, foreign minister, head of the judiciary, chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and other political officials of the country.

In his talks with al-Kadhimi, Zarif discussed the latest bilateral and regional issues as well as the Iraqi prime minister's imminent trip to Iran.

Zarif said Iran is looking forward to a "new and positive stage" in its relations with Iraq, according to a statement issued by the media office of the Iraqi prime minister.

Zarif also told the prime minister that Iran is interested at the highest level in the upcoming visit by al-Kadhimi to Iran to start a new stage of cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad.

Al-Kadhimi also pointed to the importance of developing ties between Iraq and Iran in various sectors.

"Iraq is seeking to assert its balanced and positive role in making peace and progress in the region," said the Iraqi prime minister.

President Salih also stressed the depth of Iraq's historical relations with Iran, saying that cooperation between the two countries should be expanded in all sectors, according to a statement published by Iraq's Presidential website.

President Salih also said the region is in need of building balanced ties, understanding and clear vision to reach fundamental solutions to the crises in the region through engaging in a constructive and honest dialogue between all parties.

Salih also hailed Iran's support to Iraq, especially in combating Daesh terrorists.

Zarif also expressed Iran's readiness to help Iraq in various sectors, underlining the importance of strengthening ties between the countries in the region for the sake of peace and combating terrorism.

## Iran has managed to prove peaceful nature of its nuclear program: Russian analyst

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Gennady Avdeev, the head of the international office of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, has said that Iran managed to fully implement the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, and proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.



In an exclusive interview with IRNA published on Sunday, he said that Iran fulfilled its commitments and gained international support, but the United States pulled out of the deal and proved that it is not trustworthy for negotiations.

Avdeev added that the U.S. showed that it does not respect even the UN Security Council's decisions.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The JCPOA is endorsed by the UNSC's 2231 resolution.

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Tehran said its "strategic patience" is over and began to gradually reduce its commitments under the pact to both retaliate for Washington's departure and Europeans' failure to honor their commitments.

On January 5 of this year, Iran took a fifth and last step in reducing its commitments and said it would no longer observe any operational limitations on its nuclear industry, whether concerning the capacity and level of uranium enrichment, the volume of stockpiled uranium or research and development. However, Iran has insisted if the Europeans honor their obligations it will immediately reverse its decisions.

# Iraqi Kurdistan no staging ground for anti-Iran attacks: Barzani

Senior Kurdish political leader Masoud Barzani has given Iran an assurance that the Iraqi Kurdistan region will never be used to threaten the Islamic Republic's interests.

Barzani, the former President of the Kurdistan Region from 2005 to 2017 and the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), made the remarks in a Sunday meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Erbil.

"The Kurdistan region will never turn into a place to threaten the interests and security of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Barzani said in the meeting.

He also pointed to strong bonds between the Iranian and Iraqi nations, and highlighted the unforgettable role played by Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in the defeat of Daesh terrorists.

In an interview with Sky News Arabic in 2014, when Daesh overran the Kurdish-populated northern Iraqi town of Sinjar, then president of Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) Masoud Barzani said



*Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif meets with Masoud Barzani, the leader of Kurdish Democratic Party in Erbil on July 19, 2020 (Photo by IRNA)*

Iran was the first country to provide Iraq's embattled Kurdish region with weapons to fight off the terrorist group. "We have to tell the truth. On our first

night, when we were attacked by ISIL (Daesh), Iran sent us two airplanes full of weapons. This was a great help for that moment," Barzani said at that time.

At a joint press conference with Zarif in Erbil back then, Barzani said, "We asked for weapons and Iran was the first country to provide us with weapons and ammunition."

In the Sunday meeting held in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, Zarif said for his part that Tehran has always sought friendly relations between Baghdad and Erbil.

The two sides also stressed the need for expansion of business relations while observing health protocols in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Zarif arrived in Erbil on Sunday evening, after a trip to Baghdad where he held several meetings with high-ranking Iraqi officials including Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and President Barham Salih.

The Iranian top diplomat's meeting with PM al-Kadhimi was held ahead of the latter's trip to Riyadh.

(Source: Press TV)

## Even U.S. allies are frustrated by sanctions, says presidential chief of staff

**"Policy of sanctions is an inhuman, cruel and rotten policy and must be stopped. This is not just Iran's view."**

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Monday that EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's criticism of Washington's policy of sanctions shows that even the United States' allies have become frustrated by sanctions.

"The foreign policy chief's protest over the United States' use of economic sanctions shows that even the United States' allies are frustrated by this country's addiction to sanctions," Vaezi said in a tweet.

He also said, "Policy of sanctions is an inhuman, cruel and rotten policy and must be stopped. This is not just Iran's view."

Borrell said on Friday that the European Union opposes the United States' policy of sanctions.

According to Malay Mail daily, Borrell pointed to sanctions on Iran, Cuba and the International Criminal Court, saying the EU opposed the U.S. policy of enforcing its measures against companies and individuals around the world.



"I am deeply concerned at the growing use of sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, by the United States against

European companies and interests," Borrell said in a statement.

He said Washington's secondary sanctions on those doing business with its foes was hitting European companies carrying out "legitimate business."

"Where common foreign and security policy goals are shared, there is great value in the coordination of targeted sanctions with partners. Where policy differences exist, the European Union is always open to dialogue. But this cannot take place against the threat of sanctions," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

Under the JCPOA, Iran was obliged to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

The U.S. has threatened to punish any company that do business with Iran.

## Iran reiterates it is ready to hold talks with regional countries

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has reiterated Tehran's long-held position that Iran is ready to hold talks with regional countries, noting there is no way but dialogue to bridge differences.

The comments by the spokesman come as Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi plans to visit Saudi Arabia and Iran to reduce tensions between Tehran and Riyadh.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was in Baghdad on Sunday for talks with top Iraqi officials. The visit took place two days prior to Kadhimi's trip to Tehran.

According to a report published by an Iraqi news agency, Zarif has reportedly delivered a message from Iran to the Persian Gulf Arab states, specifically Saudi Arabia, that Tehran is ready to reach a common understanding with them through Iraqi mediation.

In an interview with IRNA published on Monday, Mousavi said that Iran has announced its principled policies and it depends on Saudi Arabia how its wants to respond to Iran's proposal for talks and cooperation.

He also said that Iran seeks peace, security and stability in the region.

Iran believes in regional talks without

any foreign interference, he said.

Mousavi added, "The only way to restore security and even flourish regional economy is cooperation."

He also said, "A powerful region is important for Iran. If we have a powerful region, we will have powerful countries and can cooperate."

Hossein Dehghan, a military advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said in June that Iran is ready to hold talks with Saudi Arabia without pre-condition.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at logger-

heads over a number of issues including the Saudi war on Yemen and Riyadh's support for Donald Trump's anti-Iran moves.

Middle East Eye reported in May that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has asked new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to mediate between the Saudi kingdom and Iran.

"The first call Kadhimi got after his nomination was from the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, who asked the new Iraqi prime minister to restart mediation with Iran, the sources said," Middle East Eye reported.

## Prospects of Iran-Iraq ties

Mahdi on November 29, 2019. As the Iraqi Parliament approved Abdul Mahdi's resignation, the race to name new prime minister began in earnest. At least two people were tasked by the Iraqi president to put together a cabinet. They both failed to do so. Ultimately, the various Iraqi political factions agreed to agree on Mustafa al-Kadhimi, the country's intelligence chief who is famous for his behind-the-scenes contacts with all major players in the region including Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

Al-Kadhimi had a "close relationship" with Iran, even before he took office, Amir Mousavi, who was Iran's cultural attaché in Algeria in 2015, tells the Tehran Times. He mentioned a meeting between al-Kadhimi and Iran's Secretary of Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani on May 8, 2020.

"In General Soleimani's assassination, al-Kadhimi has also cooperated with Iran to help it get to the bottom of the assassination. That's why Iran's judiciary has very strong clues regarding the U.S. involvement in General Soleimani's assassination. This is indicative of the very good judicial cooperation between Iran and Iraq," added Mousavi, who is now director of the Tehran-based Center for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

However, the U.S. and its regional allies, in particular Saudi Arabia, have sought to portray the premiership of al-Kadhimi as a major blow to Iran's influence in Iraq. Their news media organizations regularly run articles suggesting that Iran has lost its influence in Iraq after the country's protests made it impossible for Iran to determine who would form the cabinet once Abdul Mahdi resigned, and that al-Kadhimi is distancing himself from Iran to avoid the wrath of the protesters. Al-Kadhimi, the argument goes, is doing so because he knows that he took office thanks to the protests against the Iranian influence in his country.

"In an attempt to show that the protests have achieved their goals, the U.S. and Saudi media organizations, along with the so-called 'Iraqi Jokers', make efforts to drive a wedge between Iran and Iraq. They portray al-Kadhimi's premiership as a victory to say that the protests have come to fruition. But this is not the case because al-Kadhimi has a good rapport with Iran," Mousavi pointed out.

According to Mousavi, under al-Kadhimi, the Iran-Iraq relations have become even stronger. Al-Kadhimi is also resuming the border trade with Iran. Moreover, Tehran and Baghdad are cooperating at the highest level in the fight against terrorism.

Mousavi also said that during Zarif's visit to Baghdad, the two countries reached an agreement on all issues and will continue their cooperation.

"Al-Kadhimi will sign significant agreements in Tehran on Tuesday," said the former diplomat, adding that the Iraqi prime minister's visit to Iran will include a meeting with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who has not received any foreign leader since the outbreak of Covid-19.

The Iraqi embassy in Tehran, which was kept in the dark about al-Kadhimi's trip to Iran, didn't respond to a request for comment. The embassy was not involved in the arrangements of the prime minister's trip to Iran. Al-Kadhimi has said on many occasions that he is willing to activate the role of Iraq's official institutions in dealing with other countries. But it's not clear yet why he has chosen to keep the embassy out of the arrangements.

In his trip to Baghdad, Zarif discussed with al-Kadhimi the latest bilateral and regional issues as well as the Iraqi prime minister's trip to Iran. He pointed out that Iran is looking for a new chapter in its relations with Iraq, according to a statement issued by the media office of the Iraqi prime minister.

Zarif has laid the groundwork for a new stage in Iran's relations with Iraq. According to Mousavi, the relations between Tehran and Baghdad is no longer subject to security considerations because the situation in Iraq is now normal, and that Iran has shifted from expanding security ties with Iraq to the development of economic and diplomatic ties with that country.

According to Mousavi, in the years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, security and military officials, such as martyr General Soleimani, were in charge of handling Iran's relations with Iraq as the country was unstable and under the U.S. occupation.

However, as the situation in Iraq has improved in recent years, political and diplomatic officials assumed a new role in Iranian-Iraqi relations.

It seems that al-Kadhimi is keen to seize on this opportunity to build what he calls "balanced relations" with countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S., while keeping Iraq out of regional tensions that could have major implications for its fragile security. The prime minister is likely to discuss this issue with the Iranian officials on Tuesday. It remains to be seen whether al-Kadhimi succeed in achieving his foreign policy goals.



# IRGC chief lauds progress in modernizing military equipment

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps has lauded the progress made by the IRGC Ground Force's Airborne Division in overhauling and modernizing military equipment.

In remarks on Monday, Major General Hossein Salami said the Airborne Division has achieved self-sufficiency in manufacturing components as well as modernizing and overhauling of aircraft, Tasnim reported.

He said it has also made headways in terms of overhauling attack, transport, rescue and backup helicopters.

Salami underlined the major role of the IRGC Ground Force in ensuring security in Iran, saying the Airborne Division's backup for the land forces is of great significance.

The general went on to say that the Airborne Division forces' preparedness is in a very good state like that of other Ground Force units.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment.



Iran maintains that its military capabilities pose no threat to regional countries, stressing that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine

is entirely based on deterrence.

Last month, the IRGC Ground Force unveiled several military and defensive

achievements in the presence of General Salami.

One of the military equipment unveiled was the amphibious armored vehicle, Makran, which is an efficient carrier equipped with a fire control system and a vision site, including a day camera and thermal sensor with a detection power of up to 4,000 meters and a laser rangefinder of 10 km.

Monitoring and shooting with a monitor, fast loading of ammunition, etc. are other features of this personnel carrier.

Another equipment unveiled by the IRGC Ground Force was Me'raj reconnaissance drone that uses elevator camera technology, enjoys a flight duration of more than 10 hours and has a range of 1,000km.

Other equipment produced and unveiled by the IRGC Ground Force included modernized BTR-60 personnel carrier, Ra'ad 2 tower which can be mounted on military vehicles, Explorer 1 which is a radar and electro-optic system which can be used to discover mines, offensive gun named Sa'aban with a range of 800 meters and Hedayat 22 system to precisely guide Katyusha rockets.

## General urges Supreme National Security Council to respond to U.S. threat

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali has called on the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) to respond to the threat of the U.S. Army against the Islamic Republic.



In remarks on Sunday, Jalali said Iran's defense infrastructures are relatively secure but the U.S. Army's threat is a war threat that needs to be addressed at other levels, Mehr reported.

He was responding to a recently disclosed order by U.S. President Donald Trump to the CIA to orchestrate more cyberattacks against Iran.

Last week, Yahoo News cited former U.S. officials as saying that the CIA has conducted a series of covert cyberattacks against Iran and other targets since 2018 when Trump gave sweeping authorization for such activities.

According to Yahoo News, the secret authorization gives the spy agency more freedom in both the kinds of operations it conducts and who it targets.

The authorization allows the CIA to more easily authorize its own covert cyber operations, rather than requiring the agency to get approval from the White House.

It "gave the agency very specific authorities to really take the fight offensively to a handful of adversarial countries," said a former U.S. government official.

These countries include Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea — which are mentioned directly in the document — but the authorization potentially applies to others as well, according to another former official.

"The White House wanted a vehicle to strike back," said the second former official. "And this was the way to do it."

The new cyber authorization further emboldened the CIA's operations against Iran, according to former officials. Even before Trump signed the directive, administration officials were already encouraging the CIA to aggressively interpret preexisting secret Iran-related authorities to help prosecute the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Using the Cold War strategy of rolling back the Soviet Union as inspiration, senior Trump national security officials believed that destabilizing Iran within its borders would force the Islamic Republic to cease its activities abroad and, perhaps, collapse.

The maximum-pressure campaign includes punishing economic sanctions, but has also involved CIA cyberattacks on Iranian infrastructure, said former officials.

"It was obvious that destabilization was the plan on Iran," said one former official, and Trump administration officials were eager to have the CIA conduct destructive cyber operations against targets inside that country. Bolton "wanted another tool, he wanted another hammer. He was looking at Stuxnet and how to be mean to Iran, so that was probably attractive to him," said another source.

## Tehran hails Syria's successful parliamentary elections

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has expressed Tehran's happiness with the successful holding of parliamentary elections in Syria.

In a statement on Monday, Mousavi said the elections were held at a time when Syrian people have suffered many pains and hardships because of the conflicts and damages imposed on them by the acts of terrorist groups, the presence of occupation forces, and cruel unilateral sanctions, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is hopeful that the parliamentary elections in Syria would be a positive step towards peace, stability, and progress of Syrian-Syrian political talks, and a relief for the pains of Syrian people," he added.

## Expression of Interest(EOI)

World Health Organization through its country office in Iran in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education is seeking for services of distribution of medical and laboratory items and equipment around the country (approximately 180 sites in 70 cities) for the duration of September 2020 to 28 February 2021.

We are looking to identify companies that are active and specialized in the field of customs clearance, warehousing and distribution of medical goods. Interested companies should be able to provide services such as manpower and technical facilities for unloading and loading at their warehouse and final destinations.

The whole contract would be for a period of approximately 8 months for accomplishing the whole task.

Interested companies should send their letter of interest along with their resume, team composition and related experiences through the email address [emacoiraof@who.int](mailto:emacoiraof@who.int) by CoB 24 July 2020.

The short listed companies will be invited to submit their proposals based on more detailed information on the project which will be shared with them in later stage.

All communicated documentations must be submitted in English.

Companies who have applied in the previous round are encouraged to apply again.

## Iran-China cooperation plan will break sanctions: analyst

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Emad Abshenas, an analyst, has said that 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement between Iran and China will break the sanctions.

"The United States is well aware that if this cooperation agreement is implemented, the sanctions will be broken. So, it [the U.S.] is trying to impede sale of Iran's oil," he told ISNA in an interview published on Monday.

He noted that the hype against the agreement has been created by the U.S.

In a commentary on its website on Thursday, the CGTN (China Global Television Network) says the impending 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement between Iran and China is "primarily pragmatic".

"The main reason for the controversy is that the deal paints China in a defiant role against the U.S. However, the deal is primarily pragmatic. Iran is one of the largest producers of oil, and China imports 75 percent of its oil, allowing it to diversify vendors," said the commentary.

Iran and China plan to sign a 25-year comprehensive coop-

eration agreement. The document has not been finalized yet.

It said, "It has been reported that China and Iran are negotiating a 25-year cooperation agreement named the Sino-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The partnership is thought to be a continuation of the 600 billion U.S. dollar trade deal agreement between the two countries in 2016."

It noted, "China was the largest buyer of Iranian crude oil despite sanctions from the U.S. Apart from their primary commercial purposes, the ports of Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan combined with ports at Jask and the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, would also create refueling stations for the Chinese Navy. Chinese investments will help Iran develop its telecommunication, banking, and railway sectors."

"The deal offers Iran a chance at development with mutual respect on its own terms without compromising on its national interests. More importantly, it gives Iran the opportunity not to feel helpless against the onslaught of

disapproval from the West. China gets to offer countries a way out from American military adventurism and use of force contrary to international laws. China can play a constructive role in safeguarding the peace and security of the [Persian] Gulf region and promote it's BRI [the Belt and Road Initiative]," it added.

Iranian Ambassador to Beijing Mohammad Keshavarzadeh has said that China has provided Iran with the most coronavirus aid, noting that in such a situation it is unacceptable to help tighten United States' cruel sanctions on Iran.

The ambassador also criticized those at home and abroad who are trying to dishearten Iranian citizens about the yet-to-be finalized agreement between Iran and China.

"In this critical situation in which health workers are making efforts to defeat corona, we all are duty bound to reduce the people's suffering and pain. It is unacceptable to help tighten the United States' cruel sanctions under any pretext. So far, most of the foreign help to Iran has been from China. Do not cause disappointment by unfounded lies," the ambassador tweeted.

## U.S. sanctions dramatically hampering Iran's coronavirus efforts: professor

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Even if the Iranian authorities have done non-understandable mistakes in their attempts to control the coronavirus, it is clear that the U.S. sanctions are dramatically worsening the country's possibilities to counter the pandemic, according to a history professor.

"This is particularly visible in the importation of drugs and medical equipment," said Tuomo Melasuo, a professor in political history at the University of Turku, in an interview with ILNA published on Monday.

Melasuo said due to the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic, Iran has found itself in a more and more difficult situation.

Thus, in this health care situation, the U.S. sanctions have no justification whatsoever, he remarked. "They are simply irresponsible, illegal, and even counterproductive. In the world coming after the corona pandemic, the international community could consider pursuing the USA the same way as certain regimes were treated in war crime special court after the Second World War."

He also criticized the United States' policies toward West Asia, citing the Iranian and Palestinian issues as examples.

The U.S. policies "have been and still are very immature as well as dangerous and even counter-productive at the same time."

"There have been sanctions against Iran because of its nuclear program at least already since 2007," he remarked. "During all these years the sanctions have had a negative impact on civil society and on the public health in Iran. I recall that some of my Iranian friends here in Finland were worried about the health of their parents and that they sent drugs to their elderly parents in the country."

Asked why U.S. President Donald



Trump is not willing to ease the sanctions despite international requests, he said it is clear that the sanctions are illegal because they do not respect the UN Security Council resolutions.

"In reality, the congressmen have no impact on Mr. Trump because the only thing he is worried about is his re-election in November 2020. This situation is, of course, a proof that there are many problems in the U.S. political culture and especially political system."

The professor added that the inhabitants of the U.S. should seriously consider making an important reform of their Constitution that starts to be a little bit old, outdated, and "retarded".

On the possibility of war, Melasuo said everything is possible because Trump is unpredictable. "Let us hope that there are some civilized people in his vicinity, if not in Washington DC, and then maybe in California, Mexico, or Canada, who could advise him that the best way to lose the elections is a war with Iran."

He concluded, "A real full-scale war between these two countries would be a catastrophe for both of them, but also to the entire Middle East and to the whole Euro-Mediterranean community."

## Black boxes of downed Ukrainian plane arrive in France

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne says the black boxes of a Ukrainian plane that was accidentally downed in Iran in January has arrived in France for analysis.

In a tweet on Sunday, Champagne said the black boxes were expected to be taken to France's BEA air accident investigation agency on Monday.

He added that Canadian transportation officials would be present during the analysis.

The remarks came after Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Mohsen Baharvand announced that Iran has sent the black boxes to France.

Baharvand said the black boxes were taken to Paris on Friday and would be deciphered on Monday.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistaken for an invading missile. The tragic incident happened a few hours after Iran fired missiles at a U.S. airbase in western Iraq in retaliation for the January 3 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani. Following the retaliation attack, the Iranian military had been put on high alert.

The victims of the crash included 82 Iranians, 63 Iranian-Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

Earlier this month, Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine Yevhen Yenin said that the volume of compensation for victims of the Ukrainian plane crash will be discussed when the technical investigation is completed.

"At this stage, technical investigation has not yet been completed.



If it confirms the fact of unlawful interference, it will be possible to proceed to the second phase of the negotiation process and more specifically discuss the volume of compensation. It's still too early to talk about something," Yenin told Ukraine 24 TV channel in an interview published on July 6.

He also said, "Black boxes have not been sent to France yet. As of today, we have another promise from the Iranian side to do this on July 20. A couple of days ago we received from the French authorities their consent to accept two of our experts who will participate in the process as members of the technical investigation group."

Head of the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces said on June 30 that extensive investigations have been carried out over the Ukrainian plane crash incident and the dossier will be sent to court after investigations are completed.

"We have carried out extensive investigations in this dossier and have reached good results," Shokrollah Bahrami told reporters.

Bahrami also noted that the families of the victims will receive financial compensation for the incident.

## Spy working for Mossad, CIA put to death: Judiciary

**1→** Tasnim news agency last month said it had obtained documents that showed Mousavi-Majd was neither a military staffer, nor a member of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), nor even a member of the Basij forces who go to Syria voluntarily for the fight against terrorism.

It said that the convict had left Iran before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 when he was a child, and grew up in Syria, where he established connections with a number of Iranian military advisers in that country and began a career as a driver.

Under the guise of a driver, the spy was gathering



intelligence for the U.S. and Israel and received a salary of \$5,000 a month from the CIA and Mossad, Tasnim added.

The news of Mousavi-Majd's execution comes a week after Iran executed a retired employee of the Defense Ministry for providing the CIA with intelligence on Iranian missiles.

Esmaili said the spy, Reza Askari, has sold information on the production of Iranian missiles to the CIA, and received money in exchange.

He said Askari was under intelligence surveillance and was finally put to death after his trial.

Iran is serious about its security issues, the spokesman highlighted.



## Iran to hold specialized exhibition in Kirkuk in late Oct.

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) in collaboration with a domestic organizer is planning to hold the first specialized exhibition of Iranian goods and services in the city of Kirkuk in Iraq.



According to an announcement published on the TPO portal on Monday, the exhibition is going to be held during October 27-31.

The event is going to cover a variety of areas and sectors including medicine, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, technical and engineering services, machinery and industrial equipment, construction, interior design and home appliances, agriculture, foodstuff and packing industries as well as textile, leather and handicrafts.

## Quarterly coal extraction falls 16%

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Extraction of coal in Iran has dropped 16.3 percent during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20) compared to the first quarter of the previous year, IRNA reported citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The IMIDRO data put the coal extraction in the first three months of the present year at 396,626 tons, while the figure was 474,202 tons in the same time span of the past year.

As previously announced by IMIDRO, the annual production of coal in Iran reached 1.585 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19).



The country's average annual coal concentrate production is about 1.5 million tons, while the country's current demand has reached two million tons.

Currently, Iran's coal sector provides employment for 17,000 people, however the capacity of the country's coal mines is much more than this figure, and development of the mining sector and modernization projects can play an effective role in increasing employment in this sector.

Unofficial data indicate that there are 185 small and large coal mines in the country, of which more than 59 percent are currently active, while 10 mines are being equipped and prepared, and the rest are idle.

## Iran exports tea to 12 countries in three months

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that Iran has exported tea to 12 countries during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), IRNA reported.

Rouhollah Latifi announced that over 575 tons of tea worth \$493,785 were exported during the three-month period.



Head of Iran's Tea Organization (ITO) Habib Jahansaz has said that tea production in the country is expected to rise 10 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

The official has stated that 75 percent of the payment to the tea farmers will be made by the tea factories and the other 25 percent is paid by the government.

Tea harvest season starts in farmlands across the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran in early May.

More than 55,000 families grow tea over 28,000 hectares of farmland in the two provinces, accounting for 90 percent of the country's total tea production.

In late December 2019, Jahansaz said Iran exported over 4,000 tons of tea to the neighboring countries, in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

According to the official, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Afghanistan were among the top destinations for Iranian tea exports.

Iran exports tea to India, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Canada, Australia, Spain, the Czech Republic, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

# Domestic firms ink deal to develop South Azadegan oil field

**1 →** Under the framework of the deal, the contractor is obliged to drill 35 wells, install 50 downhole ESP pumps, complete two intermediate separation plants, construct 328 km of flow pipelines, 45 km of communication pipelines and 65 km of gas and crude oil transmission pipelines from the CTEP to the West Karoun Pumping House and to the NGL 3200 plant.

The two sides also signed a nearly \$300 million contract for the construction of South Azadegan's CTEP which is going to be the country's biggest upstream treatment plant.

Speaking on the signing ceremony, Zanganeh underlined the importance of Azadegan oil field for the country's oil industry and noted that improving the field's recovery factor by 10 percent is going to increase the field's output by 2.7 billion barrels which means a \$1-trillion increase in the country's future oil revenues.

South Azadegan is one of the five major oilfields Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun, known as West Karoun fields. West Karoun holds great importance for



PEDEC Managing Director Touraj Dehqani (L), and Petropars CEO Hamidreza Mahmoudi sign a deal for development of South Azadegan oil field in Tehran on Monday.

the country's oil industry since according to the latest studies, its in-situ deposit is estimated to be 67 billion barrels containing both light and heavy crude oils, and therefore it could have a big impact on

Iran's oil output increases in the future.

Having an estimated 67 billion barrels of in-situ oil, West Karoun fields definitely deserve the spotlight which has been put on them recently.

## Permits issued for establishment of 26 industrial, mining research centers in a year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has issued permits for the establishment of 26 industrial and mining research centers in the country during the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19), according to an official with the ministry.

Mehrdad Safavi Farokhi, the acting director-general of Training and Research Department of the ministry, said that permits have been also issued for the establishment of 335 technical and engineering services export units in the previous year, which was 4.3 percent more than the permits issued in its preceding year, IRNA reported.

As previously announced by the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, during the previous Iranian calendar year, 27,947 permits were issued for establishing new industrial units which mark a 14.2-percent increase year on year.

More than 3.63 quadrillion rials (about \$86.52 billion) were invested for setting up the mentioned units which shows a 26-percent rise compared to the preceding year.



These units were expected to create job opportunities for 633,381 people, 14.2 percent more than the figure for the year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019).

In the past year, the number of permits that were issued for the newly established industrial units to start operation also increase by 2.9 percent year on year.

The investment in the newly established units increased 5.3 percent compared to the preceding year, while job creation by the mentioned units fell 1.2 percent.

The average investment in the mentioned sector also increased from 102.1 billion rials (about \$2.43 million) in 1397 to 104.5 billion rials (nearly \$2.5 million) in 1398.

In April, the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry outlined its major programs for supporting the domestic production in the current calendar year.

The ministry's programs included supporting the country's industrial units and facilitating permit issuances in order to promote domestic production and non-oil exports.

## Iran, EAEU to set up 3 working groups on expansion of trade

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will set up three more working groups on the expansion of trade ties between the two sides, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

As published on the website of the TPO, after holding the first meeting of Iran-EAEU joint working group through video conference, the two sides agreed on the establishment of three new working groups focusing on customs, standards, and health and safety measures.

According to the TPO Head Hamid Zadboum, at the end of the meeting which was attended by the representatives of the two sides, the working group's protocol was signed.

"Based on this protocol, which includes the outcomes of the negotiations held in every meeting, the parties agreed to establish three new working groups on customs cooperation, technical measures, healthcare, and plant health measures within the framework of the agreement between the two sides," Zadboum said.

The meetings of the mentioned working groups will be held between the representatives of the relevant bodies from Iran and the EAEU member countries in the near future and after setting their goals, according to the official.



He noted that the protocol of the current meeting included Iran's proposals for the formation of a banking working group and a working group on transportation and transit, as well as cooperation in the fields of investment, and free trade zones; the Eurasian Economic Union will respond to these proposals after reviewing them," he added.

During the online event, the parties stressed encouraging cooperation between the trade associations of the two sides to maximize the capacity of the agreement between Iran and EAEU.

They also underlined the need for raising awareness in the private sectors of Iran and Eurasian Economic Union members regarding the agreement and the two sides' potential markets.

The two sides also agreed to hold a business forum in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

## TEDPIX hits record high of 1.9m points

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), hit a new record high on Monday, as it exceeded 1.9 million points.

As reported by IRNA, the index gained 46,814 points to 1.911 million during the Monday trades.

Mobarakeh Steel Company, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company, Tamin Petroleum & Petrochemical Investment Company (TOPPIC), Gol Gohar Mining and Industrial Company, and Parsian Oil and Gas Development Group Company (POGDC) were the major contributors to the jump of TEDPIX in a single day.

The index had hit the record high of 1.5 million points on June 30.

While the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) was full of success for the TSE, the market is also preserving its successful performance in the current year, and the noticeable point in this due is that the other economic sectors are experiencing some declining trend due to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have been witnessing new record highs continuously posted by the exchange since the year start, and climbing to the peak of one million points, something almost unbelievable just



some time ago, came true in early May.

In a press conference on June 22, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) announced that the amount of liquidity absorbed by Iran's capital market has reached 500 trillion rials (about \$12 billion) during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20).

Hasan Qalibaf-Asl also said, "It is while the total amount of liquidity entered into this market stood at 300 trillion rials (about \$7.14 billion) during the past year."

The official further noted that the high amount of liquidity that is entering the capital market has provided some good opportunity for this market, as it's being developed and flourished, for the enterprises, as they're securing their required funds, and also for the government.

## Private sector criticizes CBI's policies on returning export revenues

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Representatives of Iranian private sector have criticized the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s strict policies for the returning of the export revenues into the Integrated Forex Management System (locally known as NIMA).

In an online meeting of the heads of the country's chambers of commerce on Sunday, the attendees voiced concern over the central bank's performance and its pressures on the private sector to return export revenues to the country's economic cycle, ICCIMA reported.

The meeting was attended by the ICCIMA board of directors, the heads of provincial chambers of commerce, as well as some of the private sector's businessmen and entrepreneurs.

According to the participants in this meeting, the continuation of the CBI's current policies will lead to the withdrawal of real economic actors from the country's economic scene.

They claimed that in the current situation, the confrontation between the private sector and the government is not in the interest of



ICCIMA Board Member Keyvan Kashefi (2nd L), ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei (C), and TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (2nd R)

the economy, and the government should not blame the shortage of foreign currency on the private sector.

Speaking in the meeting, the ICCIMA

Board Member Keyvan Kashefi noted that the CBI's list [containing information on the amount of revenues not returned to the country] is not clear.

"Despite the requests of ICCIMA head and also the head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), the Central Bank did not provide us with additional and detailed information," Kashefi said.

Referring to the CBI's policy package on the return of export revenues in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), Kashefi said: "despite the fact that the policy package of the Central Bank has recently been approved by the Article 2 Committee, it has obliged exporters to return 80 percent of their export income in the form of foreign currency remittances and 20 percent in the form of banknotes as of the beginning of this year, which is not practical."

The elimination of the export versus import procedure was another criticism expressed by the ICCIMA board member regarding this package.

Further in the meeting, ICCIMA Deputy Head Masoud Khansari also criticized the CBI's list and called for transparency in the list in terms of person, company and the amount of currency which is not returned.



# Major petchem plant to be constructed in northern Iran

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Managing Director of National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said on Sunday that a petrochemical plant with a capacity for producing 120,000 tons of propylene is going to be constructed in the northern Amir-Abad Port, IRNA reported.

Behzad Mohammadi made the remarks during a visit to the location in which the complex is going to be constructed.

Underlining the significance of propylene production for the country's petrochemical industry, Mohammadi said: "Increasing the production of propylene is very important for us in petrochemical industry; currently the production of propylene in the country stands at over 900,000 tons per year and we are trying to increase this amount to three million tons per year."

"With a production capacity of 120,000 tons per year, this petrochemical complex that is going to be established in Amirabad Port is aimed at increasing the country's propylene production capacity," he stressed.

According to the official, the preliminary researches for determining the location of the complex have been carried out and this project will be constructed to help the development of downstream industries.



opment of downstream industries.

The proposal for the establishment of a petrochemical complex in Amir-Abad Port was presented to the Oil Ministry in the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018) and it was decided that the

plant would be constructed in Miankaleh wetlands provided that the Department of Environment agrees.

Iran has been facing a shortage of propylene for years.

Currently, with the production of about

900,000 tons of propylene by Iranian refineries and petrochemical plants, there is a shortage of 175,000 tons of this product in the country, Shana has reported.

In the calendar year of 1404, the amount of propylene production will reach 1.95 million tons, while Iran will be facing an annual shortage of about 700,000 tons of the item.

To tackle this projected shortage, the first step is to launch projects with methanol and propylene output.

For the production of at least 3.5 million tons of propylene in Iran, two propylene lines have been considered; First, the southern line to the center, from Assaluyeh to Marvdasht, which will be developed by the National Petrochemical Company.

The methanol surplus in Assaluyeh will be used to produce propylene to be injected into the 430-km pipeline to Marvdasht to be stored in a storage hub.

Secondly, the Alborz pipeline, where propylene will be produced from natural gas in Amirabad and transferred from Amirabad-Neka to Damghan, to be distributed later in the provinces of North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, Semnan, and surrounding areas.

## NIOC to ink 12 major research-based deals with universities

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is going to ink 12 major research-based deals with five of the country's universities in near future, Shana reported, quoting the NIOC head as saying.

Masoud Karbasian made the remarks in the signing ceremony of the South Azadegan oil field's development project deal, which was signed between two domestic firms on Monday.

The official mentioned the positive results of Tehran University's technical studies on Azadegan oil field and said: "With the signing of these new deals, it can be claimed that there is no major hydrocarbon field in the country, the development of which is not pursued in collaboration with prestigious universities and scientific centers."

Referring to the NIOC's previous technological study contracts for nine oil fields with eight universities and research centers, the official put the value of these contracts at about 29.2 trillion

rials (about \$695.2 million), plus 19 million Euros.

Back in August 2019, NIOC signed major agreements with universities and knowledge-based companies to research a variety of oil-related areas including geophysics, geochemistry, unconventional hydrocarbon resources as well as drilling.

Later in November that year, Saeid Mohammadzadeh, deputy oil minister for engineering, research, and technology affairs had said that the ministry signed 26 deals with the country's universities to conduct research projects in various areas of the oil ministry.

Speaking on the sidelines of a signing ceremony for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Oil Ministry and Iranian Mining Engineering Organization (IMEO), Saeid Mohammadzadeh said five of the mentioned deals were in the field of exploration.

Since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, Iran has been encouraging domestic companies' presence in its oil and gas projects, in all sectors including



research, exploration, and development sectors, and cooperation with knowledge

centers has also been pursued as a major strategy.

## Can Saudi Arabia extend the OPEC deal until 2022?

By Cyril Widdershoven

Oil market bulls are in for a surprise if we believe the latest statements from OPEC+ leaders Saudi Arabia and Russia.

The official views proposed by the OPEC+ JMCC during the last few days were looked at as a positive sign as existing production cuts are being relaxed in August as a result of higher expected demand. The Saudi Minister of Energy and OPEC's main power broker Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman added fuel to the fire by telling Al Arabiya yesterday that he could see a development in which the OPEC+ oil production agreement will be extended to the end of 2021 or even through the beginning of 2022. This news hasn't been digested by the markets yet and shows a possible split in views within OPEC+. The Saudi minister also reiterated that "we still have a long way to go and actions will continue. Therefore, part of the recovery and co-existing with this situation until, God willing, this epidemic is gone, is that we decided to have a monthly meeting with the committee that monitors the market, to make sure of the obligations, and to make recommendations to the OPEC+ conference".

Prince Abdulaziz's statements differ from Russian Energy Minister Novak's view on the market. On Wednesday, Novak said that the expected easing of oil output cuts by the OPEC+ group from August to 7.7 million barrels per day is justifiable and in line with the market trends. Novak made his remarks at the opening of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC) meeting. Russia's views seem to be much more optimistic about the possible demand increase for oil and petroleum products globally.

Saudi Arabia has now made abundantly clear that it doesn't want to be confronted by a possible W-shape economic recovery and a possible 2nd wave of Corona. At least that is the official message. The underlying message could be more diffuse and could cause an internal OPEC+ discussion, in which Saudi Arabia could be threatening to stop making the lion share of the oil



production cuts. Saudi Arabia's grand oil strategy is facing critique at home as export revenues continue to decline. Official data provided by Riyadh and the Joint Organizations Data Initiative (JODI) show that the Kingdom's total oil exports, including crude and oil products, fell to 7.48 million barrels per day (bpd) in May from 11.34 million bpd in April. Exports in June and July could end up being even lower, and the same will apply to Russian oil production. The political and economic agendas, however, are now openly going into a different direction, judging Minister Novak and Prince Abdulaziz's statements.

Oil fundamentals are far from 'normal', even if OPEC+ members are stating something else in the media. OPEC's monthly JMCC meeting outcome is a clear sign of a growing desire of Russia and some other OPEC members to relax the current oil production cut agreement. The current power struggle is masqueraded in media-friendly statements, but there is a clear and present danger that Moscow and Riyadh could be heading to a new collision. At present, there's no direct risk of a breakup, but Riyadh is fed up with taking the full brunt of the output cuts, while struggling to keep its economy afloat and the social contract in place.

International media have shown a lack of critical analysis of the underlying critical developments inside of OPEC+. The current relaxation of output cuts is a full-scale sign of a belief in a global economic recovery in the coming months. This belief leans on somewhat shaky fundamentals as a second wave of COVID-19 is already showing its ugly face in several places. Still, OPEC, Russia and its allies, have officially decided to change its reasonably successful strategy by August 1. Until now, oil production was cut by 9.6 million bpd, while the new target for August is 7.7 million bpd.

In order not to risk another internal crisis or outright oil price and market share war between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Putin, a compromise, based on shaky fundamentals, is being presented. Oil demand fundamentals remain rather weak, to say the least. The global economic recovery narrative is currently being used to support the relaxation of output cuts.

Currently, oil markets are expected to be in deficit, resulting in a draw of crude oil in storage. In 2021, OPEC looks to further increase its overall production by another 6 million bpd. The need for higher revenues are the driver, not market stabilization. Optimism about a V-shaped

recovery, bullish news from China and the removal of major lockdowns in Europe have been feeding the bullish sentiment within the OPEC+ group. The real economic recovery, however, remains fragile. Even in its own report, OPEC stated that it fears oil markets are still unbalanced, especially if a second wave of COVID-19 undermines the economic recovery.

OPEC's decision to ease output cuts or increase production is a unilateral decision. The real problem is that once one OPEC member raises production, others will likely follow suit. Then there's the risk of a U.S. shale comeback. Current oil prices are high enough to bring back the production that was shut-in during the oil crash. Further production increases by OPEC+ will result in a growing glut, as other oil-producing nations will not feel obliged to keep cuts in place and will instead feel the need to save market share.

Again, OPEC+'s success seems to be blinding advisors. The very fragile balance at present between supply and demand could easily turn into a glut. After months of oil storage crisis headlines, rational reasoning now seems to be pushed overboard. Global inventories are still brimming and need to be drawn down to further stabilize the market.

The threat of a W-shape or even Triple-V recovery is clear. OECD markets are boosted by quantitative easing measures and markets are being artificially propped up by trillions euros and dollars of federal funds. The negative signs of the real economic impact of COVID in Europe are beginning to show as bankruptcies are increasing and unemployment levels continue to rise. The iceberg that the OPEC+ Titanic fails to see is that China's growth depends on its exports to OECD markets.

The current OPEC+ approach is not sustainable, there is no room for flexibility, and as long as oil inventories remain elevated and demand remains lackluster, markets will not see a full recovery. Moscow and Riyadh must find a long-term solution if they want to see a real recovery in oil markets. If this doesn't happen, a possible break-up between Saudi Arabia and Russia looms.

## China's hunger for crude is waning

By Alex Kimani

As the coronavirus epidemic brought the world's second-largest economy to a near-halt during the early part of the year, Chinese crude importers engaged in a massive buying spree, but now the Chinese bounty appears to be evaporating, and the bulls have been put on high alert by the weakening of a key oil price catalyst. In May, China's crude imports soared to an all-time high, with imports clocking in at 47.97 million tons, or 11.34 million barrels a day, according to Bloomberg.



The furious buying by the world's largest crude importer was a key reason why oil prices were able to stage a quick come back from their historic lows in April.

But after two consecutive months of heightened purchases, Chinese imports of crude oil slowed quite dramatically in the month of June, with traders from Houston to Geneva to Singapore reporting that the country's appetite for crude had cooled considerably in recent weeks. Customs data from 27 producer countries shows that exporters loaded ~2.55 million barrels a day, or 22 percent, less of crude headed for China during the month of May.

There's a method to the madness though (hint: the second wave of Covid-19 is not to blame).

### ■ Unsustainable pace

The export slump could be taken to mean either of two things: China's oil demand is hitting reverse gear once again, maybe due to the so-called second wave of Covid-19, or the pace of crude buying was unsustainable and is now reverting to the mean.

Luckily for the bulls, the second option appears to be a more valid reason for the unfolding scenario.

China's price-sensitive independent refiners--aka the teapots--took advantage of the oil price crash in April to stock up on cheap crude and cut their purchases sharply after crude prices rebounded. China imported a record 19.1 million barrels of Russia's Urals for April loading. The journey from Russia's Baltic Sea ports takes about 40-50 days, meaning much of the April-loaded oil would have arrived at Chinese ports in June.

What some traders are latching onto is the hope that China's teapot refineries are still hungry--desperately so--for crude imports, if only to hold on to their government licenses to import at a certain quota.

Further noted by traders is the fact that imports by the Chinese giants--China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), and China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec)--didn't miss a beat.

This in turn means that imports are likely to remain lackluster in July and July and probably recover in September. This optimism, however, fails to account for the fact that the teapots make up over one-fifth of Chinese crude processing capacity.

But there's another problem on the horizon for teapots in particular, if not for global traders: China is gearing up to build a mega refinery (400,000 barrel-per-day) in Shandong. That refinery is slated to come online in 2024, and it would render a lot of teapots irrelevant.

Regarding demand being wrecked by the pandemic, China has been successful at dealing with its second Covid-19 wave, quickly bringing the situation under control in a matter of weeks and has remained relatively stable for at least a month now.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the giant North American markets.

### ■ Global demand still recovering

You can expect to see more of this kind of trader-driven ebb and flow from the Chinese market in the future.

Despite a slump in demand by a key customer, the price of Urals has held up pretty well. Russia's flagship brand as well as Saudi and OPEC crude have been enjoying much better pricing power as we explained here thanks to the deep production cuts.

Overall, global oil prices appear to have consolidated \$40/barrel and are likely to remain range-bound until another big catalyst emerges.

In the meantime, it's worth keeping an eye on China's yuan-denominated crude-oil futures, launched in March 2018, because global interest is gathering--even if slowly. Challenges remain to this becoming a global benchmark, but it's clearly headed in that direction.

Global interest has increased because of fairly stable Chinese oil prices this year thanks to price controls that allowed it to slide through the oil price war that saw prices go negative for WTI in April, according to the Wall Street Journal.

In 2018, there were only 45 international brokers offering up Chinese yuan-denominated oil futures. Now, there are 60, says WSJ, and they include JPMorgan and Goldman Sachs.

Further, for the first time, it's profitable for traders to deliver this contract. Industry sources told Reuters on Tuesday that BP has now officially become the first major global firms to deliver oil to the Shanghai contract in July. BP reportedly delivered 3 million barrels of Iraqi oil to the contract, and is set to deliver another million barrels next month.



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# It is Iran that is genuinely fighting terrorism: Richard Falk

“I believe Ayatollah Khamenei wants the youth of the West.... to create the basis for inter-civilizational understanding.”

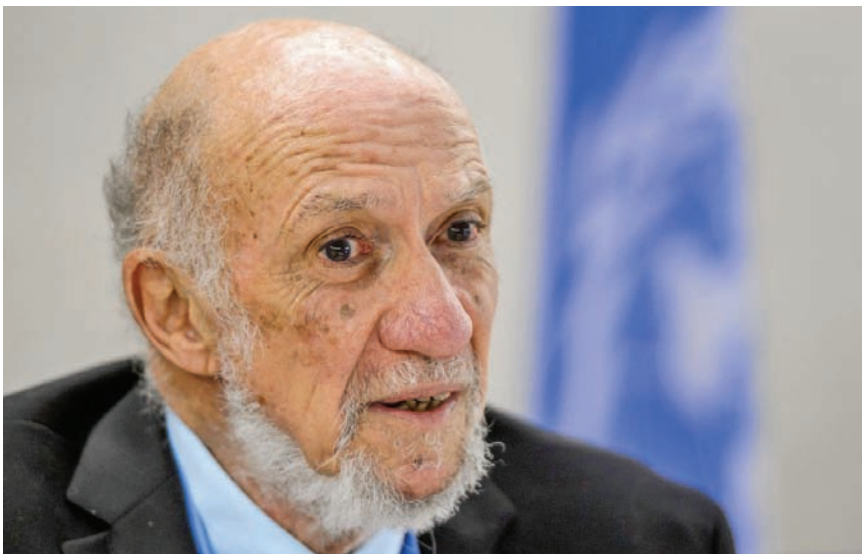
➡ and posed a threat of further anti-Western political developments, especially in Arab countries, but elsewhere as well. Thirdly, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the U.S. needed to find a new enemy to justify its outsized military budget if there was no longer a Soviet adversary. Fourthly, the Western dependence on the oil reserves of the region created strong strategic interests in finding ways to maintain hegemony in the post-colonial era. Fifthly, the resistance efforts of Palestinians and later emergence of extremist groups in Islamic countries culminated in the 9/11 attacks in 2001 on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and produced an orchestrated propaganda backlash that attributed terrorism to Islam rather than to extremism and the effects of prior Western interventions. The so-called ‘war on terror’ was carried on exclusively within Islamic countries, including Iraq after the attack and occupation of 2003 actually gave rise to ISIS. In other words, there are direct links between Western intervention, alliances with indigenous terrorist groups, and political extremism in some Muslim countries, which can change their agenda to function as national resistance against Western intervention as was the case in Iraq.

■ In his second letter to the youth in the West on Nov. 29, 2015, that also followed terrorist attacks in France, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “You (the youth in Western countries) are the ones that have to uncover the apparent layers of your own society and untie and disentangle the knots and resentments”. Ayatollah Khamenei made such a suggestion in reference to the youth who have been born in Europe but have become

**“The whole alignment of the West in the Middle East is based on geopolitical opportunism and is unrelated to humane or anti-terrorist principles.”**

dangerously radicalized and joined groups such as Daesh due to inequality, prejudice, discrimination, etc. How do you analyze this point?

A: It would seem that this second letter was written several months later to reinforce the message of the earlier letter to the effect that it was up to the youth in the West to address the twin challenges of terrorism and Islamophobia, and to grasp the deep roots of terrorism in the behavior of Western governments accused of ‘state terrorism.’ Ayatollah Khamenei is also



**“The U.S. imposed an occupation regime (on Iraq) after its attack in 2003 that gave birth to Daesh”**

asking youth to look into the layers of history in their Western countries, including the legacies of colonialism and slavery, to uncover the intensity of alienation that drives Islamic youth born in Europe to have become ‘dangerously radicalized’ to such an extent as to seek solutions via extremist violence of the sort practices by groups such as Daesh. In effect, it is domestic injustices in their own societies that prompts this sense of desperation by victimized outsiders who make their homes in these Western settings without being accepted by the majority national population. The experience of such alienated non-indigenous youth that makes terrorism appear to be the only way for them to fight back. I read the letter as suggesting that there are better ways to address these issues by removing the persistence of injustice and discrimination, and this require help of the mainstream youth of these European societies to arise against the practices, policies, and belief of their own parents who are presiding over the governance of these European societies.

In effect, Ayatollah Khamenei is implying that it is the alienated Islamic youth in these countries that are drawn to terrorist solutions

and, if the facts are examined, we in the West would understand that it is the genuinely Islamic government of Iran that fights against terrorism whether Islamically oriented, as with Daesh and Taliban, or state terrorism as with Israel or the United States. From this perspective, Iran is the victim of terrorism, not as Western propaganda alleges, the sponsor and perpetrator of terrorism.

■ In the November 2015 letter, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also said, “Today, there are very few people who are uninformed about the role of the United States of America in creating, nurturing and arming al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their inauspicious successors.” Please give your comments on this.

A: This is, of course, a controversial assertion, yet sadly it contains elements of illuminating truths. There is no doubt that in the course of mobilizing opposition to Soviet influence and intervention in Afghanistan the U.S. lent decisive material support to groups that later were organized under the banners of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. As well, later in Iraq the U.S. imposed an occupation regime after its attack in 2003 that gave birth to Daesh. In other words, the U.S. has a serious responsibility for supporting

**“Legitimation in the West of Israel was accompanied by the demonization of Arabs as a race, Palestinians as a nation, and Islam as a religion.”**

the rise of the very Islamic extremist groups that it alleges are guilty of becoming terrorist actors because of their jihadist orientations. The reality is that Iran, despite its avowed Islamic structure of governance, has acted consistently in opposition to such terrorist organization regardless of their claim of representing Islam as a religion. In effect, Ayatollah Khamenei is calling upon the Western youth not only to grasp the true nature of Islamic religious faith but also to be aware that terrorism comes in many shapes and derives from governments as well as extremist groups, indicting specifically the U.S. Government.

U.S. hostility toward Islam arose for political reasons, especially its unconditional support for Israel in its conflict with the Palestinian people and in relation to Iran after the revolutionary movement in 1978-79 that overthrew the pro-Western government of the Shah. To this day the West has no problem having special relationships with Saudi Arabia despite its endorsement and practice of terrorist tactics. The whole alignment of the West in the Middle East is based on geopolitical opportunism and is unrelated to humane or anti-terrorist principles. I believe Ayatollah Khamenei wants the youth of the West to understand this and act upon it to create the basis for inter-civilizational understanding. A better future depends on looking inward at the legacies of abuse in relation to non-Western peoples and outward at the present manifestation of such deformed behavior. On the basis, then, of seeking rectification of past abuses a brighter future is possible. In this regard, the current youth-led protests in the

**“To this day the West has no problem having special relationships with Saudi Arabia despite its endorsement and practice of terrorist tactics.”**

United States and the West seem responsive to this challenge, and the positive connection being drawn at protest events between Black Lives Matter and the Palestinian struggle is a clear recognition of solidarity against racism in all its forms, whether internal and historical or external and contemporary. And it is the refusal to acknowledge such connections that informs us that if we want to end injustice we need to do more than replace one old leader by another, but find leadership that is ready to change the system.

## U.S., Saudi Arabia doing utmost to “split Iraq away from Iran”: analyst

The United States and Saudi Arabia are doing their utmost to drive a wedge between Iraq and Iran, turning the former into an “American vassal state,” according to a former U.S. diplomat in the Arab kingdom.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi plans to travel to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. next week with the declared aim of discussing cooperation in various fields.

This will be Al-Kazemi’s first foreign tour since becoming prime minister on May 7, after the Iraqi parliament approved a new government following nearly six months of political wrangling and protests demanding economic reforms.

“In my view, the new Iraqi prime minister’s trip to meet with Iranian officials and then to go to Saudi Arabia and then later on to the United States on the surface looks good. It looks like good diplomacy. But on the other hand, I don’t think you can read too much into this beyond the fact that the United States and Saudi Arabia are doing their best to split Iraq away from Iran,” Michael Springmann, a Washington-based author and former U.S. diplomat in Saudi Arabia told Press T.V.

“I think the whole operation is designed to weaken Iraq, to turn Iraq into more of an American vassal state than it’s been in the past, at least in the last few months, there’s been evidence of Iraq being sick and tired of being occupied by the American armed forces and wanting to maintain the sovereignty of their country... So, I think the whole thing is going to be counterproductive and will not produce any effects whatsoever if it comes to that,” he underlined.

■ **Al-Kazemi after ‘balance’ in ties**

Kevin Barrett, an author, journalist, and radio host with a Ph.D.



in Islamic and Arabic Studies, also said that the Iraqi premier intended to create a “balance” in political and economic relations between Baghdad, Washington, and Riyadh.

“I assume that what he’s trying to do is to achieve a kind of balance and try to get the Americans and the Saudis to back off a bit from their bad behavior, and in return, giving them a little bit of an entry in economic projects and so on like that. At least that’s what he’s trying to do with the Saudis, but whether that will work is an open question,” Barrett said.

“In the U.S. case, they’re trying to maintain the hold of this completely illegal occupation that was created not to stabilize Iraq, but rather to destabilize Iraq to take down the achievements of the very dubious dictator Saddam Hussein who at least had largely eliminated corruption except for within his own family, and he had succeeded in building a modern infrastructure for

Iraq,” he added.

Washington and Riyadh have long been the main beneficiaries of mayhem in Iraq, where they have sought to bolster remnants of Daesh alongside other terrorist outfits.

Unrest and insecurity serve the U.S. goal to extend and justify its protracted military stay in Iraq, which is staunchly opposed by the Iraqi people. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia sees Takfiri groups as its best hope to wield influence in Iraq and prevent the empowerment of real stakeholders in the country.

Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill on January 5, demanding the withdrawal of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the country.

The vote followed the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, along with the deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, and their companions in a U.S. airstrike authorized by President Donald Trump near Baghdad International Airport two days earlier.

Later on, January 9, former Iraqi prime minister, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, called on the United States to dispatch a delegation to Baghdad tasked with formulating a withdrawal plan.

Iraqi resistance groups have vowed to take up arms against U.S. forces if Washington fails to comply with the parliamentary order calling for U.S. troops’ expulsion.

The U.S. has so far refused to withdraw its troops, with Trump threatening to seize Iraq’s oil money held in bank accounts in the United States.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iraq seeks to revive its regional role through Iran

BY Mohammad Mazhari

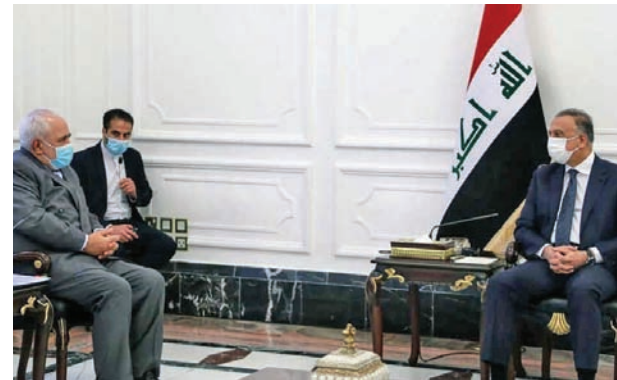
Iran is awaiting the first visit by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to Tehran on Tuesday, a trip described as extremely important by analysts. The visit is expected to lead to positive results for the two countries.

Al-Kadhimi is making his first foreign trip in the light of Iraq’s economic crisis and the spread of the Coronavirus.

“Al-Kadhimi’s visit is extremely important and would reflect positively on the level of political and commercial relations between Tehran and Baghdad,” Hussein Al-Dirani, an Iraqi political analyst, tells the Tehran Times.

Reportedly, al-Kadhimi also plans to visit the United States in July or August for the second round of the Strategic Dialogue between Baghdad and Washington.

Before becoming prime minister and heading the Iraqi intelligence service, he was suggested as a mediator between Tehran and Washington. Due to his record, Iran and the U.S. may be interested in using al-Kadhimi’s strong relationship with both sides to reduce tensions.



On the other hand, al-Kadhimi is not reluctant to portray himself as a mediator and is interested in playing a role.

About a week ago, Iran’s central bank governor Abdul Nasser Hemmati met Kadhimi in Baghdad. During the meeting, the prime minister announced that Iraq would back Iran in difficult circumstances, stressing the necessity of resuming trade exchange between the two sides.

The trade exchange between the two neighboring countries has decreased significantly due to the spread of the coronavirus. It has led to economic and financial losses for Iraq amid the sharp fall in oil prices.

The prime minister is also going to visit Saudi Arabia, which has very important messages and results.

The prime minister is trying to present Iraq as an influential country due to its relations with the Sunni Arab countries as well as its and religious affinities with Iran, which can pave the way to reduce regional tensions.

**However, Iraqi people never forget how Iran rushed to the help of its neighboring country in the most difficult security, economic, and political situations, regardless of their religious background.**

Iraq’s foreign policy is based on two different identity factors. The first is a religious factor in view of the fact that a majority of Iraqis are Shia Muslims. Iraqi Shias mostly have a sympathetic view toward the Islamic Republic and always consider Iran as a great supporter of themselves. The historical experience of relations between the two nations also proves this.

The second factor is rooted in Iraq’s Arabic identity and its historical and geopolitical role in the Arab world. Some Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, are trying to use this factor as a trump card to strengthen Iraq’s influence and diminish Iran’s presence in the region.

However, Iraqi people never forget how Iran rushed to the help of its neighboring country in the most difficult security, economic, and political situations, regardless of their religious background.

In fact, Iran has contributed to Iraq’s stability and paid a heavy price for establishing security in Iraq during the last six years.

Whenever insecurity in the region spread due to the emergence of ISIS, Iran did its best to support Iraq by arming Kurdish forces and strengthening Hashd Al-Shaabi. However, Saudi Arabia was continuing to train and fund Takfiri groups in order to send them to Syria and Iraq.

That is why the U.S. and Saudi Arabia exercise pressure on the Iraqi government to reduce its relation with Iran, and disband Hashad Al-Shaabi, the strongest popular force that succeeded to defeat ISIS.

Meanwhile, Al-Kadhimi is trying to reduce tensions in Iraq and establish balanced relations with regional and international powers through consolidating economic relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

In this regard, Ali Shariati, a member of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, tells the Tehran Times that Iraq’s economy is based on oil. He says Iraq relies on oil revenues for 95 percent of its income.

“After the oil crisis in the world, Iraq is facing a large budget deficit, and Kadhimi tries to compensate it quickly, because the economic condition has a direct impact on Iraq’s internal affairs, including its relationship with the Kurdistan region,” Shariati says.

He adds, “Al-Kadhimi is ready to work with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and any country that can provide money and facilities for his country to overcome this crisis.”

Nevertheless, the development of Iran-Iraq relations in various fields is another goal of the prime minister’s visit to Tehran, and it requires a roadmap in both countries.

Tehran-Baghdad relations should reach an acceptable level because Iran-Iraq relations go beyond normal international protocols.

Iran shares cultural and religious affinities with as well as 1,400-kilometer border, which play an irreplaceable role in the relations between the two countries.

## Ismail Haniyeh: Unified Palestinian position thwarts Israel’s annexation plan

The Palestinian cause is going through its ‘most dangerous’ phase, says the head of the political bureau of the resistance movement Hamas, urging a unified position to thwart Israel’s much-condemned plan for annexing large parts of the occupied West Bank.

Ismail Haniyeh was at a press conference with Qatari journalists earlier this week, where he highlighted Hamas’s three priorities to deal with the situation on the ground in a bid to foil the annexation scheme, the Palestinian Information Center reported on Monday.

The top Hamas official said the first priority, or “the most important factor,” is to work on rebuilding the national project on sound foundations based on the unchangeable principles of the Palestinian cause.

“If there is a unified Palestinian position, then surely we will be able to thwart this plan, and I can say that we have succeeded so far in building one Palestinian position against the annexation plan and the deal of the century,” Haniyeh noted that this priority could be achieved through renouncing the Oslo Accords, according to which the West Bank was divided into areas under Israeli, Palestinian, and joint controls.

“All Israeli crimes were carried out under the guise of Oslo (Accords), so our people must abandon the entire Oslo process, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) must halt any cooperation with the Israeli occupation and revoke its recognition of Israel.”

The Oslo Accords were signed between the

Israeli regime and the PLO during the early-mid 1990s to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and guarantee the Palestinians’ right to self-determination.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), now led by President Mahmoud Abbas, has limited governance over the occupied West Bank. It was established following the Oslo Accords.

US President Donald Trump gave Tel Aviv the green light to annex large parts of the West Bank and Jordan Valley in his self-proclaimed “deal of the century,” which was unveiled in January with the aim of legitimizing Israel’s occupation and re-drawing the Middle East map.

Although the highly-provocative plan drew global condemnation, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he is determined to

carry on with it.

The top Hamas official said the second priority would be about all the means and mechanisms to confront Israel’s annexation and how to execute them.

Hamas, he added, is ready to sit at a single table with other Palestinian parties and factions to agree on how to carry out the national fight against Israel.

The third priority, Haniyeh said, is about arranging the relationship with the Arab and Islamic world. “It is related to organizing the relationship with our Arab and Islamic roots, and this is an important topic for two reasons: First because the [Palestinian] cause has an Arab and Islamic dimension and the second, such plans have repercussions for the entire region.”



## Over \$4m allocated to tourism projects in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A budget of 180 billion rials (over \$4 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to tourism and development projects across southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, a provincial tourism chief has said.



The budget is planned to be spent on restoring and reviving historical buildings and structures as well as handicrafts and tourism sectors, CHTN quoted Majid Safai as saying on Monday.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is known for its nomads and nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

The province attracted over four million people, mostly domestic travelers, during the Iranian year 1397 (ended March 2019), according to data announced by the provincial tourism department.

## Beyond Iran's tourist attractions: the people and places to visit in Iran

By Pashmina Binwani

(Part 5/8)

In 2017, the Global Energy Award was conferred to Yazd for its advantages in conserving and making optimum use of energy because of its architecture. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site known to have the oldest community in Iran, the Zoroastrians.

### ■ Being part of the Zoroastrian community in Nartitee's 100-year eco-lodge

Arriving in Taft, just 30km from Yazd, I was picked up Ramtin, who took me to a quaint, beautiful mud-house at



the Nartitee Ecolodge, a 100-year house which was built by the generations of Ramtin's grandfather who was set on preserving the religion and culture of Zoroastrianism.

As I walked the narrow lanes of Yazd, the oasis in the middle of the desert in central Iran on our way to Nartitee Ecolodge, the people and culture revealed the traditional and ancient life of pedestrians during the silk route era. I walked and walked with Ramtin and it felt like it was 770 CE. There was a 69-step walk-down to an ancient well, an old bazaar and a 1,400-year-old Mosque, the old-town was brimming with charm and a vast maze of small roads.

Awed by the endless passages, I finally reached Nartitee's Ecolodge, and the beautiful interiors and cooling mud-walls were a treat. These cool houses back in those days used to be damp, which made it easier to climb and watch matches.

He gave me the Maidyozarem room which means "Rich Spring" and was located in the middle-yard, known to hold a feast, a Gamhambat feast during the ancient Persian times. Certainly, there was no feast in my room, as I was presented with a charming bed, printed sheets, and a rickety vintage sewing machine as its iconic showpiece in the room.

The next few days went by in a breeze, I was taken in, fed an Iranian Zoroastrian feast with dried fruits, a cheese platter, Barbadi (Iranian bread) and fruits.

In the blistering afternoon sun, I was met with surprising escapades and chatter from the locals in the surrounding Taft region with fond memories of being driven around in a motorbike at breakneck speed in the blistering afternoon heat, helmetless to explore the ruins of Yazd, Iran.

6 people on a bike in Iran's countryside is a common sight. With 4 of us, it's a waste of space! When a bright-eyed, young family man gave us a lift after paying a visit to the dentist to get his wisdom tooth extracted, we were not sure if we were signing up for danger but what we thought was a quick drop off to the city, turned out to be the best afternoon spent with him and his family.

### ■ The twisting alleys of Abyaneh

It is a visual treat to come across an ancient village like this in Iran, called Abyaneh. Characterized by a peculiar reddish hue, the village is one of the oldest in Iran, attracting numerous native and foreign tourists year-round, especially during traditional feasts and ceremonies.

Due to its dwindling population, only about 300 families live here as many of them had moved to cities due to better opportunities. But walking around here is quite a sight, you'll notice [holy] Quranic verses on their doors, narrow alleys, the elderly selling their local jewelry, and most of them donning floral hijabs and pleated skirts.

# Iran prepares strategic plan for tourism development

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The administration of President Hassan Rouhani has prepared a strategic plan for the development of tourism sector in the country through coordinated policy-making by executive bodies, academics, and the private sector.

The plan focuses on the effective elements of the tourism sector such as management, business environment, infrastructure, manpower, culture, advertising, and issues related to foreign nationals, ISNA reported.

Defining main policies in the field of tourism, creating the ground for developing a national tourism development plan, implementing goals most dynamically and efficiently possible, more competitive environment, as well as empowering local tourism, natural and cultural tourism are among the other objectives of the strategic plan, the report added.

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus has plunged the travel and tourism industry



People cross Tabiat Bridge constructed over Modares Highway in Tehran.

and economy in the global scene over that past couple of months as passenger traffic on airlines and hotel occupancy rates have fallen off a cliff compared to the same periods previous years. However, some experts expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

## Ancient objects found at Iran's mine to go on display in Germany

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of ancient relics discovered from Iran's Chehrabad Salt Mine is scheduled to be held in Germany in autumn.

Organized by Ruhr-Universiat Bochum in collaboration with Iran's Research Center for Conservation of Cultural Relics and Zanjan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, the exhibit will display 200 objects and tools discovered in the ancient mine in Zanjan province, CHTN quoted Zanjan's tourism chief Amir Arjmand as saying on Monday.

The research institute for the protection and restoration of historical relics from the Ruhr-Universiat Bochum and the Archaeological Museum Frankfurt are collaborating with a team of Iranian experts on a project for purifying, cleansing, and restoring garments and personal belongings of ancient salt mummies which were first found the salt mine in 1993, and the objects are in Germany since last year, the official added.

Salt mummies are the highlights of the findings in the mine. In 1993, miners in the Douzlakh Salt Mine, near Hamzehli and Chehrabad villages in Zanjan Province, accidentally came across a mummified head, dated to 300 CE. The head was very well preserved, to the extent that his pierced ear was still holding the gold earring. The hair, beard, and the mustaches were reddish, and his impressive leather boot still contained parts of his leg and foot, according to the Ancient History Encyclopedia.

However, in 2004, the miners discovered yet another "saltman", which was followed by further excavation unearthing



remains of a human body along with a large number of artifacts made of wood, metal tools, clothing, and pottery.

In 2005, a systematic excavation began, three more mummies were excavated, and a sixth remained in situ, due to lack of funds for its storage. The context of the remains suggested that a collapse in the mine had caused the death of the miners in question.

The first mummy, dubbed the "Saltman", is on display in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran. He still looks very impressive.

## “Hand of Achaemenid soldier” attached to bas-relief in Persepolis



**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Achaemenid-era (c. 550 - 330 BC) bas-relief carving, depicting a soldier grabbing a spear, has recently been attached to the rock-carved art after decades in the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, southern Iran.

"By providing the possibility of better protection of this bas-relief through the design and installation of a glass protector, it became possible to re-install the separated piece of stone [hand-shaped portion] in its original place," CHTN quoted Hamid Fadaei, director of the World Heritage site, as saying on Monday.

"The bas-relief of this Achaemenid spearman, which is attached on the wall of the Queen's Palace, now one of the entrances to the Persepolis Museum, had been separated from its place since the 1960s and was kept in the treasury of the Persepolis Museum for years," Fadaei explained.

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

The royal city of Persepolis ranks among the archaeological sites which have no equivalent, considering its unique architecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art. The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall ("Hundred-Column Hall").

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

## Over 100 historical monuments restored in Yazd



**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Over 100 historical buildings and structures have been restored across the central province of Yazd since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20), though the coronavirus outbreak has brought the country's tourism to a standstill.

A budget of over 30 billion rials (about \$700,000) has been allocated to the restoration projects, provincial tourism chief Ali-Asghar Samadiani said on Monday, CHTN reported.

Bagh-e Gandom Bathhouse, Aqa Mosque, Navvab Vakil, Salehi, Maryam Khanum mansions, Shahrash Fort, and Fahraj Jame Mosque are among the restored monuments, the official added.

Yazd is one of the top tourist destinations in Iran as it embraces several ancient and historical monuments.

Over 150 archaeological and historical sites were identified across the province through excavations and surveys conducted by Yazd

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department during last Iranian year.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. It is teemed with mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

The city is known today with its traditional districts, the qanat system, traditional houses, bazaars, hammams, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and the historic garden of Dolat-Abad. The city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

## Book on earthquake resistance of historical structures hits stores

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A book containing 13 scientific papers on earthquake resistance of historical structures has recently been published, introducing ways to maximize the protection of potentially vulnerable structures.

Compiled by Iranian researcher Alireza Anisi, the book has brought together a selection of essays presented during the first International Symposium on Seismic Rehabilitation of Heritage Structures, which was held at the University of Tehran in January 2017, CHTN reported.

"Earthquake in Minds"; "Gonbad [Dome of] Soltanieh Structural Pathology and 3D Analysis"; "Seismic Improvement of Law Faculty of the University of Tehran"; "Overview of

Recognition and Restoration of Damage to Qazvin Kharqan Towers in the 2002 Earthquake"; "Methods of Enhancing Seismic Safety in e Traditional Architecture of Tabriz"; and "The Empowerment of Historical Buildings: Introduction of A Smart Experimental Method of the Achaemenid Period" are amongst essays published in the Persian section of the book.

Articles in the English section include: "A Masterpiece of Early Muslim Architecture; Haji Piyada Mosque [in Balkh, Afghanistan]"; "Seismic Study of Brick Tower No. 32, of Bam Citadel, Iran"; and "he Seismic and Wind Performance of A Five-Story Temple of Wooden Heritage Buildings Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011".



The symposium revolved around properly employing seismic retrofits modifications that enable existing structures to be more resistant to ground motion and soil failure caused by earthquakes as Iran is one of the most seismically active countries in the world.



# Parishan Wetland: West Asia's largest freshwater at drought tipping point

By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** —Parishan Wetland, the largest freshwater lake in Iran and West Asia, dried up in recent years and is struggling to death due to excessive groundwater withdrawal.

Parishan is located in Kazerun County, Fars Province, and receives only a very small amount of water from Feeder Rivers and the whole lake or wetland is a protected area, as it is considered a globally significant wetland ecosystem.

Wetlands play a significant role in the natural cycle and, as one of the most important natural habitats on earth are of great importance in sustaining wildlife, providing fresh water, and maintaining biological balance, so their extinction has devastating effects on nature.

Moreover, attracting tourists, mass migration of migratory birds from around the world, reproduction of fish and other aquatic species, and creating a suitable environment for the life of special plants in that area are among other beneficiaries of these ecosystems.

Ezatollah Raeisi Ardakani, professor at Shiraz University and Iran's father of groundwater hydrology told IRNA on Monday that wetlands evaporate water, water evaporation lowers the temperature and creates humidity, the lake's humidity satisfies the water needs of the plants around the lake, whether pasture, agriculture or forest.

He went on to explain that migratory birds that come around the lake spread their feces around the lake, forest, and agricultural lands and as manure fertilize the surrounding lands.

In addition to Parishan, Fars province has two other freshwater lakes called Kaftar and Arzhan. But the most important wetland in the province is Parishan, which is recognized in the Ramsar Convention as an international wetland of importance that must be protected, but in recent years, the wetland has faced severe crises.

■ **Water withdrawal way above rainfall rate**

In the past, the amount of water harvested from the lake was proportional to the amount of rainfall, Raeisi lamented.

For example, in 1981, two million cubic meters of water was harvested from the lake,



which was proportional to the rainfall of that time, but in recent years water withdrawal from this wetland is not consistent with current rainfall, he added.

And more than 28 million cubic meters of water is extracted, which, along with several cultivations, has been very effective in emptying groundwater aquifers, he further regretted.

In salt lakes, the water becomes saltier with a little more water withdrawal, so water is harvested to a certain amount, while in freshwater lakes there is no such restriction, and people deepen the wells to have more water and this causes the lake water to dry out, he explained.

"Currently, the groundwater level of the lake is about 5 meters below sea level, which if the water withdrawal continues in the same way, the water can drop by 10 or 15 meters," he emphasized.

■ **Strengthening groundwater aquifer**

Nothing is more effective than the level of the groundwater aquifer in the lake's revival, he stated, adding, even if the rainfall increases, the problem will not be solved until the groundwater aquifer is improved, and there is no other way but to reduce the harvest.

Raeisi added that measures such as shutting down illegal wells, placing meters on permitted wells, and setting a certain amount of quota for permitted wells could be a solution.

"The Ministry of Energy intends to transfer 10 million cubic meters of water from Nargesi Dam to the lake, but given that the lake has a capacity of 70 to 80 million cubic meters, probably cannot solve the problem," he noted.

■ **Over-harvesting by drilling wells**

There are about 300 illegal wells and 650 permitted ones around the lake that draw water without any restrictions or limitations, Hamid Zahrabi head of the provincial department of environment said.

The gas power plant, which is located near the lake, has 2 wells, which draw 1,200 cubic meters of water in every 24 hours in winter and 1,700 to 2,000 cubic meters in summer, he noted, stating, obviously, every year 500 to 600 thousand cubic meters of water is significant and will have dire consequences.

■ **Plant and animal species**

Zahrabi also noted that after the lake has dried up, the submerged aquatic vegetation has disappeared, but reeds have grown more in the wetland, especially in late winter and spring.

Fish, benthos, and phytoplankton have also been completely extinct and have not been seen since the early 1390s (falling on 2011-2021), he lamented, adding, migratory birds are no longer seen in the lake, but animals such as monkeys and foxes and some native birds are found in the area.

Due to the uncontrolled harvesting of agricultural lands, in recent years it has increased from one crop to several; in addition to the groundwater resources declined sharply, he regretted.

Parishan wetland management plan and other plans to rehabilitate the wetland have been prepared, but some responsible bodies have not taken this issue seriously, he added.

Programs such as dredging the lake bed and waterways entering the lake, conducting watershed management operations to prevent sediment from entering the lake, educational programs and training courses for public awareness, implementing a sustainable agricultural pilot project in Qaleh Narenji village, preventing land-use change around the lake are among the plans that have been carried out in this regard, he concluded.

■ **Why wetlands should be protected?**

Wetlands, as the most important natural ecosystem, are one of the most vital, fertile, complex, and sensitive habitats on earth, which are of special importance and their preservation and protection is a basic goal.

Wetlands are of great economic, social, and ecological importance. Local communities are also dependent on the functions of the wetland in terms of livelihood and face problems with decreasing wetland production.

Parishan wetland is also of special importance as the largest freshwater wetland in Iran and West Asia, but in recent years, this wetland has been depleted due to various factors, and many plant and animal species have been degraded.

Human and natural causes of drought in this wetland are both to blame, but poor management is undeniable; actions such as reducing planting periods, preventing new wells, and controlling the amount of water withdrawn by wells can prevent further depletion of groundwater and help revitalize the wetland.

## Eco-friendly disinfectants produced in Iran

1 → **SDC technology**

An eco-friendly disinfectant based on silver dihydrogen citrate (SDC) technology, which, unlike other disinfectants, stabilizes silver ions along with citric acid, has a double effect on antiseptic properties.

This green technology is monopolized by only 3 countries in the world and due to the high global demand for green disinfectants, which has also been approved by EPA and FDA, the country can benefit from the export opportunity, he highlighted.

These products are also based on the latest global health protocols and contain completely non-toxic active ingredients and are classified as green products, he noted, emphasizing, on the other hand, the results of microbiological tests in the reference and trusted laboratories of the Ministry of Health showed that the disinfectants are effective on a wide range of microorganisms.

SDC-based disinfectant kills the coronavirus within two minutes and has a protective effect on the spot for up to 24 hours, he highlighted.

The company's third green product is based on the natural substance lactic acid and is produced in the country for the first time, he noted, adding, the product is designed and prepared for disinfecting fruits and vegetables and does not require rinsing after washing according to international protocols.

While green products are more expensive in the world than similar products, with the domestic production of 3 eco-friendly disinfectants, we are able to offer these products at a price even lower than similar products in the world, he concluded.

Mehdi Kashmiri, director for technology and planning at the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, said in early July that about 450 knowledge-based companies are active in the country for manufacturing protective equipment and treatment products to fight the coronavirus.

"Production of more than one million face masks per day, over 1.5 liters of disinfectants per day, diagnostic kits, non-contact thermometers, protective clothing, ventilator are among the products manufactured by these companies," he stated.

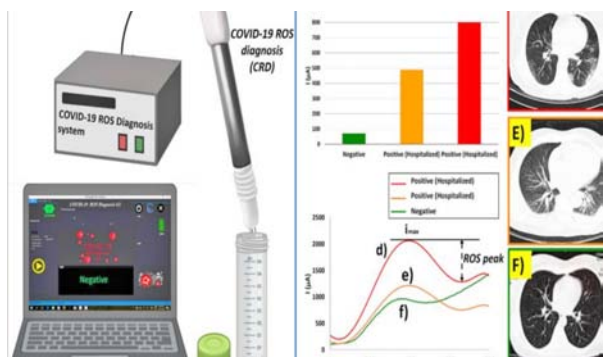
He added that 150 companies are active in the field of hospital equipment production.

Besides, manufacturers have multiplied their production capacity and researchers have achieved the technology to produce three kinds of COVID-19 diagnostic kits that hit the market.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 276,202 on Monday, of whom 14,405 have died and 240,087 recovered so far. Over the past 24 hours, 2,414 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 217 died, Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said.

Currently, 3,583 patients with coronavirus are in critical condition, she added.

## Iranian scientists develop system for real-time diagnosis of COVID-19



1 → In this system, a calibration was performed related to the COVID-19 by testing about 170 normal, suspicious, and virus-infected cases. It showed great promising results in the real-time screening of the people during this pandemic.

Also, special software was designed based on experimental calibration to analyze the data and diagnose whether the responses are related to the positive or negative detection of COVID-19.

This ability of the device provides a free and flexible method for the phlebotomist or physicians to utilize the device in the laboratories or clinics.

It can be used as a power full assistant in the fast screening of the patients who need further medical examination during this pandemic and may be used in the future to reduce the number of cases that must be undergone CT-Scan for COVID-19 diagnosis.

## Trump can't weaken California's climate change carbon market, federal judge rules

California beat President Donald Trump's efforts to water down its signature climate-change initiative, a market-based program that is designed to reduce carbon emissions.

A federal judge in Sacramento on Friday dismissed a lawsuit the Trump administration filed challenging California's cap-and-trade program, which requires hundreds of businesses to purchase carbon credits or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The program, a centerpiece of the 2006 global warming law signed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, has forced businesses to spend billions of dollars on the credits, phys.org reported.

The decision marks the latest chapter in the court battles between the Trump administration and the state over a multitude of issues, including the environment and immigration. The two sides have spent much of the past two years in particular fighting over California's efforts to rein in greenhouse gases.

Friday's decision stems from the White House's lawsuit over California's cap-and-trade initiative—in particular the state's decision in 2014 to link its program with a comparable cap-and-trade market operating in the Canadian province of Quebec. The alliance allows companies in both states to sell carbon credits to each other and, California officials say, broadens the market for credits and strengthens the overall program.

The Trump administration argued that the alliance was the equivalent of California signing a treaty with a foreign government—something disallowed by the U.S. Constitution, which says foreign policy is under the federal government's jurisdiction.

In addition, federal officials said California officials are using the cap-and-trade program to defy the president's wishes on environmental matters, including his decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord in 2017.

"California's Governors have defied this clear constitutional structure," federal officials argued in court papers. "They have positioned the State in open opposition to the foreign policy of the United States on greenhouse gas emissions."

U.S. District Judge William B. Shubb, however, said California hasn't exceeded its legal limits or intruded on Trump's "foreign affairs power."

The federal government has shown no "concrete evidence that the President's power to speak and bargain effectively with other countries has actually been diminished," the judge wrote.

In a tweet, Gov. Gavin Newsom called Shubb's decision a "clear victory in an unwarranted and vindictive lawsuit against California."

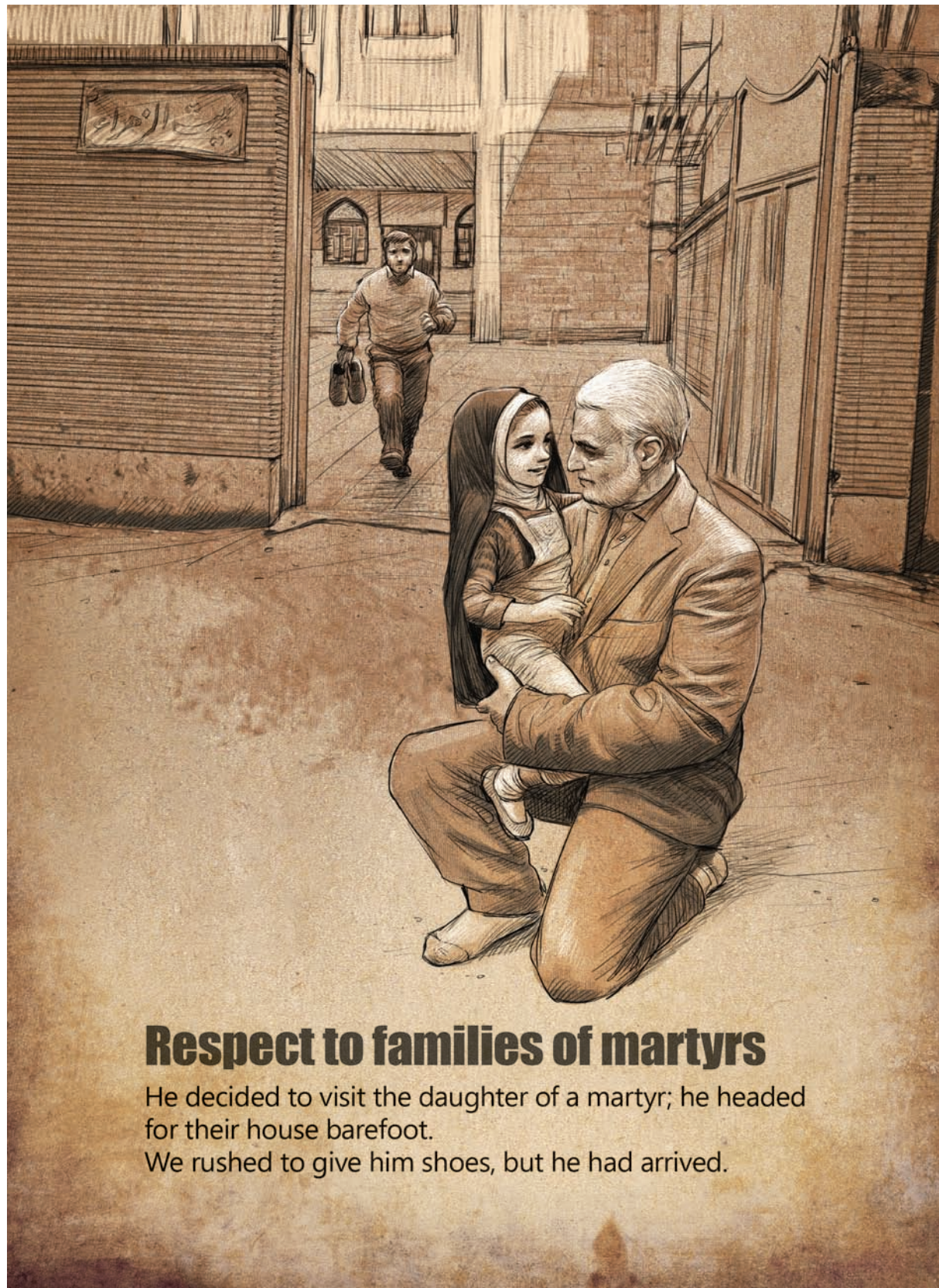
The decision comes as California officials ponder the effectiveness of the cap-and-trade program.

The program revolves largely around a series of carbon-credit auctions held every three months by the California Air Resources Board, the state's air-pollution agency. In the most recent auction, barely one-third of the 57 million carbon credits were sold, the result of the plunge in demand for gasoline as the coronavirus pandemic brought economic activity to a standstill.

Each credit enables the purchaser to emit a ton of carbon pollution. The amount of available credits ratchets down with each auction, effectively forcing businesses to find ways to reduce their carbon footprint or buy extra credits on the open market. This market-based approach is designed to give individual businesses flexibility while reducing the overall volume of carbon emissions.

But with so many credits going unsold in the latest auction, the pressure to reduce emissions has been relaxed, at least for the time being. The Newsom administration is looking at whether other programs can do a better job of keeping the heat on businesses to reduce carbon pollution, the nonprofit news organization Cal Matters has reported.

According to Cal Matters, California Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Jared Blumenfeld has told lawmakers he would work with the Air Resources Board to consider "the extent to which the state's climate strategy should rely on the cap-and-trade program reductions relative to other approaches."



## Respect to families of martyrs

He decided to visit the daughter of a martyr; he headed for their house barefoot.

We rushed to give him shoes, but he had arrived.



## Saudi King Salman, 84, admitted to hospital

Saudi Arabia's 84-year-old ruler, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, has been admitted to hospital in the capital Riyadh, suffering from inflammation of the gall bladder, state news agency SPA said on Monday.

The king, who has ruled the world's largest oil exporter and close U.S. ally since 2015, is undergoing medical checks, the agency added, without giving details.

After the news, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi postponed a visit scheduled to Saudi Arabia, said Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said.

King Salman, the custodian of Islam's holiest sites, spent more than 2-1/2 years as the Saudi crown prince and deputy premier from June 2012 before becoming king. He also served as governor of the Riyadh region for more than 50 years.

The de facto ruler and next in line to the throne is the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, widely referred to as MbS, who has launched reforms to transform the kingdom's economy and end its "addiction" to oil.

The 34-year-old prince, who is popular among many young Saudis, has won praise at home for easing social restrictions in the conservative Muslim kingdom, giving more rights to women and pledging to diversify the economy.

To the king's supporters, this boldness at home and abroad was a welcome change after decades of caution, stagnation and dithering.

But state control of the media and a crackdown on dissent in the kingdom make it difficult to gauge the extent of domestic enthusiasm.

The crown prince's reforms have been accompanied by a purge of top royals and businessmen on charges of corruption, and a costly war in Yemen, which have all unnerved some Western allies and investors.

His prestige also suffered a blow after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 at the hands of Saudi security personnel seen as close to him.

## Sudan force says 160 Libya bound 'mercenaries' arrested

Sudanese forces arrested around 160 people on the border with Libya who were en-route to the war-torn neighboring country to work as "mercenaries," a state-linked paramilitary group said Sunday.

"The joint security forces stationed at the Sudanese-Libyan border arrested 160 people who were going to work as mercenaries to fight in Libya, including two foreigners," Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) said in a statement.

The RSF is led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, a leading member of Sudan's transitional ruling council.

"Sending Sudanese to fight in Libya as mercenaries is unacceptable," said General Jaddo Hamdan, the RSF's commander in North Darfur state.

"We have been monitoring and securing the border with Libya to combat illegal migration, human trafficking and all cross-border criminal enterprises," he added.

Sudan is currently undergoing a fragile democratic transition after massive protests last year prompted the military to topple long-time autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

In January, a United Nations panel of experts said many Arabs from Sudan's conflict-wracked region of Darfur and neighboring Chad were fighting as "individual mercenaries" in Libya.

The panel said they belonged to the same tribes that made up a majority of RSF personnel, but said there was no "credible evidence" that the RSF itself had deployed in Libya.

The UN experts' report also said several Darfuri armed groups operating in Libya "have participated in various clashes and military operations alongside Libyan warring parties."

Sudan's Darfur region itself remains scarred by war after a rebellion in the early 2000s against al-Bashir was brutally suppressed.

Libya has turned into a regional proxy-war in recent years, amid chaos following the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi.

Since 2015, a power struggle has pitted Libya's UN-recognized, Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) against forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, who is based in the east of the country.

## Resistance News

## Haneyya: Three priorities to face dangers threatening our cause

**INTERNATIONAL** **TEHRAN**— Head of Hamas's political bureau Ismail Haneyya has described the developments which the Palestinian cause is going through as "the most dangerous," affirming that his Movement has three priorities to deal with the situation on the ground.

In a recent meeting with Qatari journalists, Haneyya said that the first priority is to work on rearranging the Palestinian house and rebuilding the national project on sound foundations based the constants of the Palestinian cause, calling it "the most important factor."

"If there is a unified Palestinian position, then surely we will be able to thwart this plan (Israel's annexation plan), and I can say that we have succeeded so far in building one Palestinian position against the annexation plan and the deal of the century," the Hamas leader said.

He explained that this priority can be achieved through renouncing Oslo accords. "All Israeli crimes were carried out under the guise of Oslo, so our people must abandon the entire Oslo phase and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) must halt any cooperation with the Israeli occupation and revoke its recognition of Israel."

As for the second priority, Haneyya said that it is about how to confront Israel's annexation plan and about the means of the Palestinian struggle, stressing that his Movement is ready to sit at one table with other parties to agree on how to exercise the national struggle against the occupation.

The third priority, he said, is about arranging the relationship with the Arab and Islamic worlds. "It is related to organizing the relationship with our Arab and Islamic depth, and this is an important topic for two reasons: First because the [Palestinian] cause has an Arab and Islamic dimension and second such plans have repercussions for the entire region."

"We, in Hamas, believe that the strategy of being open to everyone and relying on a strong bloc in the region is successful, so when we talk about the necessity of coordinating with Qatar, Turkey, Jordan, Iran and other countries, we are in this direction," he stated.

He also stressed the importance of working on developing the relationship with Europe and influential parties inside America in order to confront Israel's expansion plans.

# U.S. protests: Troops 'kidnap' protesters into unmarked cars

## → 1 Detaining of protesters

Federal officers have charged at least 13 people with crimes related to the protests so far, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported on Thursday.

Some have been detained by the federal courthouse, which has been the scene of protests. But others were grabbed blocks away.

"This is part of the core media strategy out of Mr Trump's White House: to use federal troops to bolster his sagging polling data," Mr Wheeler said.

"And it is an absolute abuse of federal law enforcement officials."

One video showed two people in helmets and green camouflage with "police" patches grabbing a person on the sidewalk, handcuffing them and taking them into an unmarked vehicle.

"Who are you?" someone asks the pair, who do not respond. At least some of the federal officers belong to the Department of Homeland Security.

Customs and Border Protection said in a statement that its agents had information indicating the person in the video was suspected of assaulting federal agents or destroying federal property.

"Once CBP agents approached the suspect, a large and violent mob moved towards their location. For everyone's safety, CBP agents quickly moved the suspect to a safer location," the agency said.

However, the video shows no mob.

In another case, Mark Pettibone, 29, said a minivan rolled up to him around 2 am Wednesday and four or five people



got out "looking like they were deployed to a Middle Eastern war."

Mr Pettibone said he got to his knees as the group approached.

They dragged him into the van without identifying themselves or responding to his questions and pulled his beanie over his eyes so he couldn't see, he said.

"I figured I was just going to disappear for an indefinite amount of time," Mr Pettibone said.

Mr Pettibone said he was put into a cell and officers dumped the contents of his backpack, with one remarking "Oh, this

is a bunch of nothing."

After he asked for a lawyer, Mr Pettibone was allowed to leave.

## ■ Call for investigation

"Authoritarian governments, not democratic republics, send unmarked authorities after protesters," Democratic U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley said in a tweet.

U.S. Attorney Billy Williams said he has requested the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General to investigate the actions of DHS personnel.

In a letter on Friday, Oregon's two

## UAE launches Arab world's first Mars probe

The UAE has successfully launched a rocket carrying a Mars orbiter from a site in Japan. The probe, which will monitor the atmosphere on the Red Planet, is the Arab world's first interplanetary exploration mission.

The Emirati Hope (Amal) orbiter separated from the Mitsubishi H-IIA rocket and is heading for Mars, which it is scheduled to reach in February. The mission is going according to plan, officials said, as the ground team in Dubai has established communications with the probe and received its first signal transmitted to Earth, RT reported.

The spacecraft is designed to monitor Mars from above the planet using an infrared spectrometer, an ultraviolet



spectrometer and a camera. The orbiter will study the atmosphere condition and record climate change on the Red Planet, among other things.

The launch marks the first interplanetary exploration mission by an Arab country. The historic send-off was due to commence earlier this month, but was delayed several times because of bad weather.

## Erdogan in surprise visit to Hagia Sofia after its reconversion into mosque

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pays a flying visit to Hagia Sofia in Istanbul, the country's most outstanding landmark and a UNESCO World Heritage site, after ordering revocation of the edifice's nearly century-long status as a museum and its reconversion into a mosque.

The visit came on Sunday, with the president inspecting the underway refurbishment work, a week after Turkey's top court green-lighted the process, the president's office reported. The office also provided pictures showing scaffolding inside the building.

Some 500 people are to join Muslim prayers in the building Friday, the first such occurrence since 1934, when then-Turkish ruler Mustafa Kemal Ataturk turned it



into a museum. It was not clear whether Erdogan will join the prayers.

The site was built as a cathedral during the Byzantine empire, but was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

Erdogan, however, said last year that it had been a "very big mistake" to convert the Hagia Sophia into a museum.

## Russia bounties story in U.S. media aimed at spoiling peace deal: Taliban

A Taliban official has dismissed as fake a recent report in the U.S. media that accused Russia of paying the militant group to kill American troops in Afghanistan, saying the report was a byproduct of U.S. political infighting and aimed at spoiling a Taliban-Washington peace deal.

In a report last month, the New York Times, citing an unnamed source, claimed that a top-secret unit within the Russian military intelligence, or the GRU, had allegedly offered monetary rewards to Taliban-linked militants to kill U.S. troopers in the country last year.

Russia dismissed the report as a bunch of "lies."

In an interview with Russia's RT news channel released on Sunday, Taliban spokesperson and U.S.-Taliban negotiator Suhail Shaheen said the story "has to do with internal politics" in the U.S.

"This Russian bounties, it is not true," he said. "We are not fighting for anyone for money."

He did not deny that the Taliban attack U.S. troops in Afghanistan, but said that the group do so based on "ideology."

A peace deal was signed between the Taliban and the U.S. in late February, in the Qatari capital, Doha, for a phased U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## ■ Taliban reshuffle team of negotiators

Meanwhile, the leader of the Taliban militant group is reported to have reshuffled his team of negotiators ahead

of long-awaited peace talks with the Afghan government, sources with the group said Saturday.

Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, added four close aides to the group and removed three to four earlier members of the team, AFP reported.

According to the sources, the newly-appointed negotiators are all members of the militant group's leadership council, which should help the team make quicker decisions.

## ■ U.S., Taliban urge Kabul to complete priss oner swap

On Sunday, acting U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Ross Wilson, called on President Ashraf Ghani and his coalition partner, Abdullah Abdullah to complete the exchange of prisoners and launch talks with the Taliban without delay.

"The Afghan people have made clear their impatience," he said in a series of tweets. "Start intra-Afghan negotiations now so that discussions on a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire can begin."

The peace negotiations hinge on the prisoner swap, in which Kabul pledged to free about 5,000 Taliban prisoners in return for around 1,000 Afghan security forces held by the militants.

Afghan authorities have so far released about 4,400 Taliban prisoners, according to officials. The Taliban ac-

cused Kabul on Sunday of "creating hurdle" in the way of negotiations by refusing to release the remaining prisoners.

Kabul has refused to release around 600 prisoners, whom it says are "too dangerous."

The intra-Afghan talks have repeatedly been delayed as the Taliban continue their attacks across the nation. The peace talks, which were abandoned by the Taliban back in April, were initially supposed to have started in March in Doha.

U.S. Special Representative on Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, said last week that "large numbers" of Afghans continue to die without a reason.

"Violence has been high, especially in recent days and weeks," he said.

## ■ U.S. cuts down troops, closes 5 bases in Afghanistan

Last week, the Pentagon announced that it had closed five military bases in Afghanistan as part of the agreement reached with the Taliban.

"U.S. forces in Afghanistan remain in the mid-8,000s and five bases formerly occupied by U.S. forces have been transferred to our Afghan partners," said Pentagon chief spokesman Jonathan Hoffman.

The bases were in Helmand, Uruzgan, Paktika and Laghman provinces.

## Trump not ready to commit to election results if he loses

U.S. President Donald Trump is refusing to publicly commit to accepting the results of the upcoming White House election, recalling a similar threat he made weeks before the 2016 vote, as he scoffs at polls showing him lagging behind Democrat Joe Biden. Trump says it's too early to make such an ironclad guarantee.

"I have to see. Look ... I have to see," Trump told moderator Chris Wallace during a wide-ranging interview on "Fox News Sunday." "No, I'm not going to just say yes. I'm not going to say no, and I didn't last time either." The Biden campaign responded: "The American people will decide this election. And the United States government is perfectly capable of escorting trespassers out of the White House."

According to AP, Trump also hammered the Pentagon brass for favoring renaming bases that honor Confederate military leaders - a drive for change spurred by the national debate about race after George Floyd's death. "I don't care what the military says," the commander in chief said.

The president described the nation's top infectious diseases expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, as a "a little bit of an alarmist" about the coronavirus pandemic, and Trump stuck to what he had said back in February - that the virus is "going to disappear." On Fox, he said, "I'll be right eventually." The United States tops the global death toll list with over 140,000 and confirmed infections, with 3.7 million.

It is remarkable that a sitting president would express less than complete confidence in the American democracy's electoral process. But for Trump, it comes from his insurgent playbook of four years ago, when in the closing stages of his race against Hillary Clinton, he said he would not commit to honoring the election results if the Democrat won.

Pressed during an October 2016 debate about whether he would abide by the voters' will, Trump responded that he would "keep you in suspense." The president's remarks to Fox are certain to fuel conversation on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers had already been airing concerns in private about a scenario in



which Trump disputes the election results.

Trump has seen his presidential popularity erode over his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and in the aftermath of nationwide protests centered on racial injustice that erupted after Floyd's death in Minneapolis nearly two months.

Trump contends that a series of polls that show his popularity eroding and Biden holding an advantage are faulty. He believes Republican voters are underrepresented in such surveys.

"First of all, I'm not losing, because those are fake polls," Trump said in the taped inter-

view, which aired Sunday. "They were fake in 2016 and now they're even more fake. The polls were much worse in 2016."

Trump was frequently combative with Wallace in defending his administration's response to the pandemic, weighing in on the Black Lives Matter movement and trying to portray Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, as lacking the mental prowess to serve as president.

Among the issues discussed was the push for wholesale changes in policing that has swept across the nation. Trump said he could understand why Black Americans are upset about how police use force disproportionately against them.

"Of course I do. Of course I do," the president said, adding his usual refrain that "whites are also killed, too."

He said he was "not offended either by Black Lives Matter," but at the same time defended the Confederate flag, a symbol of the racism of the past, and said those who "proudly have their Confederate flags, they're not talking about racism."



# Iran enjoys a golden generation: Afshin Ghotbi

**1 →** In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Afshin Ghotbi, coach of top-tier team Shijiazhuang Everbright, has talked about his career in Iranian football clubs and National Team.

**Tehran Times:** It has been difficult for you and your players since you have been in isolation due to coronavirus for months. Let us know, what is your team's condition at the moment?

**Ghotbi:** After the historic promotion on November 2, 2019, we diligently created a strategy to strengthen the selection to be able to compete in the Chinese Super League. Our budget is one of the lowest, if not the lowest, so we have had to be pragmatic, efficient and precise in every decision. Corona virus created a global pandemic our generation has never experienced, so there has been a sense of uncertainty, isolation and loss of control. We have tried to take it one day at a time and focus on helping others, improving each player and through self-reflection discovering better and more effective ways in preparing the team.

**COVID-19** has shut down the sports, however the many countries have started their competitions since last month. As a coach who has worked in many countries, can be acceptable to play behind closed doors since many say football is nothing without fans?

Fans are the soul of the game. They provide the sight and sounds inspiring memorable performances from the players and teams. The players will have to find inspiration from within themselves and their teammates to create a spectacle worth



watching for fans on television or online. We have a rare opportunity during this pandemic to be a symbol of hope for our fans and create a distraction for at least 90 minutes away from all the challenges people are facing in their lives.

As Pim Verbeek's assistant, you helped South Korea to beat star-studded Iran in the 2007 AFC Asian Cup. A year later, you were appointed as Persepolis coach and inspired them to win the league title after six years. You made a great job since Persepolis had suffered six-point deduction at that time. Just tell us about the last match against Sepahan, where Persepolis won the title in the dying mo-

ments of the match.

This day will be remembered by all Persepolis and football fans forever. Winning is always important in sports, but the way we triumphed on this day of May 17, 2008 is the most important. Against all odds, heart of a lion, courage, passion, team work, human spirit, and God's intervention.

It was written in the stars, and forever it will be a source of inspiration for everyone who witnessed and experienced this season.

You were chosen as Iran national football team coach in 2009 but won nothing with the team. Under your stew-

ardship, Iran lost to South Korea in the 2011 AFC Asian Cup quarter-final. Tell us what happened.

Your description of winning nothing is quite harsh. Success is defined and measured differently at different times, and history is more a reflection of people's opinion rather than the facts. There were extraordinary political, social, economical and sporting circumstances during this period between April of 2009 and January 2011. Somethings are better left unsaid, as my enduring love for my country and national team will never allow me to speak negatively.

You returned to Iran after many years and took charge of Foolad but opted to leave the team to join Shijiazhuang. Was financial reasons behind the decision?

I truly enjoyed my short time at Foolad, but there are many reasons for my departure. Please allow me to show respect to Foolad football club and fans and not discuss internal matters and events.

And last question. Iran have a difficult task to advance to the 2022 World Cup for the third time in a row. The 'Persian Leopards' will have to win their four remaining matches. Do you think Dragan Skocic can make it happen?

I am not familiar with Mr. Dragan Skocic's work, so I cannot comment on his ability. But We are enjoying the availability of a golden generation in Iranian football. We have the top talent in Asia. If the Iranian players are given the proper support and care by the football federation, I believe Iran will qualify for 2022.



## Milad Ebadipour happy to be back in the game

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iranian PGE Skra Belchatow outside hitter Milad Ebadipour is happy to return to volleyball after the months.

Volleyball games are slowly coming back in Poland. Before the regular season starts, PLS has decided to hold a PreZero Grand Prix PLS to be held on the beach. The tournament will be played from July 24 to 26 in Krakow.

"Volleyball is our job. Life is very difficult without it," said the Iranian in an interview with PZPS.

"We all miss volleyball now. It is a difficult period especially for us. It wasn't easy being suspended for the weeks. It's a difficult task to live without volleyball," he added.

PGE Skra Belchatow is one of the participants in the PreZero Grand Prix PLS and it's interesting for the Iranian international.

"It's interesting for me because if I get the chance, it's my first time playing on the beach. The formula of a four-against-four game is also nice," Ebadipour concluded.

## No Ballon d'Or for 2020 after France Football cancel award

The prestigious Ballon d'Or, awarded by France Football magazine, is cancelled this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the organizers confirmed Monday.

"There will be no edition in 2020, because it turns out, after thoughtful consideration, that all the conditions are not met," said Pascal Ferré, the editor of France Football.

The Ballon d'Or has been given out every year since Stanley Matthews won the first one in 1956. Lionel Messi has won it a record six times — one more than longtime rival Cristiano Ronaldo.

The magazine started giving out a women's award in 2018, but that has also been put on hold.

"It's such a strange year that we couldn't treat it as an ordinary one. Let's say that we started talking about (making the decision) at least two months ago," Ferré told The Associated Press in a telephone interview.

"It isn't a decision we took lightly but we had to accept it couldn't be a normal or typical Ballon d'Or winner, and what really worried us is that it wouldn't be fairly awarded."

**'Exceptional circumstances led to an exceptional decision'**

Ferré noted that because the game's

rules have been modified during the pandemic, the award itself was impacted.

"The season started with certain rules and ended with other rules. In January and February, soccer was played in front of full stands. Then from May and June it was with empty stands," Ferré said. "Then we had the five substitutes rule and not three. Then other changes happened in terms of the competitions, notably the final eight (eight-team knockout format) for the Champions League when it had started with home and away legs."

With the European Championship and the Copa America postponed this year, the Champions League would have massively weighed on the award's outcome but with a format inadvertently providing a shortcut for an eventual victor.

"The Ballon d'Or would have been decided over just three games: quarterfinal, semifinal, final," Ferré said. "There were loads of changes [to the rules] which are totally legitimate and which we don't contest given the worldwide health crisis, but we couldn't consider this as a typical year. Exceptional circumstances led to an exceptional decision."

The Kopa Trophy for the best player under 21 and the Lev Yashin award for



best goalkeeper have also been canceled this year, Ferré said.

Ronaldo, who will be 36 in February, can still win an Italian league-Champions League double with Juventus this season, but he is not the only player affected by France Football's decision.

Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski reached 50 club goals for the first time and can win a treble. Kylian Mbappé and Neymar can clinch quadruples for

Paris Saint-Germain.

"Look at Lewandowski's performances this year, his form has been at the level of Messi and Ronaldo," Ferré said. "And Paris players, imagine if they win the Champions League."

**Players deliberately not informed in advance**

To maintain the award's authenticity and level of suspense, players were not informed of the decision before the announcement.

"We are independent and autonomous enough not to have to raise our little finger and ask what they think," Ferré said. "We will take their frustration as a sign of their attachment to the award."

If the virus impacts next season the same way, however, the award will be awarded.

"It would be less of a problem in terms of fairness, because this time around we've had two parts to the season: normal and not normal," Ferré said. "Imagine that in 2021 all matches are played behind closed doors (without fans) and with five subs. We would adapt, because it would be comparable."

To fill this year's gap, the magazine created another trophy: the France Football Dream Team.

(FRANCE 24)

## Olympics: Human Rights Watch report documents abuse of child athletes in Japan

**TOKYO (Reuters)** — A Human Rights Watch report has found child athletes in Japan often suffer physical and verbal abuse and sometimes sexual abuse during training after documenting the experiences of over 800 athletes in 50 sports.

The 67-page report released on Monday titled "I Was Hit So Many Times I Can't Count" looks at Japan's history of physical punishment in sport and includes first-hand accounts from athletes.

The report comes in the week that would have marked the start of the Tokyo Olympics had it not been for the global coronavirus pandemic. The Games have now been delayed a year.

"The specific abuses we documented include punching, slapping, kicking or striking with objects (and) excessive or insufficient food and water," Minky Worden, director of global initiatives at Human Rights Watch (HRW), told a news conference.

In 2013, the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) promised to take steps to wipe out violence among its sports federations after an internal survey revealed more than 10% of its athletes had been victims of bullying or harassment.



It also cut funding to its judo federation for a time after coaches were found to have physically abused female athletes.

HRW said not enough had been done since then and demanded organizations such as the Japan Sports Council and the JOC use the upcoming Olympics as a catalyst for

change. It noted child abuse in sport is a global problem and that the systems for reporting abuse are opaque, unresponsive, and inadequate.

"Human Rights Watch is calling on Japan to take decisive action and to lead in tackling this global crisis," Worden said.

The JOC did not respond to Reuters requests for comment.

The report was based on interviews with more than 50 current and former athletes, an online survey that drew 757 responses and meetings with eight Japanese sports organizations.

Of the 381 survey respondents aged 24 or younger, 19% indicated they had been hit, punched, slapped, kicked, knocked to the ground or beaten with an object while participating in sports.

"The coach told me I was not serious enough with the running, so we were all called to the coach and I was hit in the face in front of everyone. I was bleeding, but he did not stop hitting me," the report quoted a professional athlete given the pseudonym of Daiki A. as saying.

Eighteen percent reported experiencing verbal abuse, and five reported experiencing sexual assault or harassment while participating in sport as children.

## Mohajerani, Ranjbar among AFC Asian Cup top three coaches

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iranian coaches Mohammad d e s k Ranjbar and Heshmat Mohajerani have been chosen among top three greatest coaches at the AFC Asian Cup.

Saudi Arabia's Khalil Al Zayani was voted as the greatest coach. Al Zayani, who guided Saudi Arabia to the 1984 championship - the first of three AFC Asian Cup titles the West Asian nation has won - collected 77 percent of the votes on the AFC.com.



Mohajerani and Ranjbar came second and third, respectively in the poll.

Mohammad Ranjbar (winner in 1972) and Heshmat Mohajerani (winner in 1976) were two Iranian coaches in the 10-man list.

The list also included Carlos Alberto Parreira of Brazil (winner in 1980 and 1988), Ange Postecoglou of Australia (winner in 2015), Zico of Brazil (winner in 2004), Philippe Troussier of France (winner in 2000), Jorvan Vieira of Brazil (winner in 2007), Alberto Zaccheroni of Italy (winner in 2011) and Felix Sanchez of Spain (winner in 2019).

(Source: the-afc)

## Vahid Hashemian meets Dragan Skocic

**Tasnim** — Iranian assistant Vahid Hashemian held talks with Croatian coach Dragan Skocic in Iran Football Federation's headquarters on Monday.

Hashemian has returned to Iran after several months since leaving the country due to coronavirus outbreak.

The ex-Iran striker was Marc Wilmots's assistant in Iran national football team and will continue his cooperation with Iran as Skocic's assistant.

Iran will host Hong Kong on October 7, and will travel to Cambodia five days later. Team Melli will also face Bahrain and Iraq on November 11 and 16 respectively based on the new match dates scheduled by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

## Iranian duo to participate at World Snooker Championship

**IRNA** — Hossein Vafaei and Soheil Vahedi will represent Iran at the 2020 World Snooker Championship.

The competition is an upcoming professional snooker tournament that is scheduled to take place from 31 July to 16 August at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, England.

It was originally scheduled to take place from 18 April to 4 May, but qualifying and the televised rounds were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The qualifying rounds, featuring 128 players, will take place from July 21-28 at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield.

The winner of the tournament picks up a £500,000 first prize from tournament sponsors.

## Santi Cazorla joins Al Sadd

Santi Cazorla has joined Al Sadd after leaving Villarreal, with Arsenal head coach Mikel Arteta hinting he would like the midfielder to join his backroom staff in the future.

Cazorla, 35, enjoyed a remarkable career revival as he returned to LaLiga following an injury-hit final two years with the Gunners.

He revealed his Achilles issue became so bad he almost had his foot amputated - but, after signing for Villarreal in 2018, he was soon back to his best.



His performances were so eye-catching he earned an international recall with Spain last year and was given a fine send-off by his team-mates following his last game for Villarreal on Sunday.

Just 24 hours later and reigning Qatar Stars League champions Al Sadd - managed by Cazorla's former international team-mate Xavi - announced his arrival.

"We have reached an agreement with Santi Cazorla. He will reach Doha soon to complete the formalities and join the team. Welcome to Al-Sadd, Santi!" they tweeted.

Meanwhile, Arsenal boss Arteta - who played alongside Cazorla in the Gunners' midfield for four years - praised his former colleague and suggested he could one day look to bring him back to the Emirates Stadium.

Asked if he had held discussions with Cazorla about a coaching role at Arsenal, Arteta replied: "Not yet."

"My opinion of Santi cannot be any higher. Personally, first, with the type of person he is and what he brings to that dressing room, but then also as a player for what he did throughout his career."

"About the coaching role and the future, we will see what happens. Right now, he's just finished (at Villarreal) so let him enjoy that moment and we'll see what happens in the future".

(Source: Sky Sports)



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 ■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian  
 ■ Editor-in-Chief: Ali A.Jenabzadeh

» **Editorial Dept.:** Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
 editor@tehrantimes.com  
 » **Switchboard Operator:** Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
 » **Advertisements Dept.:** Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430  
 » **Public Relations Office:** Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
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 Zip Code: 1599814713



**GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**

It is not right that a creature should be sure of two things: health and wealth. For, when you feel certain of your health, you fall ill, and as soon as you are wealthy, you go towards poverty.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Indian Muslim scholars oppose government's bid to ban Iranian movie "Muhammad"

→1 After the demand from Raza Academy and a few other Muslim organizations to ban the movie release, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh wrote a letter to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to lift the ban.



A scene from Iranian director Majid Majidi's "Muhammad, the Messenger of God".

"Muhammad, the Messenger of God" was Iran's submission to the best foreign language film category at the 88th Academy Awards.

Renowned international craftsmen and artists such as editor Roberto Perpignani, special effects designer Scott E. Anderson, makeup designer Gianetto De Rossi and Indian composer A. R. Rahman collaborated with Majidi in the production.

## Vocalist Salar Aqili to do online duet with pianist wife Harir Shariatzadeh

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Vocalist Salar Aqili and his pianist wife Harir Shariatzadeh will be presenting an online duet on Friday evening.

The concert will be available on an official application, which will be announced later.

Aqili and his musician family have chosen to stay home during the pandemic. He had previously held a concert with wife and son Mahur at home for his fans.



Vocalist Salar Aqili performs in an undated photo. (Mehr/Mohammad Moheimani)

Also he, along with musician Fazel Jamshidi and actor Parviz Parastui who are members of the nationwide #Moshahonar movement, released a song named "Mate" in April during the home quarantine for the coronavirus pandemic.

They gained the movement launched by hundreds of Iranian artists to entertain people during the quarantine.

"We actually felt the need to keep the spirits of people and the healthcare staff up these days. COVID-19 is a tough virus and we are still battling with the disease. I know some may have suffered more financially these days, however, it is a matter of life and death," Aqili had said earlier.

He had called the collaboration with Parastui and Jamshidi a good experience and hoped the song would be remembered by the Iranian people.

"After the song was released, I received many positive responses from people. I truly must thank the people who always support us. Jamshidi had a great role in the formation of this piece and was the first who proposed the idea. It was a great honor for me to have done this for the people of my country," he had said.

The song was written by Alireza Bahrami based on a poem by Persian mystic and poet Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi.

Hundreds of artists, including thespians, cineastes, painters, cartoonists and writers who launched the Moshahonar movement, have announced that they would produce artworks to showcase on social networks for at least 100 days in order to make the stay at home almost tolerable.

# "Cast out of Heaven" nominated for Oskar Barnack Award

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian photographer Hashem Shakeri's series "Cast out of Heaven" has been shortlisted for the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA) in Wetzlar, Germany.

The series depicts the aftermath of the expansion of Tehran satellite towns, which occurred after the implementation of the government's Mehr Housing Project in 2007.

The series composed of 18 images took the runner-up prize in the Discovery category at the Sony World Photography Awards in June.

The Oskar Barnack Award, presented almost continuously since 1979, recognizes photography expressing the relationship between man and the environment.

Shakeri's collection is competing with eleven other series including "Black Summer" by Matthew Abbott from Australia, "Arctic Heroes – Where the world is melting" by Ragnar Axelsson from Iceland, and "Displacement – New Town No Town" by Giovanni Cocco from Italy.

Vincent Fournier from France with "Space Project", Emil Gataullin from Russia with "Mezen: By Sky's Edge", Maimouna Guerresi from Italy with "Beyond the Border – A



An image from Iranian photographer Hashem Shakeri's series "Cast out of Heaven".

## Shanghai festival picks movies from Iran

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The 23rd Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF), which will take place in the Chinese megalopolis from July 25 to August 2, has selected five movies from Iran to screen in its various categories.

"Najibeh" directed by Mostafa Gandomkar and "The Badger" directed by Kazem Mollai will be competing for the Asian New Talent Award.

Najibeh is a poor old woman who wants to commit a crime because she needs to go to prison for a while. To accomplish her goal, she needs an aid, so she tries to get help from her friend.

"The Badger" tells the story of Sudeh, a 40-years-old woman who faces a strange incident right before her second marriage. Sudeh and her son Matiar lives in an old apartment. One day, she hires a pest control company to solve the termite problems in the apartment. While the pest control company is working, Matiar is recording the procedures, as this is his hobby. The next day, Matiar gets kidnapped after school, and the kidnapper asks Sudeh to pay 10 bitcoins for her son. Tremendous pressure is put on Sudeh, but the truth hidden beneath will surprise everyone.

"Just 6.5" directed by Saeid Rustai and "Old Men Never Die" by Reza Jamali have been selected to be screened in the SIFF Highlights – Viva La Festival.

In "Just 6.5", the city is brimming with drug addicts, many of whom are homeless. Samad, a member of Anti-Narcotics Police Task Force, is looking for a drug kingpin,



A poster for "Old Men Never Die".

Nasser Khakzad. After several operations, Samad manages to track him down at his penthouse, where he had attempted suicide but is still alive. Nasser goes through legal steps

that lead to his death penalty and execution, but along the way, Samad comes to realize that Nasser was drawn to this path because of broken down social conditions, imposed on him. Nasser is ultimately executed, and Samad who has been promoted to the station chief, resigns from his post. He has come to believe all the arrests and executions in all these years, did not have any effect on society's drug problems.

"Old Men Never Die" is about 100-year-old Aslan, the head of a death squad in youth who lives with his other single old fellows in a remote village. Since he came to the village 45 years ago, nobody has ever died in the village! Now, most of the population consists of old and disabled men. All being done with life, they believe the only way to bring death back to the village is to commit suicide!

"Crab" by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi will be contending for the Golden Goblet Award in the official section.

The short animation tells the story of a shy schoolboy who is interested in performing in a play with his school's theater troupe. But the only part offered to him is to play the role of a crab.

The movies have been produced at Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

The 23rd Shanghai International Film Festival was first scheduled to be held from June 13 to 22, but it was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event will be held both offline and online in a bid to minimize the impact of the pandemic.

## Iranian art galleries urge government support in COVID-19 era

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Owners of several art galleries in Iran have asked the government to support them during the hard days of the coronavirus pandemic.

They expect the government to purchase artworks or extend loans to them so that they can continue their activities, or else they believe art and the artists will face irreparable losses.

Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance canceled all art, cultural and cinematic events across the country in February in an attempt to stem coronavirus' spread.

Art galleries across Iran were allowed to resume activities since April 20 after an over two-month shutdown due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

However, gallery owners prefer to continue the lockdown since there are no visitors, buyers, or dealers.

The director of Diba Gallery in the central Iranian city of Isfahan has said that she has shut down the gallery for one year and plans to hold only online exhibits.

"Isfahan is not in a good condition these

days with the rapid spread of coronavirus and even the galleries, which are open to visitors have only a few visitors," Mahnaz Javadi said.

"Diba Gallery is located in an old building in the city and we had to pay a large sum of money for its repair after a hard rain this year, and these on and off exhibits cannot compensate," she added.

She added that she has changed the gallery's schedule and therefore, its two upcoming exhibitions will go online. She is planning to promote the exhibits on the pages of several active artists and gallery owners on social networks.

She asked the government to support the gallery owners through loans or else they will have big problems.

Nazanin Asgharzadeh, the executive director of the Mah Gallery in Tehran, has also said that she believes nothing can replace the attendance of visitors at galleries and museums, however, organizing virtual exhibits is a breakthrough these days.

"The spread of coronavirus made all careers seek new methods to continue their activities, and galleries were no exception and have



Artworks are on display at a Tehran gallery. (File photo)

continued their activities through podcasts and virtual exhibits," she said.

"Mah gallery also resumed activity after the Culture Ministry allowed galleries to reopen observing health protocols. Of course, we do not hold opening ceremonies and art aficionados also visit the exhibits by

appointment only," she noted.

She added that the number of visitors has decreased, and the artists who have spent one or two years to create their collections prefer to hold their exhibits at a time when there can be opening ceremonies with good number of visitors.

## Actor Ahmad Purmoghber dies at 80

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Ahmad Purmoghber, famous for his roles in Iranian comic series such as "Sour and Sweet", died of a stroke on Monday. He was 80 years old.

"My father was in Firuzgar Hospital in Tehran for a month and died of a stroke this morning," his son Mohammad said.

Purmoghber made his debut in acting in 1996 by playing a cameo in director Majid Majidi's acclaimed drama "Children of Heaven". However, he shot to fame years after with his roles in director/actor Reza Attaran's comic series "Sour and Sweet" and "The

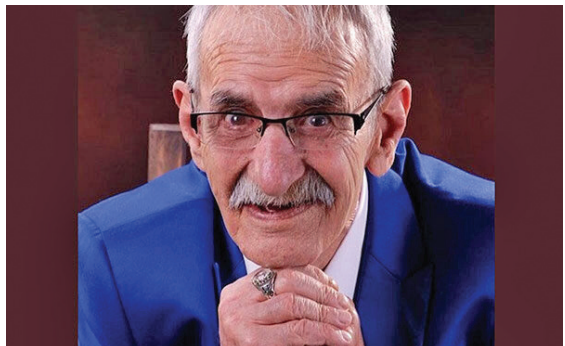
Suspect Ran Away".

He received a nomination for the best actor award for his role in "Sour and Sweet" at the Hafez Awards, Iran's first and only private awards in the film industry and TV productions.

He was most liked for his sweetness and that is why he was also selected to play in comic series and comedies.

His roles in films such as "Women Are Angels", "Milk and Honey", "Shy Groom", "Big Trouble" and "The Outcasts" are also remembered well.

He last appeared in director Saleh Deldam's movie "Goose Kebab".



Actor Ahmad Pumoghber in an undated photo.

## Persian audiobook of Osamu Dazai's "Setting Sun" released

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A Persian audiobook of Japanese author Osamu Dazai's "The Setting Sun" has recently been released by the Novin Ketab Publications in Tehran.

The post-war period in Japan was one of immense social change as Japanese society adjusted to the shock of defeat and to the occupation of Japan by American forces

and their allies.

Osamu Dazai's "The Setting Sun" ("Shayo") takes this milieu as its background to tell the story of the decline of a minor aristocratic family.

The story is told through the eyes of Kazuko, the unmarried daughter of a widowed aristocrat. Her search for self meaning in a society devoid of use for her forms the

crux of Dazai's novel. It is a sad story, and structurally is a novel very much within the confines of the Japanese take on the novel in a way reminiscent of authors such as Nobel Prize winner Yasunari Kawabata – the social interactions are peripheral and understated, nuances must be drawn, and for readers more used to Western novelistic forms this comes across as being rather wishy-washy.

Kazuko's mother falls ill, and due to their financial circumstances they are forced to take a cottage in the countryside. Her brother, who became addicted to opium during the war is missing. When he returns, Kazuko attempts to form a liaison with the novelist Uehara. This romantic displacement only furthers to deepen her alienation from society.