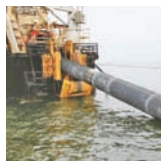
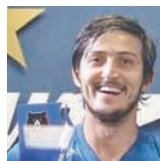




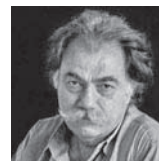
‘We should wait for details of Iran-China agreement’ **2**



IOEC starts constructing Iran’s longest underwater gas pipeline **5**



Sardar Azmoun wins RPL Golden Boot **11**



Iran’s Graphic Design Week to pay tribute to Morteza Momayyez **12**

Harassment against Iranian passenger plane:

Iran seeking expulsion of U.S. from the region

See page 2

Zarif: ‘Outlaws must be stopped before disaster’

Foreign Ministry says Iran will not let hostile acts go unpunished

Guardian Council calls for reciprocal steps against U.S.

Deputy parliament speaker likens harassment to using human shield for military purposes



©File photo

Agricultural projects worth \$809.5m inaugurated in 3 provinces

TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, on Thursday, inaugurated three major agricultural projects valued at 34 trillion rials (about \$809.5 million) via video conference in three provinces, IRNA reported.

The mentioned projects, namely an irrigation system in southern Hormozgan Province, 4,040 hectares of gardens in the sloping lands of western Lorestan Province,

and a greenhouse complex in the central Yazd Province, were inaugurated as part of the government’s programs for the re-alization of the surge in production motto.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony, Rouhani said: “We cannot meet the agricultural needs of the country traditionally, so we must change the traditional cultivation and irrigation ways to industrial methods.” **→4**

Iran plans building desalination plants along Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman

TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) is preparing a plan to deploy desalination plants on the shores of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in order to supply drinking water to the coastal provinces.

Ahmad Reza Lahijanzadeh, deputy chief of the marine environment of the DOE, announced that suitable areas that cause the least damage to the environment have

been identified in Hormozgan province. According to him, the project, which is to be carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, will supply water for 17 drought-ridden provinces.

The country’s coastline stretches to about 5,800 kilometers, which includes the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in the south. **→9**

Coronavirus causing habit of going to cinema to fade away: filmmaker

TEHRAN – Filmmaker Mohsen Damadi has said that coronavirus is gradually causing the habit of going to cinema to fade away, and is imposing a great pause in all areas.

“One of the major things in these hard days of the pandemic, is the issue of going to movie theaters and watching movies, which has made people show more interest in watching films at home

during the home quarantine,” Damadi said.

He said that no one can predict the future and added, “I believe coronavirus has given the biggest blow to the habit of watching films in movie theaters. Of course a large portion of Iranians did not have the habit of going to cinema, but even that small number has dropped”. **→12**

U.S. ugly face exposed to the world: ambassador

TEHRAN – Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzadeh has said the ugly face of the United States has been exposed to the world by closing the Chinese Consulate General in Houston and its other illegal measures.

“The U.S. once again showed its hegemonic nature to the world by violating international laws in closing the Chinese Consulate General in Houston,” Keshavarzadeh wrote in a series of tweets on Thursday.

“A country that claims to be an advocate of peace and saving the world is in practice the orchestrator of chaos and turmoil in the world,” he said.

On Tuesday, the U.S. government ordered China to close its consulate in Houston, Texas, by the end of the week.

The Chinese consulate in Houston was one of five in the U.S., along with the embassy in

Washington D.C. It was not clear why it was singled out.

Tensions have been rising between the U.S. and China over several issues.

The Trump administration has clashed repeatedly with Beijing over trade and the coronavirus pandemic.

Keshavarzadeh said the United States has exposed its ugly face to the entire world by unilaterally withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, imposing a policy of “maximum pressure” on Iran, invading Iraq based on baseless allegations, waging war on Afghanistan and the trade war and all-out pressure on China.

The United States’ view of international law and diplomacy not only threatens world peace and stability, but the ramifications of this behavior will be to the detriment of the United States itself, the envoy continued. **→3**

U.S protests: Chicago on edge over Trump’s federal forces, violence

Amid a surge in gun violence and protests sparked by the alleged killing of George Floyd, the United States’ third-largest city is on edge, awaiting possible greater tension in the form of a plan by President Donald Trump to dispatch dozens of federal agents to Chicago.

The White House plan emerged days after a downtown protest over a statue of Christopher Columbus devolved into a chaotic scene of police swinging batons and demonstrators hurling frozen water bottles, fireworks and other projectiles at officers.

Then, on Tuesday in another neighborhood, a spray of bullets from a car passing a gang member’s funeral wounded 15 people and sent dozens running for their lives.

Tension in the city has climbed to a level that, if not unprecedented, has not been felt in a long time.

“I’ve never seen things worse in this city than

they are right now,” the Reverend Michael Pfleger, a Roman Catholic priest and longtime activist on the city’s South Side told the Associated Press.

Much of the strain stems from the fact that it remains unclear exactly what the federal officers will do here. The plan seems to be a repeat of what happened in Kansas City, Missouri, where the administration sent officers to help quell violence after the shooting death of a young boy.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot sought to ease fears that the surge will resemble the kind of scene that unfolded in Portland, Oregon, where unidentified agents in camouflage have beaten unarmed protesters and stuffed some of them into unmarked vehicles.

Lightfoot said she has been told the US Attorney’s Office will supervise the additional agents supporting the Chicago offices of the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. **→10**

The kind of ‘balanced ties’ that Iraqi PM seeks to establish

TEHRAN — Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi paid a visit to Iran on Tuesday and Wednesday, in a bid to establish what some Iraqi officials call ‘balanced ties’ with Iran and other countries like Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

“Iraq wants balanced ties with neighboring countries on the basis of Iraq’s interest and non-interference in internal affairs,” Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said during a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif, who was on a one-day

visit to Baghdad on July 19, two days before the Iraqi prime minister starts a trip to Iran.

Al-Kadhimi echoed the same remarks during his visit to Tehran, saying that Iraq is “eager to have cooperative relations with Iran on the basis of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.”

The remarks have been widely interpreted by Saudi and American news media outlets as an effort by the prime minister to distance his country from Iran. However, analysts tell the

Tehran Times that al-Kadhimi’s push to establish balanced ties with neighboring countries like Iran doesn’t mean that Iraq’s relations with Iran is at risk of being undermined, because all Iraqi prime ministers have sought to establish balanced ties with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

“No prime ministers in Iraq can take only one side, and that Iraq can’t rely on only one country. Baghdad is just like Beirut, where there are many competing forces,” Amir Mousavi, who was Iran’s cultural attaché in Algeria in 2015, **→3**



© Tehran Times / Samira Nazari

Precipitations fill up dam in central Iran

Alghadir dam in the central province of Markazi has been refilled once again as precipitations in the past year reached normal and above-normal levels in the region. The dam was established in 1993.

The drought situation over the past couple of years had decreased the volume of water at its reservoir drastically, but it is now replenished with water up to 96 percent of full capacity.

Egypt, Turkey on clash course over Libya

By Salman Parviz

In a sign of hope for peace and stability in Libya, early July Turkey announced its banks and companies’ plans for an assessment trip within two weeks to rebuild post-war Libya and secure its energy infrastructure.

Unfortunately, there has been no follow up of this plan that could help trigger peace and stability in Libya. On the contrary, the North African country can be in the peril of being a battleground between two factions, each supported by outside forces.

On Monday, Egypt’s parliament unanimously approved deployment of troops in Libya after President Abdul Fattah el-Sisi threatened military action against Turkish backed forces in neighboring Libya.

Turkey’s National Security Council (MGK), convened by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday, reaffirmed the country’s continued support for Tripoli’s UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). Turkey has helped to repel a 15-month assault on Tripoli by renegade general Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA). After sustaining heavy losses Haftar retreated in June and announced a ceasefire in Cairo in the presence of Sisi, declaring he was ready to stop fighting and enter talks.

On the one side the Authoritarian regimes of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, backed by Russia and France support the 76-year-old Libyan born Haftar’s siege of Tripoli. On the other Turkey, Qatar and GNA have teamed up in defense of the capital city.

Officials in Ankara have been negotiating with Moscow for a withdrawal of suspected Russian mercenaries deployed in Mediterranean city of Sirte and the inland Jufra airbase. **→7**



ARTICLE

Afshin Majlesi
Tehran Times journalist

Trump’s Muslim ban: For the sake of safer America or anti-Muslim bigots

House Democrats on Wednesday voted to pass a legislation that would revoke the U.S. President Donald Trump administration’s controversial order banning entry to immigrants from mostly Muslim-majority countries.

The ‘NO BAN Act’ received broad support in the Democratic-controlled House with 233 votes in favor and 183 against, however, it is unlikely to advance in the Republican Senate. At least, it can be regarded as a symbolic victory for civil rights groups.

Trump’s initial ban targeted Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, generating criticism that it amounted to unlawful religious discrimination. Trump then expanded the ban to include Venezuela and North Korea, and later added Nigeria, Myanmar, Sudan, and three other countries to the list.

The ban has affected millions of Muslim Americans. It has cut them off from their families, friends, and loved ones who are barred from entering the United States. It has also barred people fleeing violence, those hoping to access medical treatment, or pursue their careers.

Let’s have a peek into the roots of the ban. Is Trump an Islamophobic bigot or he defends the ban as a necessity for national security and safer America?

Looking into Trump’s words in his speeches and tweets may clearly reveal his attitude towards Muslim people. Does he try to spread hatred by calling them deranged or hostile people?

For instance, in 2011 Trump publicly questioned President Barack Obama’s religious beliefs and place of birth. As he debated running for president in the 2012 election, Trump said in a radio interview: “He doesn’t have a birth certificate, or if he does, there’s something on that certificate that is very bad for him. Now, somebody told me — and I have no idea if this is bad for him or not, but perhaps it would be — that where it says ‘religion,’ it might have ‘Muslim.’ And if you’re a Muslim, you don’t change your religion, by the way.” **→7**

Iran Air Force extends range of Sidewinder air-to-air missiles to 12 miles

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chief of the Iranian Air Force has underlined Iran's progress in developing air-launched missiles, saying the Islamic Republic has successfully extended the range of its Sidewinder air-to-air missiles to 12 miles.



"We have succeeded in increasing the range of Sidewinder air-to-air missiles from five to eight-twelve miles," Press TV quoted Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi as saying on Wednesday.

Vahedi said the improved range could notably boost aerial combats. The general also said the Air Force had started to develop a heavy-weight fighter jet after manufacturing the home-grown Kowsar warplanes, which were first unveiled in August 2018.

He described Kowsar as an Iranian jet with indigenized avionics and homegrown engines that has nothing to do with the F-5 fighter jets.

Kowsar, a fourth-generation all-indigenous interceptor jet, is equipped with advanced avionics and fire control systems and can be manufactured in both single- and double-cockpit types, the latter of which can be used for advanced pilot training missions in addition to its combat capability.

The achievement has made Iran one of the few countries with the know-how to design and manufacture such aircraft.

Pointing to military projects to upgrade the radar capabilities of the Air Force's planes, Vahedi said good progress has been made in this regard.

The commander said that the country had achieved great success in increasing the stealth capabilities of various types of aircraft, adding that the new achievements would be unveiled after undergoing final tests.

The general further pointed to the breakthrough Iran has made in the drone industry, saying the Karrar unmanned aircraft successfully dropped a 500-pound bomb.

The Air Force has also armed the Ababil-3 drones with rockets, he said, adding that preparations are underway to equip drones with Qaem-1 and Qaem-5 precision-guided bombs.

Ukraine says decoding of downed UIA Boeing is successful

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister Yevhenii Yenin has said that decoding of flight data recorders from UIA Boeing downed in Iran has been successful despite the external damage caused to the recorders.

According to Interfax-Ukraine, he said that it is impossible to predict how long the investigation will continue.

According to National Post, in an interview on Monday, Kathy Fox, the head of Canada's Transportation Safety Board, confirmed the long-awaited downloading of crucial flight data and cockpit voice recordings from the Jan. 8 crash was completed successfully in Paris on Monday. The safety board sent a team to Paris to witness the downloading of the data.

She said that Iran has the final say over who gets to analyze the flight data recorders from the Ukrainian passenger jet.

"It's not clear to us whether some of that work is going to be done in France or whether Iran is simply going to take the data and go back and do it in their country," Fox said.

Fox also made clear that she was able to say what she did publicly because Iran gave the necessary permission required under international aviation law to do so.

Under Annex 13 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the "State of Occurrence" — in this case, Iran — becomes the lead investigator for the crash because it happened in Iran.

But Iran could ask for help from another country or designate another country to lead the investigation, as was the case when Ukraine turned to the Netherlands to lead the probe into the shootdown of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 by pro-Moscow Ukrainian rebels over eastern Ukraine six years ago.

"ICAO permits countries to delegate. For whatever reason, Iran has chosen to lead it. They have the right to do that," said Fox.

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.

'We should wait for details of Iran-China agreement'

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Gholamreza Ansari has said that details of the 25-year Iran-China cooperation plan will be published after it is finalized.

"We should wait for details of the agreement between Iran and China," ISNA quoted Ansari as saying on Friday.

He expressed hope that the document would be finalized and prepared for implementation soon.

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on June 23 that Iran and China have drafted a 25-year plan for comprehensive cooperation which proves failure of the plots to isolate the Islamic Republic.

In a meeting on June 21, the Iranian cabinet of ministers approved the final draft of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation with China.

The Foreign Ministry said on June 29 that the cooperation plan has not been finalized yet between the two countries.

However, it said, the content of the "agreement will be published once it is finalized."

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that 25-year cooperation plan is transparent and there is nothing secret about it.

Iran-China co-op shows failure of U.S. maximum pressure: ex-Pakistan army chief

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Former Pakistani army chief General Mirza Aslam Beg has said that the 25-year cooperation plan between Iran and China shows failure of the United States' policy of maximum pressure on Tehran.

"Tehran-Beijing partnership shows the United States' strategic failure and the country's policy of maximum pressure," IRNA quoted him as saying on Friday in an article published by the Pakistani media.

Developments after Iran-China cooperation will challenge the West's economic interests, especially the U.S., the former Army chief said.

He added, "Strategic partnership of Iran and China will create a geopolitical storm and will define new axes of world order as keys to economic and social progress."

A U.S. newspaper has underlined the importance of the 25-year strategic partnership deal between Iran and China, saying the deal is a "massive failure" of the U.S. maximum pressure policy against Tehran.

"U.S. President Donald Trump's administration pursued a policy of economic sanctions in an attempt to bring Iran to the negotiating table, but such approach pushed Tehran towards signing an accord with Beijing rather than Washington," The Chicago Tribune wrote.

"The new China-Iran partnership represents a massive failure of the administration's Iran policy," it said.

The daily noted that the yet-to-be-finalized accord would establish "a far-reaching economic and security partnership" between Iran and China.

Foreign media have launched a campaign against the partnership between Iran and China.

Li Li, an associate professor at Southwest University (SWU) in China, tells the



Tehran Times, "I think such propaganda campaign from the mainstream Western media that are extremely inimical to and feverishly demonize the strategic Iran-China partnership is all too predictable and hardly avoidable. Mainstream media in the West especially in the U.S. have ample reasons to vilify Iran-China relations from their vested interests as they are tightly in the grip of the aggressive and warmongering neocon military-industrial complex and pro-Israeli Jewish lobbies."

■ **'Powerful new blow to U.S. interests'**

According to The Washington Post, Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran has failed to achieve any of the U.S. objectives.

The Washington Post editorial published on Tuesday stated that Washington unleashed its so-called maximum

pressure campaign against Iran in 2018, when it left the 2015 multilateral nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Following U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Washington targeted Tehran with its "toughest ever" economic sanctions.

However, the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign not only failed in its objectives, including renegotiation of the Iran nuclear deal, prevention of Tehran's growing influence in the Middle East, as well as "regime change"; but also, unintentionally strengthened China's bilateral relation with Tehran.

The article stresses that the Trump administration's policy resulted "in a powerful new blow to U.S. interests, in the form of an Iranian partnership with China that could rescue Iran's economy

while giving Beijing a powerful new place in the region."

According to the Post article, "Trump's confrontational approach to China in recent months, including his refusal to continue work on a comprehensive trade deal, has given Mr. Xi [Jinping] little incentive to cooperate with Washington's geopolitical priorities. On the contrary, the Chinese leadership likely perceives a moment of critical U.S. weakness as Mr. Trump flounders amid a health and economic crisis and is moving to take advantage. It is expanding its presence in the South China Sea; it is crushing Hong Kong's autonomy. Allying itself with the foremost U.S. adversary in the Middle East opens yet another front."

The Post article concluded that the hostile U.S. policy towards China, exacerbated by the hostilities of Washington's trade war on the Chinese nation, was pushing Beijing to shield U.S. adversaries from Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign.

In addition, China would gain more by "demonstrating U.S. impotence" as Iran becomes immune to the U.S. "pressure campaign".

"Trump is mistaken if he believes 'maximum pressure' is getting him closer to a deal with Iran. The policy is not leading to Iran's capitulation or collapse, but entrenching U.S.-Iran hostilities and keeping the United States perennially at the cusp of war in the Middle East," according to another article published in the Foreign Policy.

The leading U.S. Foreign Policy magazine advised "Trump to ditch maximum pressure and rebuild the trust necessary for successful negotiations."

Pointing to the former realtor, the Post said, "International relations and the real estate market are not similar."

"Bullying and bluster do not win deals; mutual respect and 'win-win' compromise do," it concluded.

Iran, Russia determined to reach a long-term deal: diplomat

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali has said that Iran and Russia are determined to reach a deal for long-term comprehensive cooperation, ISNA reported on Friday.

Iran and Russia signed a cooperation deal 20 years ago.

"The two countries' top officials have announced their agreement to extend and update the deal. Given the prospect of cooperation, they are determined to sign a long-term deal for comprehensive cooperation," the ambassador tweeted.

Upon arrival in Moscow on Monday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran plans to extend the 20-year agreement with Russia.

"I stress that Iran-Russia relations are strategic. In the current situation in which there are developments at the international level, it is needed to hold talks between the two countries and also with other friends," he told reporters.

During his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Tuesday, Zarif said Iran-Russia relations are at



their strongest in decades, adding that such sustainable ties will benefit both countries and guarantee global peace and security.

He said on Wednesday that while in Russia he had spoken with President Vladimir Putin on the phone for an hour.

"It was a constructive conversation, and inshallah it will lead to good outcomes," he said.

In a post on his Twitter account on July 1, Zarif said while in Moscow he "delivered important message to President Putin" from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

The foreign minister also said he held "extensive talks with FM Lavrov on bilateral cooperation, regional and global coordination."

The chief diplomat said Tehran and Moscow share "identical views on the JCPOA and need to uphold international law."

He added the two sides "agreed to conclude long-term comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement."

Iran, China deal result of age-old ties, nothing out of order about it: Iran's UN envoy

(Press TV) — Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations says the long-term deal that awaits finalization between the Islamic Republic and its Asian ally, China, is nothing out of the ordinary and stems from age-old relations between the two countries.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Russia's RT news channel, Majid Takht Ravanchi said relations between Iran and China "go back centuries," adding, "So, it is natural for these two countries to get together, to discuss different issues, [and] collaborate on many issues of interest to both sides, including in the field of economy."

"So the agreement between Iran and China is not something unusual. We are in the process of finalizing the deal, which affects both countries," as it "deals with many issues of interest for both sides and I think it is natural for ... two countries to sign such an agreement provided that this is something necessary for two sides," Iran's envoy said.

The agreement is to serve as a "roadmap" defining the quality of the countries' strategic relations for the subsequent 25-year period. It is expected to ditch the dollar in bilateral trade by bringing in each side's legal tender instead and bypass the illegal and unilateral sanctions that the United States returned against the Islamic Republic in 2018.

The roadmap is expected to enable such level of coordination between Tehran and Beijing that could eat away at Washington's sway in the region and further frustrate its attempts at isolating Tehran.

■ Iran, China 'natural friends'

Takht Ravanchi was then asked if the Islamic Republic was hammering out the agreement with China because it can't come to a deal with the United States and because the U.S. has pushed Iran away.

"No," he asserted, saying the deal "has nothing to do with the U.S."

Iran and China's relations go long back in history, the ambassador said, and declared that the two countries were



"natural friends" both interested in "a strategic alliance."

On the other hand, Iran is "not interested to beg anything from the United States," the official noted.

It was Washington, itself, that left the negotiation table in the first place by leaving a historic 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and then re-imposed the sanctions that the deal had lifted, he stated.

Takht Ravanchi, meanwhile, reminded

that the reinstated U.S. bans have blocked transfer of "food and medicine" to the Islamic Republic among other items, refuting Washington's claims that such items were "exempt" from the coercive measures.

The envoy was also asked how Iran would act vis-a-vis the U.S. if Democratic frontrunner Joe Biden, who has supposedly floated Washington's return to the nuclear deal, was supposed to win the 2020 U.S. elections.

The JCPOA was clinched during the administration of previous US President Barack Obama. Biden, who is now in the race for the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, was the vice president in the then U.S. administration.

"As soon as" Washington returns to the deal and acts like a "normal country" that upholds its commitments under it, then "they can join the other members of the JCPOA ... and have a normal discussion about the nuclear issue," Takht Ravanchi said, referring to the agreement by the abbreviation of its official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Pakistani students in Iran hold virtual session on Kashmir

To deliberate upon the implications of the arbitrary decision of the Indian government to abrogate the special status of Kashmir in violation of international law and the relevant UN resolutions, the embassy of Pakistan in Tehran arranged a virtual interactive session with the Pakistani students in Iran on Thursday, the embassy said in a press release.

Highlighting the legal, security and humanitarian aspects of the decision of the Indian government, the participants discussed the Hindutva driven policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his attempt to end the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August

5, 2019 that was accorded in the Indian Constitution.

By abolishing the articles 35A and 370 of the Constitution, the Indian government has attempted to turn the Muslim majority into minority in Kashmir with the ultimate objective to absorb it in the Indian Union territories. The decision tramples the inalienable right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people and also violate civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The participants also condemned the human rights violations and freedom of the Kashmiri people that have spiked after the abrogation of articles 370 and 35A. Currently, the Kashmiris are under strict lockdown and are facing worst atrocities at the hands of

the Indian security forces especially in the wake of Covid-19. Continuous lockdown has crippled life in Kashmir.

The students were also briefed that the Indian action constituted the material change to the situation in Kashmir which was prohibited under the UNSC resolutions including 38 and 91. Kashmir is an internationally recognized issue that must be settled in accordance with the UNSC resolutions and according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

The students appreciated Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for his support to the Kashmiris in their struggle on different occasions.

Iran seeking expulsion of U.S. outlaws from the region

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Tehran desk says it is investigating the details of the Thursday night's harassment of a Beirut-bound Mahan Air flight by the U.S. warplanes, warning the U.S. against any further escalation.

In a statement on Thursday night, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Iran will take the necessary political and legal actions once the investigation is completed.

According to the Jam-e Jam daily, Mousavi also said presence of U.S. forces in Syria is illegal and Iran will not let any hostile act against the Iranians go unpunished.

The spokesman added that Iran will give "decisive answer to unwise act in proper time."

Warplanes deployed by the so-called U.S.-led coalition operating illegally in Syria conducted aggressive maneuvering close to the Beirut-bound Iranian passenger airplane.

The incident involved two warplanes and Mahan Air's Flight 1152, which had taken off from Tehran and was en route to the Lebanese capital, IRNA reported.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denounced on Friday the harassment of the passenger plane, calling on the international community to stop the U.S. "outlaws" before a disaster happens.

"[the] U.S. illegally occupies territory of another State and then harasses a scheduled civil airliner—endangering innocent civilian passengers—ostensibly to protect its occupation forces. Audacity to compound lawlessness upon lawlessness. These outlaws must be stopped before disaster," Zarif tweeted.

Videos broadcast by Iranian and Lebanese media taken by passengers showed passengers screaming as sudden turbulence seized the plane.

In the aftermath, one video showed a passenger with his face and head bloodied, as well as a man lying down, apparently unconscious, while someone tended to him. Oxygen masks dangled overhead.

Capt. Bill Urban, a spokesman for the U.S. Central Command, said in a statement later Thursday that an Air Force F-15 on "a routine air mission" near a small American military base in southern Syria had conducted "a standard visual inspection of a Mahan Air passenger airliner," the New York Times reported.

Captain Urban claimed the encounter on Thursday was conducted at "a safe distance of approximately 1,000 meters" and was done to "ensure the safety of coalition personnel."

"Once the F-15 pilot identified the aircraft as a Mahan Air passenger plane," Captain Urban added, "the F-15 safely opened distance from the aircraft." He claimed the encounter was done "in accordance with international standards."

A U.S. military official said a second U.S. Air Force F-15 was at least two miles away from the Mahan Air jetliner, but only one of the U.S. aircraft closed to about 1,000 meters.

The plane later landed in Beirut, safely evacuating its passengers. After refueling, it immediately took off and returned to Tehran's Imam Khomeini without any harassment, media reports say.

The IRIB news quoted a passenger describing how his head had hit the roof



of the plane during the change in altitude.

"I don't know what happened. A black plane came close to our plane and our plane lost its balance. I was sprung up and my head was banged against the ceiling," the unnamed passenger told IRIB.

Another said: "It was a fighter jet. A fighter jet was literally sticking to our plane. We lost balance and bounced up and down."

All the passengers left the plane, some with minor injuries, the head of the Beirut airport told Reuters.

The incident comes amid tensions between Tehran and Washington, which deteriorated since 2018 when U.S. President Donald Trump exited Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six world powers and adopted a "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Laya Joneidi, the presidential aide for legal affairs, said harassing a passenger plane is a violation of the principles of international law.

She said the actions taken by the U.S. fighters are a violation of Articles 3 and 44 of the International Civil Aviation Convention (Chicago Convention).

According to Joneidi, the explanations provided so far are unjustified and unconvincing, so the actions taken by the fighters will cause the international responsibility of their respective governments and will lead to legal action by Iran, including in the ICAO Council and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Iran Civil Aviation Organization on Friday lodged a protest at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), condemning the harassment.

"The harassment of the Iranian passenger plane by U.S. warplanes constitutes clear violation of international law as well as aviation standards and regulations," Iran Civil Aviation Organization said in a statement.

It also urged the ICAO to look into the issue as soon as possible.

Iran's permanent mission to the UN is expected to protest the U.S. measure in a letter to the UN Security Council.

According to Tasnim, the letter will be sent to the UN Security Council and the UN secretary general to be recorded

as evidence in the United Nations.

'He who loves his leaders' lives, doesn't mess with our passengers' lives'

As the news broke that the U.S. warplanes harassed the Iranian plane, reactions poured in on social media.

In a tweet on Friday, Hesameddin Ashena, an advisor to the Iranian president, wrote: "He who loves his leaders' lives, doesn't mess with our passengers' lives."

Ardeshir Motahari, representative of Garmsar in the parliament, tweeted: "They want to provoke Iran by attacking the Iranian passenger plane, but they don't know that Iranians not only make good missiles, but they are also good chess players. Wait for [our] tough revenge, but we will determine its time and place. Iran knows what to do."

'Americans should quickly leave the region'

Vali Esmaili, another MP, also tweeted: "The harassment of Iran's passenger plane by U.S.-Israeli warplanes has once again revealed the savage nature of the invading countries. This savage act and the terrorization of Iranian passengers will not go unanswered. The perpetrators of this aggression should wait for the slap of the resistance, and Americans should quickly leave the region."

Reza Nasri, an international law expert, also commented on the incident.

"Since two years ago, the U.S. and Israeli lobbies have launched a calculated legal and psychological campaign against Mahan to pressure Iran by suggesting that the main function of the airline was "military" and could therefore be a legitimate military goal. Today, they are taking advantage of this groundwork."

'Deploable violation of international law'

Ali Najaf Khoshroodi, an advisor to Iran's foreign minister, tweeted: "The attack on the Iranian passenger plane once again revealed the deplorable state of violation of international law. This action, which disrupted aviation security, is a violation of international conventions, including ICAO, and is an illegal act that entails responsibility. International anarchism knows no bounds!"

■ Guardian Council calls for reciprocal steps against U.S.

Abbas Kadhodaei, the spokesman for the Guardian Council, also commented on the plane issue, calling for reciprocal steps against the U.S. He tweeted: "in the face of violations [of law] by other countries, in addition to legal action, there should be reciprocal action, because the legal actions per se take a lot of time. This terrorist act of the U.S. regime, in addition to legal action, on which the honorable officials of the government emphasized, requires a reciprocal action."

Mohsen Abdollahi, an international law professor at Shahid Beheshti University, also tweeted: "It is strictly forbidden under international law to intercept or attack a civilian flight unless the pilot rebels or there is a threat similar to 9/11."

Deputy parliament speaker Seyyed Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh also likened the move by the American warplanes to the ploy used by the Zionist regime's fighter jet on September 8, 2018 as it hid itself behind the Russian airplane causing the Syrian air defense system to mistakenly target the Russian plane.

Calling the move an act contrary to principles of human rights, the senior lawmaker and said the action of Americans warplanes is like using human shield for military purposes.

■ Transport minister calls harassment a 'terrorist act'

Also on Friday, Iranian Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami condemned the harassment of the passenger plane, calling the move a "terrorist act".

"The harassment of an Iranian plane by U.S. warplanes should be met with condemnation... Iran submitted its legal complaint to ICAO in black and white this morning," Eslami said.

The minister rejected the U.S. explanation that the warplanes conducted a "standard visual inspection" of the Iranian plane at a "safe distance", saying that "the U.S. aggression is not acceptable by any logic, and Iran expects an immediate investigation and condemnation."

He added, "Harassing a passenger plane is a terrorist act."

The minister asked, "How can a passenger plane that is flying in its commercial route according to aviation protocols be attacked and threatened by another country's warplanes?"

Eslami said the U.S. warplanes' maneuvering was "illegal and in violation of the Chicago Convention" on International Civil Aviation, and that Iran has right to follow up on the incident at the legal level.

"Iran will never forgive the U.S. administration's flagrant aggression," noted the minister.

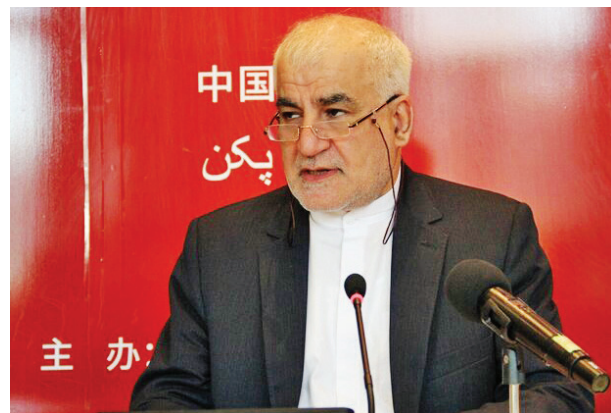
He also called on the governments of Syria and Lebanon to take reciprocal steps and help Iran by filing lawsuits against the U.S.

"Unfortunately, 12 people, including the flight's crew and passengers, have been hurt in this terrorist act. As the warplanes harassed (the plane), the pilot was forced to immediately lower the altitude to avoid being hit by a missile, which greatly hurt the passengers," the transport minister stated.

U.S. ugly face exposed to the world: ambassador

1→ He added that the Islamic Republic condemns the U.S. government's decision to close the Chinese consulate in Houston and believes that China will certainly respond appropriately.

In a retaliatory measure on Friday, China ordered the closure of the U.S. consulate in the south-western city of Chengdu.



China said the move was a "necessary response" to the U.S. According to China's Foreign Ministry, the closure was a "legitimate and necessary response to the unreasonable actions taken by the United States."

"The current situation between China and the United States is something China does not want to see, and the responsibility rests entirely with the United States," the ministry said. "We once again urge the U.S. to immediately revoke the erroneous decision to create necessary conditions for the return of bilateral relations to normal."

On Twitter, Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry, said the order was "a legitimate and necessary response to the unilateral provocative move by the U.S. to demand the closure of China's Consulate General in Houston."

The kind of 'balanced ties' that Iraqi PM seeks to establish

1→ told the Tehran Times. Mousavi said the Iraqi government needs to establish coordination with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. to move forward with its internal security, political and economic plans.

Al-Kadhimi presented a "governmental program" to the Iraqi parliament, after he was named by the Iraqi president to form a government. He said in the program that Iraq's foreign relations would be based on three pillars: sovereignty, balance and cooperation.

According to the program, which was passed by the parliament, national sovereignty cannot be ensured without relying on the principle of balance in foreign relations and the balance requires Iraq to avoid taking sides in conflicts. The program also stipulates that the government should seek cooperation at the regional and international levels and secure Iraq's national interests through dialogue and bilateral cooperation.

Al-Kadhimi's visit to Iran was a major step towards securing Iraq's national interests, according to Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's former ambassador to Iraq.

"The Iraqi prime minister's visit to Iran was important, because the U.S. has sought to put pressure on Iraq to sever its economic relations with Iran. Iraq plays a pivotal role in circumventing the U.S. sanctions on Iran. That's why the Americans seeks to disrupt the cooperation between Iran and Iraq. But al-Kadhimi showed by visiting Iran that what matters most to him is the Iraqi interests, and these interests are dependent on expanding ties with Iran," the former diplomat told the Tehran Times.

Kazemi Qomi also said that Iran's strategic policy towards Iraq was to help the Iraqi people at all times, and that no county can claim that it has stood by the Iraqi people like Iran.

During his visit to Iran, al-Khadimi touched on this reality. Speaking at a joint press conference with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, he said: "We fought against terrorism and Takfiri groups, and Iran was the first country to stand by Iraq in this fight. We will not forget this. That's why Iraq is standing by Iran so that it tackles its economic challenges. Iraq has become a market for Iranian goods."

But the prime minister also needs to maintain good relations with Saudi Arabia and the U.S., because these countries could disrupt his internal plans, if he chooses to further tilt the balance in Iran's favor, according to Mousavi, who is now director of the Tehran-based Center for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

"The U.S. and Saudi Arabia have zero tolerance for the expansion of ties between Iran and Iraq. They are very sensitive about the expansion of ties. But Iran has no problem with Iraq expanding ties with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia," Mousavi told the Tehran Times.

According to Mousavi, the U.S.-Saudi zero tolerance policy was on full display in the electricity crisis in Iraq.

The country is suffering from shortage of electricity, especially in the summertime, which led it to import electricity from neighboring Iran. In an attempt to strangle Iran's economy, the U.S. is putting pressure on Iraq to abide by its sanctions on Iran by ending energy imports from Iran.

"They are not helping Iraq on the electricity issue, nor are they allowing Iran to do so," added Mousavi.

In light of this reality, al-Kadhimi seeks to establish "balanced ties" with countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. to implement his programs and secure Iraq's national interests through cooperating with all major regional and international players.

He is expected to visit the U.S. in late July. The Americans are already threatening sanctions on some Iraqi officials in the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) for their close relationship with Iran. And the Saudis have already asked al-Kadhimi to postpone his visit to Saudi Arabia. So it's not clear if the Americans and Saudis support the prime minister's idea of balancing Iraq's ties with their countries.

Therefore, the Iraqi prime minister's push to balance his country's ties with other countries isn't aimed at undermining ties with Iran. Instead, it's aimed at creating a long-term framework for the Tehran-Baghdad ties. Iraq has much in common with Iran. Tehran has clearly voiced its support for al-Kadhimi, because Iran itself pursues balanced ties with neighboring countries.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that it should have friendly and balanced relations in the region, especially with the neighboring countries," IRNA quoted Abbas Mousavi, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, as saying on July 17.

All forces present in Syria without permission must leave, Iran's UN envoy says

Takht-Ravanchi censures Washington's sanctions on Syria as 'shameful'

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — All foreign forces who have entered Syria with the permission of the Damascus government must leave the country, the Iranian ambassador to the UN said on Thursday.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi said all should fully respect Syria's national sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity.

Following is the text of Takht-Ravanchi's speech to the UN Security Council on Syria:

On July 1st, a virtual meeting of the Summit of Astana Format was held to discuss different aspects of the situation in Syria.

Following discussions on the latest developments, the Presidents issued a joint statement, where they emphasized their strong commitments to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria; opposed illegitimate self-rule initiatives and separatist agendas; renounced the imposition of unilateral sanctions on Syria; rejected the occupation of Syrian Golan and condemned the relevant U.S. decision; considered the Israeli military attacks in Syria as destabilizing and violating its sovereignty and territorial integrity; and reaffirmed their determination to cooperate in eliminating all UNSC-designated terrorist groups.

We once again stress that the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria must be fully respected by all, and accordingly, all foreign forces whose presence is not permitted by the Syrian

Government must leave the Syrian territory.

The prominent example is the occupation of parts of Syria by the U.S. forces, who continue looting the Syrian oil and wealth as well as supporting and shielding terrorist groups under the mask of combatting terrorism.

Similarly, Israel's acts of aggression against Syria are in gross violation of international law and the UN Charter, in the face of which, the Syrian Government has a sovereign right to decide how and when to exercise its inherent right to individual or collective self-defense. Such aggressions must come to an end.

The occupation of Syrian Occupied Golan by Israel is illegal, and the recognition by the U.S. of Golan's annexation by Israel is null and void. Condemning such unlawful irresponsible acts, we stress that Golan is and will remain a part and parcel of the Syrian territory.

We reiterate our principled position that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict and it must only be resolved through a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, UN-facilitated political process.

Underlining that the establishment of the Constitutional Committee is an achievement of the Astana format, and welcoming the agreement to hold its next meeting in August, we support the Committee's work. Committee's activities must continue without any external pressure, and any possible assistance thereto, even by the United Nations, must be extended only at the request of the Committee itself in accordance with its ROP

TEDPIX gains 60,000 points in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), increased 60,000 points, or three percent, during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported by IRNA, the index stood at 1.901 million points in the previous week.



The indices of Bank Mellat, National Iranian Copper Company, Iran Khodro Investment Company, Ghadir Investment Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, and Tehran Refinery were the major contributors to the weekly rise of TEDPIX.

On Tuesday, a capital market expert said that TEDPIX is expected to climb to 2.5 million-2.7 million points by the end of Iran's second quarter (September 21).

Referring to the new record registered by the index on Monday, Bahador Shams told IRNA that a noticeable amount of liquidity is leading to the stock market and many investors are seeking to make investment in this market.

There is a high demand in the market, he underscored.

TEDPIX hit a new record high on Monday, as it exceeded 1.9 million points.

The index gained 46,814 points to 1.911 million during the Monday trades.

It 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.

Iran attaches high priority to expand economic ties with Azerbaijan: envoy

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Iran's newly-appointed Ambassador to Azerbaijan Republic Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday that boosting economic relations between Tehran and Baku is a high priority for Iran, IRNA reported.

Making the remarks in a meeting with Governor-General of Iran's East Azarbaijan Province, Mohammad-Reza Pour-Mohammadi, said that the neighboring states will have an important role to play in the future of Tehran's political and diplomatic relations with other countries due to the cruel sanctions imposed against Iran.

Border provinces of Iran have a crucial role to this end, he said, adding that East Azarbaijan is of high importance as the province enjoys the appropriate commercial, economic and industrial infrastructures.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mousavi outlined the development of cultural, academic, and scientific relations as other priorities of Iran's diplomacy with Azerbaijan, noting that the exchange of students and holding joint conferences can be effective in the expansion of bilateral relations.

In a telephone conversation in late June, Iran's Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dehpasand and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev explored the ways for the expansion of bilateral economic relation between the two countries amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Dehpasand, who is also the Iranian chairman of the joint cooperation committee of the two counties, said, "I hope that with the help of bilateral cooperation, we will be able to witness the expansion and strengthening of economic relations between Iran and Azerbaijan."

The minister also expressed hope that through observing anti-coronavirus health protocols the two sides can hold the 14th meeting of Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee in the near future.

He also referred to the building of a joint industrial park near the border of the two countries and joint projects of North-South Corridor which is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road routes for moving freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

A preliminary agreement on the establishment of a joint Iranian-Azerbaijani industrial park was reached in 2019. Along with a joint industrial park, the two countries will also set up a joint logistics center in Iran's Ardebil Province.

Dehpasand wanted Mustafayev to take measures to support Iranian transit drivers dealing with issues when entering Azerbaijan in the time of coronavirus.

Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Mustafayev said his country has a comprehensive plan to limit the negative effects of the coronavirus outbreak and to support the employers and people active in trade and economy, and promised to pursue all the points mentioned by the Iranian side and try to finalize the projects with collaboration.

During an online meeting in late April, Iran and Azerbaijan had reviewed customs and transportation cooperation, and discussed the issues regarding the limitations and the lockdown applied by both countries due to the coronavirus outbreak.

As reported, the Azeri side of the meeting was headed by the country's Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee Cavad Mustafa Gasimov.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed the compliance of cargo transportation through the two countries' border crossings with the quarantine regime applied amid the pandemic, and they also explored the regulations regarding vehicle traffic and the transfer of goods across the border.

They also discussed the technical issues related to the transfer of cargos to their joint vehicle manufacturing plant AzKron which is operating in the Naftchala industrial zone in southern Baku.

As one of the biggest production units in Naftchala zone, AzKron is currently producing several models of passenger cars.

Having close cultural ties, Iran and Azerbaijan have broadened their relations in all areas in the past few years.

Govt. considering incentive packages to encourage returning export revenues

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Head of d e s k Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has emphasized the positive effect of incentive packages for encouraging exporters to return their export revenues into the country's economic cycle, TPO portal reported.

In a meeting of the Supreme Council for the Development of Non-Oil Exports' Expert Committee, various ways and solutions for increasing the commitment of the exporters in returning the foreign revenue earned from their non-oil exports into the country's forex management system (known as NIMA) were explored among which was considering incentive packages.

Speaking in the meeting, Hamid Zadboum noted that the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry is obliged to follow up on the process of re-injection of foreign currency incomes into the NIMA system and to implement the necessary mechanisms like using incentive tools.

In this regard, Zadboum called on various government and private sector bodies to present their suggestions on ways to accelerate the return of the foreign currency



earned from exports, so that appropriate actions could be taken after reviewing the solutions and implementing the decisions.

"Investigating the exporters who do not return the export currency to the country's

economic cycle within the specified deadline is one of the main programs that the Trade Promotion Organization is pursuing," he said.

He emphasized the need for considering incentive packages by TPO and the Central

Agricultural projects worth \$809.5m inaugurated in 3 provinces

I → As one of the largest irrigation projects in the country, the first phase of Minab plain irrigation network project was inaugurated with the aim of optimal utilization of water resources and agricultural development for various products like eggplant, onion, pepper, and watermelon, wheat, canola and sunflower.

Cultivating gardens in steep lands, in addition to preventing soil erosion, will generate employment and

increase income for the people of the region.

According to the Head of Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization Masoud Mansour, in the past two years over 60,000 hectares of gardens have been established in sloping and low-yield lands across the country, which has consequently created 20,000 jobs and increased production by 183,000 tons.

The greenhouse complex inaugurated in Arnan

village in Yazad is established in an area of 15,000 square meters by the private sector and with government support.

This complex has currently provided direct jobs for 15 people.

In this greenhouse, about 600 tons of lettuce and cabbage are produced annually, which in addition to meeting the needs of Yazd, are also sent to other provinces.

Khosravi border between Iran, Iraq reopens

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Khosravi d e s k Border between Iran and Iraq was reopened on Thursday after several months of closing due to the coronavirus pandemic, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said, "The border crossing resumed operation on Thursday following the Iraqi side's announcement. Iranian goods can be transported to Iraq through this border, and no restriction has been already announced", Mehr news agency reported.

On July 10, Farzad Piltan, the director-general of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Office of Arabian and African Countries, had announced that Iran and Iraq were going to resume trade exchanges through Mandali and Shalamchah borders following the reopening of the mentioned crossings from the Iraqi side.

"The Iraqi government has agreed to reopen the Shalamchah and Mandali borders after the joint trade borders with the Kurdistan Region were reopened earlier," the official said.

Following the outbreak of the new coronavirus, all trade borders between Iran and Iraq were closed, however with the partial control of the pandemic's first wave, trade borders between the two countries were gradually reopened, he added.

"Trade from the mentioned border crossings is going to be carried out in accordance with international health and safety protocols", the official underscored.

Noting that declining trade with Iraq would hurt both sides, Piltan added:



"Diplomatic efforts and negotiations with Iraqi officials led the Iraqi government to agree to the limited reopening of borders in Shalamchah, and Somar, and the process of exporting from these borders will begin soon."

He expressed hope that with the reopening of all trade borders with Iraq, the trade between the two countries will return to normal and will continue to grow.

Head of Iraq's Border Crossing Authority, Omar al-Waeli had announced on July 6 that the country's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi agreed to resume partial trade in the Mandali and Shalamchah border markets with Iran.

"According to this decision, 250 shipments from Iran will enter Iraq for two days a week through the Shalamchah border in Basra and Mandali border in Diyala province," al-Waeli said.

Head of Iraq's Border Crossing Authority said: "Only the exchange of goods is allowed and the entry of passengers into the border crossings for any reason is prevented."

In mid-March, the Iraqi Border Crossing Authority closed border crossings with Iran and its neighbors to prevent the coronavirus outbreak.

Trade co-op discussed between Iranian, Italian businessmen

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**—The think d e s k tank European House - Ambrosetti in partnership with the Italian Embassy in Tehran and the Tehran's Chamber of Commerce – hosted a virtual Business Forum on "Economic relations between Italy and Iran in the current context: non-oil sectors, SMEs' role, EU support" on Wednesday evening.

More than 800 Italian and Iranian representatives from the private sector, business consultants and professionals attended the online event, aimed at discussing avenues for economic cooperation, building on a long-standing tradition of friendly relations and vibrant economic bonds between Italy and Iran.

The online event offered participants the opportunity to analyze the current economic context and lay the premises for increased cooperation. Furthermore, a special virtual B2B session was held where participants established direct contact, with a view to exploring options for further cooperation and exchange.

In his opening remarks the Italian Ambassador in Tehran, Giuseppe Perrone, highlighted Italy's wish to bring economic and trade relations with Iran back on a positive trajectory.

While appreciating the commitment and professionalism by Iranian private sector, he pointed out the deep historical ties existing between the two countries as well as the significant number of Italian companies who over the years have built strong relationships in Iran and look forward to the opportunity of advancing their cooperation.

On his part, the Chairman of Tehran's Chamber of Commerce, Masoud Khansari, encouraged participants to bet on Iran's



important economic potential and to develop effective partnerships, including by seizing the opportunities available in the broader region.

Khansari also recognized the special role Italy has always played as a key partner to the Iranian private sector in trade and investment activities, wishing that Italian companies continue to be a reference point for their Iranian counterparts.

The event also included a presentation by experts from the European Union, of new tools made available at the EU level to facilitate trade relations between European companies and Iranian ones.

Although the U.S. renewed sanctions against the Iranian economy are preventing Iran's European trade partners to do business with the Islamic Republic, Italian traders and businessmen seem strongly determined to preserve their trade ties with Iran.

They did not leave the Iranian market even in the previous round of the sanctions.

During a number of meetings between Iranian and Italian officials and businesspeople after the imposition of the new round of sanctions, the Italian side has repeatedly expressed its eagerness and determination to preserve and even expand economic and trade cooperation with Iran.

Average monthly household spending up 27%: SCI

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – The average monthly net d e s k expenditure of Iranian urban households in the previous Iranian calendar month of Tir (ended on July 21) increased by 27 percent compared to the same month last year, ISNA reported.

As reported, the figure also registered a four-percent increase month on month.

According to ISNA, although the data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) indicates a downward trend for some of the inflation indicators, the net expenditure by

the households has not shown any decrease.

In late June, SCI reported that the average annual net expenditure of Iranian urban households in the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020) increased by 21 percent compared to the preceding year.

Based on the report, the annual cost of Iranian urban households was estimated to be 474.379 million rials (about \$11,300), while the average annual income of a household in the mentioned period was estimated at 541 million rials (about \$12,800), 24.4 percent more than the previous year (1397).

Completing semi-finished projects a priority for Industry Ministry

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Iranian d e s k deputy industry, mining, and trade minister for industry affairs has said that completing semi-finished industrial projects and boosting the production of active units are the main goals of the ministry in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

"This year, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has identified four axes as the priorities for its programs, one of which is completing semi-finished projects and increasing the production capacity of active units," Shata quoted Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki as saying.

According to Niaraki, the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry is implementing the "Per-

sistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program in the current year, based on which 200 industrial, mining, and trade projects valued at 1.7 quadrillion rials (about \$40.47 billion) will be inaugurated across the country.

These projects will create direct job opportunities for 41,000 people, the official said.

The official also mentioned the ministry's plans for reviving idle production units and said: "This program is being pursued with the focus on the Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), and as planned by the ministry, reviving 1,500 industrial units in the current year is on the agenda."

"Since the beginning of this year, more than 381 units with the capacity to restore employment for more than 10,000 people have returned to the production cycle," Niaraki said.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the Industry Ministry has been inaugurating several industrial, mining, or economic projects in various provinces every week.

The ministry's "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program was implemented following the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran scheme which kicked off by the energy ministry last year and is continuing in the current year.



According to the A-B-Iran scheme [the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian], Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate some water, electricity projects across the country every week.

Power consumption by agricultural sector up 4%

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian Energy Ministry's Spokesman for Electricity Industry, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, has said that the electricity consumption by the agricultural sector has increased by four percent in the current Iranian calendar year compared to the previous year.

According to Rajabi Mashhadi, the consumption by the industry sector has also increased by 10.6 percent, IRNA reported.

"The growth of electricity consumption in the agricultural and industrial sectors comes as every year the number of electricity consumers is increased by about one million, while nearly 1,000 megawatts of new industrial subscribers are also added [to the consumer population]," the official said on Thursday.

The addition of new subscribers as well as the growth of consumption in both agriculture and industry sectors are the main factors contributing to the increase in consumption this year, he added.

He also underlined the increasing use of air conditioning devices in the summer period as one of the major reasons for the increase in the country's electricity consumption, calling on people to manage their consumption and use the auto-



matically regulated devices to decrease energy waste.

According to Rajabi Mashhadi, over 22,000 MW of the country's electricity consumption is accounted for by the cooling devices, which is more than the average figure in the neighboring countries.

Last week, Rajabi Mashhadi said that

the country's power network is in a stable condition and no power outage is expected to occur during the summer peak period.

Mentioning the implementation of a program called "Zero 99" (a plan aiming for zero power outages in the summer of the current Iranian calendar year 1399), Rajabi Mashhadi said: "This program means

passing the summer peak consumption period without blackouts."

According to the official, construction of 2,000 megawatts of new power plants, upgrading the production capacity of existing power plants, carrying out power plant overhauls and entering power plants with full capacity into the power grid and construction of transmission networks have been among the activities carried out in Zero 99 program.

Earlier this month, Iran's Power Generation, Transmission, and Distribution Management Company, known as TAVANIR announced that the daily electricity consumption in the country reached 58,104 megawatts (58.1 gigawatts), registering the highest power consumption recorded in the history of Iran's electricity industry.

Meanwhile, Rajabi Mashhadi had said that 14 provinces were in the red zone for high electricity consumption and TAVANIR might be forced to cut some over-consumers from the grid.

"If consumers cooperate [and manage their consumption], we will get through the summer without any blackouts, otherwise we will have to impose some restrictions," Mashhadi told ILNA on July 18.

IOEC starts constructing Iran's longest underwater gas pipeline

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company (IOEC) has started the construction of the country's longest underwater gas transmission pipeline as part of a project to transfer gas to Kish Island power plants, IRIB reported.

According to the Operator of Kish Gas Field's Development Project Abdollah Mehrabi, in this project, a 32-inch gas transmission pipeline and an 18-kilometer fiber-optic cable will be laid between Kish Island and Bandar Aftab.

Mehrabi stated that the purpose of this project is to send gas to Kish Island gas power plants, adding: "The Kish Island gas supply pipeline project will be derived from the seventh national line in the north of Bastak city in the southern Hormozgan province and will lead to Kish Island gas power plants."

Engineering studies, supply of goods and implementation of piping and cabling of the mentioned project have been carried out by Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company as the contractor of the project, Mehrabi said.



The official noted that based on engineering calculations and considering the depth limitation on the Kish Island coast, this project is going to be the longest offshore pipeline operation.

"According to the plan, piping operation will be completed in 20 working days depending on to the weather conditions," he said.

Located below Kish Island in the Persian Gulf, Iran, Kish Gas Field has been under development since 2012.

The field was discovered in 2006 by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and is the world's fifth biggest offshore gas field.

The field is being developed by Iranian Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC).

Pars petchem output up 19 percent Y/Y

TEHRAN (Shana) — The Managing Director of Pars Petrochemical Company said the plant's output grew by 19 percent in the calendar year of 1398 which ended on March 19, in comparison with the preceding year.

Addressing the company's annual general assembly, Massoud Hassani said on Tuesday that in 1398, the complex had produced a total of 4.205 million tons of products, adding the company's butane production increased by 20 percent, ethyl benzene by 23 percent, styrene monomer by 23 percent and ethane production by 17 percent.

He said that the production record of 5 percent higher than the nominal capacity was one of the achievements of Pars Petrochemical Company in terms of production, and said in 1398, compared to the previous year, the production of the plant rose by 19 percent.

The CEO mentioned the 13 percent increase in sales of the company's products in terms of volume as another



achievement of Pars Petrochemical Plant in 1398, and said: "Sales of the profitable styrene monomer in 1398 increased by 23 percent in terms of volume."

He also stated that in terms of increasing the company's sales in Rials in 1398, compared to the previous year, "we had a total increase of 61 percent, in styrene monomer 66 percent, pentane 75 percent, butane 49 percent and propane 41 percent."

The company's gross profit increased by 28 percent and operational profits by 5 percent year-on-year, he added, saying the basic profit per share in 1398 increased by 1.2 percent.

Saudi oil revenues continue to slide after ending price war

Oil revenues for the world's largest oil exporter, Saudi Arabia, continued to slide in May after the Kingdom ended its oil price war with Russia, with the income from oil exports plunging by 65 percent year on year, data from Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Statistics showed on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia's total exports plunged in May 2020 compared to May 2019. The significantly lower value of oil exports was the main drag on overall Saudi merchandise exports in May — the first month in which the OPEC+ group cut production by record levels after Saudi Arabia and Russia forged a new deal to cut supply to the market amid the demand crash in the pandemic.

As reported by oilprice.com, the value of Saudi Arabia's oil exports plunged by \$11.8 billion (44.277 billion Saudi riyals), or by 65.0 percent year on year in May, the General Authority for Statistics said.

The share of oil exports in total exports declined from



78.6 percent in May 2019 to 65.4 percent in May 2020.

The drop in oil revenues for May follows a similar drop of US\$12 billion in Saudi oil revenues for April, when the Kingdom made good on its promise to flood the market

with oil and contributed to the oil price plunge to the lowest since 1999 together with the crash in demand during the lockdowns in Europe and the United States.

The rebound in oil prices since May could slow the drop in Saudi oil income in June and July, but the world's top oil exporter is feeling the pinch from the low oil prices and the low oil exports as per the OPEC+ deal.

Earlier this year, after the price crash it helped create by flooding the market with oil, Saudi Arabia tripled its value-added tax (VAT) and suspended cost-of-living allowances as part of a new round of painful austerity measures to save its finances.

Earlier in July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that the price plunge and the production cuts would hit oil exporters in the West Asia and North Africa (MENA) hard, with the combined oil income for those countries expected to plummet by \$270 billion this year compared to 2019.

World's largest economies are still spending big on oil and gas

By Irina Slav

Spending on oil and gas, and coal is still higher among members of G20 than spending on renewable energy, a data update from the Energy Policy Tracker has revealed. Across the group, since the start of the pandemic, governments had pledged at least \$160.95 billion in fossil fuel investments, versus \$123.75 billion in renewable energy investment, the tracker, which updates government spending data on energy every week, said. This translates into \$35.10 per capita in oil and gas spending, and \$26.99 per capita for cleaner energy spending.

Most of the so-called unconditional fossil fuel investment was on oil and gas, unsurprisingly, with just \$10.20 billion of the total allocated for coal. While this may sound like ten billion dollars too much to spend on the most polluting fossil fuel, G20 governments also allocated \$38.44 billion on unconditional renewable energy. This was, however, the smaller portion of the total renewable energy spending; the bulk was pledged for so-called clean conditional energy, the Energy Policy Tracker said.

The tracker defines clean conditional policies as those that "are stated to support the transition away from fossil fuels, but unspecific about the implementation of appropriate environmental safeguards. Examples include: large-hydropower; rail public transport and electric vehicles (electric cars, bicycles, scooters, boats etc) using multiple energy types."

This means that G20 members are spending—and planning to spend more on the electrification of transport than on boosting renewable energy capacity to produce the power required for this electrification drive.

On the other hand, the 19 countries and the European Union that make up G20 plan to spend most of their fossil fuel money on unconditional oil and gas—this means investment in the production and consumption of oil and gas "without any climate targets or additional pollution reduction requirements," as the tracker puts it.

This doesn't look too well in the context of the climate change narrative but, of course, there are marked differences in spending priorities among G20 governments.

The European Union is among the best

performers here: the bloc earlier this week agreed on a historic post-crisis economic recovery program that heavily features green energy. Of the total \$2.1 billion that the EU approved for its 2021-2027 budget—including the Covid-19 recovery fund—almost a third will be spent on climate change-related projects, in line with the EU's net zero plans for the period to 2050. In absolute terms, this translates into \$572 billion on green policies and initiatives.

Outside the European Union, China has made strong policy commitments for conditional clean energy and a lot lower commitments for unconditional fossil fuels. The country has pledged some \$27.23 billion for conditional clean energy and just \$3.99 billion to unconditional fossil fuels. This is unsurprising given China's place as top renewable energy spender even if this approach has come back to haunt Beijing with a \$42-billion unpaid renewable energy subsidy bill.

The United States appears to be the biggest spender on unconditional oil and gas: most of its policy commitments since the start of the crisis are in this area, totaling \$68.12 billion, versus \$26.91 billion for clean

conditional policies. Again, this is hardly a surprise with a federal government that has prioritized the country's energy security and even dominance.

Outside Europe and North America, G20 members are spending on fossil fuels over anything else with the marked exception of Brazil, which has made commitments on clean energy and what the Energy Policy Tracker calls "other energy", which includes things like nuclear and polluting biomass and biofuels.

Meanwhile, the pressure against the oil and gas industry continues in the form of an investor outflow. In the U.S., no less, several universities have sworn off oil and gas investments, according to a recent Wall Street Journal report. In Europe, none other than the Vatican joined the anti-fossil fuels crowd with the pope personally advising Catholics to stop investing in oil and gas.

The discrepancy between this pressure and G20 governments' energy policy plans suggests energy security is still a priority over the source of the energy that provides this security. For now, it seems, for most G20 members, oil and gas are better at providing the security.

Rosneft discovers new oil, gas field at Russian Vostok Oil project

Russia's largest crude producer Rosneft said July 23 that it has discovered a new field containing an estimated 20 million metric tons (mt), or around 146 million barrels of oil, and 1 Bcm of gas, as part of its Vostok Oil project in Northern Russia.

Vostok Oil links some of the company's vast resources with the Northern Sea Route -- a development priority for Russia that ships to both European and Asian markets.

Russia is pushing for greater development of the Arctic despite high costs, difficult weather conditions, ecological concerns, and sanctions targeting some oil production there. Earlier this year Russian President Vladimir Putin approved tax exemptions to stimulate Arctic upstream oil and gas development.

Rosneft estimates Vostok Oil's resource base at around 5 billion mt of light, sweet oil. The project includes the Vankor cluster, the Zapadno-Irkinsky block, the Payakhskaya group of fields and the East Taimyr cluster. Rosneft said previously that the project may supply 25 million mt of oil to global markets in 2024. This may increase to 50 million mt in 2027, and 115 million mt by 2030. Rosneft has held talks with Indian and Western investors on joining the project.

The new field, named Novoogennoye, is on the border with the Krasnoyarsk Territory and the Yamal-Nenets autonomous region. Design documentation for additional exploration of the field and preparation for commercial development is currently being prepared, Rosneft said.

Rosneft Vankor, which discovered the field, is carrying out exploration work at 38 licensed blocks, and previously discovered the Baikalskoye, Icheminskoye and Gorchinskoye fields. It estimates that the resource potential of the Vankor cluster has more than doubled since commercial production began in 2009, including a 20% increase in oil reserves, and a 54% increase in gas.

China's Sinopec seeks long-term LNG as prices remain low

China's Sinopec is seeking liquefied natural gas (LNG) for delivery over a 10-year period to take advantage of the current low prices as gas demand has fallen because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Sinopec, officially named China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, is seeking 1 million tonnes of LNG a year for delivery over 10 years starting from 2023, Reuters reported citing industry sources.

Offers are due by Friday and will remain valid until mid-August, one of the sources said.

Sinopec declined to comment.

The firm is likely seeking long-term LNG at a time when prices for both long-term contracts and spot cargoes are low, a second source said.

Asian spot LNG prices LNG-AS, which buyers are increasingly using as a gauge to negotiate their long-term contracts, are hovering near record lows.

Prices of long-term contracts that are typically priced on Brent oil are also being negotiated at lower levels.

"Expectations for long-term demand are still bullish so it's a good time to buy long-term cargoes," another of the sources, based in Beijing said, declining to be named as he was not authorized to speak with media.

"It's the lowest price range now and so is a good time to discuss long-term deals."

Sinopec is also looking for volumes from the United States as part of the tender requirement, a fourth source said.

Sinopec, expected to be the next major Chinese buyer of U.S. LNG, had been in discussions with Houston-based Cheniere Energy to sign a 20-year deal but Reuters reported in January that both companies were planning to review terms of the deal after a sharp drop in prices.

China's long-term gas demand is expected to grow, stoked by the country's push to shift to the cleaner fuel from coal.

Dozens of queries show investor appetite for India oil firm sale

India's biggest asset sale program is drawing interest from global investors despite the volatility in the oil markets and devastating fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

As many as 81 queries were sent by prospective bidders vying for state-owned oil refiner-cum-fuel retailer Bharat Petroleum Corp., according to officials with knowledge of the matter. While the questions from multiple international oil majors is a reflection of interest, it doesn't mean they will translate into bids, they said, without disclosing how many companies have sought clarifications.

A government official had previously said that several top oil producers from the West Asia and Russia's Rosneft PJSC have shown interest in buying BPCL, which is India's third-biggest refiner and second-largest fuel retailer.

The Indian government is in the process of clarifying these queries through a corrigendum to the offer document, and will go ahead with the privatization. The process can rake in a sizable amount and support its coffers depleted by sluggish tax revenues and dole outs to shield the poor from the virus fallout.

BPCL is a high-quality asset and its value hasn't eroded despite the fall in share price, the people said, asking not to be identified as the information is not public.

Spokespeople at the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas didn't respond to queries seeking comment.

The government doesn't plan to dilute the \$10 billion net worth clause for bidders, showing the administration's confidence in getting bigger players for the transaction. Only two Indian companies make the cut, of which only one is in the oil and gas sector, the people said, referring to Reliance Industries Ltd.

The last date for submitting initial bids for Indian government's 52.98% holding in BPCL is July 31.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is offering employees shares at a discounted price as an incentive for the privatization, they said.

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept**Tel: 021 - 430 51 430**

times1979@gmail.com



tehrantimes79



tehrantimes79

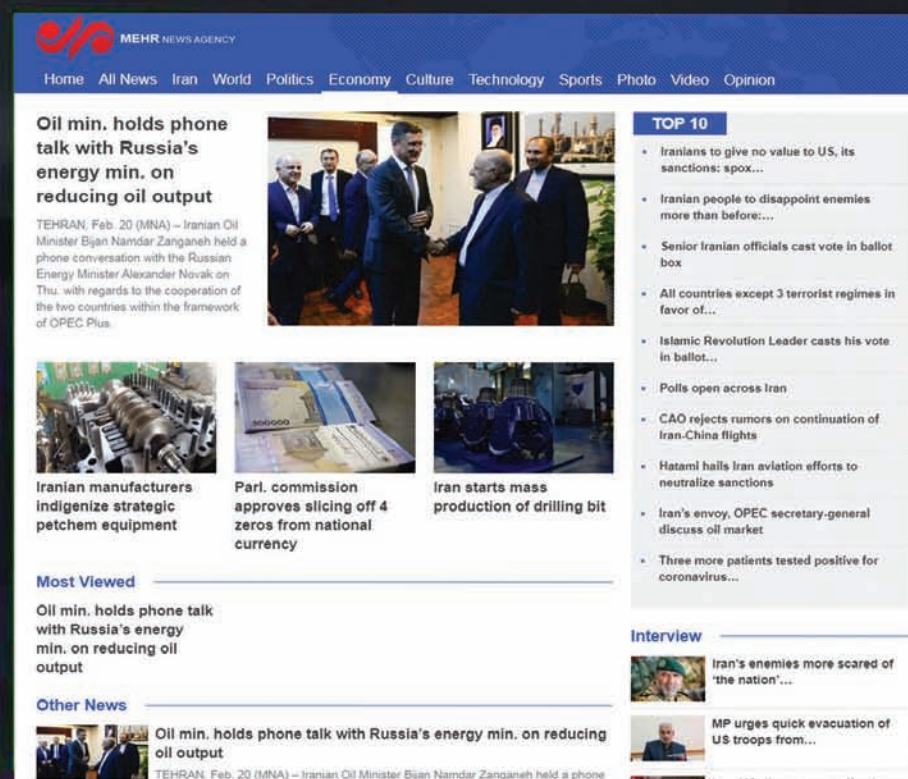
Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



PIC-COLLAGE

English page of Mehr News provides you
with great opportunity to advertise.

Get in touch
www.mehrnews.com



en.mehrnews.com

@Mehrnewscom

Catch up with the latest news in Iran and beyond with

**Mehr News English**

If Salman dies tribal hostilities will mushroom in Saudi Arabia, says ex-advisor to Saudi finance minister

“MBS is making enemies in every corner of the Kingdom”

TEHRAN— Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, believes that “Salman’s death will not significantly affect Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy.”

However, Askari says he thinks “Saudi foreign policy depends much more on the result of the U.S. elections.”

Askari tells the Tehran Times that if the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden wins the election he “will be undoing Trump’s most egregious policies and one of these, the support for MBs will fall by the wayside.”

Following is the text of the interview: ■ When Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) took power, he marginalized opponents in various ways and even imprisoned and punished them. He paved the way for his rise to power. Is the path to power perfectly smooth?

A: “I believe not. MBS upended the al-Saud family agreement on succession to the throne. King Salman did nothing as his son put the designated Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Nayef, under house arrest and tortured him into accepting to step aside. MBS in turn arrested many senior members of his family and other high profile Saudis outside his family to extract money before he set them free. MBS has had other opponents arrested and tortured. Most notably he ordered the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey. His oppressive rule is taking a toll. He is making enemies in every corner of the Kingdom. And above all, don’t forget al-Qaeda, the mortal enemy of the al-Sauds, just waiting for the right time and opportunity.”

■ With the hospitalization of King Salman it seems that MBS intends to establish himself as the king before the end of Trump’s presidency. Why does MBS insist on consolidating his power before the end of Trump’s presidency?

A: “First, let me remind you about the pillars of al-Saud rule—family harmony, U.S. support in its many forms, plenty of oil cash to buy domestic support and low profile in regional affairs. The Trump Administration has supported



his domestic oppression and his crimes outside of Saudi Arabia. Most notably the brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi and his crimes in Yemen. But as you well know, king or not, MBS has been the de facto ruler of the Kingdom since becoming Crown Prince. King Salman has been helpful in keeping his enemies within the 20,000 member al-Saud tribe, they really are a tribe and not a family, in check. But when Salman dies, I believe tribal hostilities will mushroom. At first in secret but then more openly. MBS is afraid of that. But for now he has Trump-Kushner in his pocket and he feels safe. But when Salman dies and Trump is no longer president, things could spiral out of control. There is no love for him in his own tribe. He is hated by the U.S. establishment. The country is no longer awash with cash to

buy domestic loyalty and support. His regional enemies have been somewhat kept in check. And al-Qaeda is in the wings. He wants to establish himself more firmly while his father is still alive and Trump is in power.”

■ If MBS becomes king, who will be his most important opponents at home. And are they a serious danger to him?

A: “He has opponents inside and outside Saudi Arabia. Are they a danger, yes. Let me explain. Inside, he is hated by many members of the al-Saud tribe. Mohammad bin Nayef has close connections to the U.S. intelligence services. His close ally in the tribe, Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, who also has close relations with the Saudi National Guard will be by his side or mount his own opposition. Then there is Prince Ahmad bin Abdulaziz, the uncle of MBS and the rightful heir if

succession rules had been respected. I believe there are a number of younger al-Sauds that are also thirsting for power. Their names are not yet in bright lights but they are there. But most important, I believe that al-Qaeda is waiting for its golden opportunity—no Salman and no Trump-Kushner, the two financial opportunists who have supported him. I think Mohammad bin Nayef, Mutaib bin Abdullah and Prince Ahmad, other younger members of the tribe and al-Qaeda are serious threats to MBS.”

■ If the Democratic candidate in the United States win the elections and MBS becomes the king, will there be a change in relations between Washington and Riyadh?

A: “Definitely yes. As I said earlier, MBS is universally hated in the United States. He has been riding high because of the corrupt support he has received from Trump-Kushner, support that is founded on their personal financial gains and not on the best interest of the United States. So if and when Biden wins, I believe that that the tables will be totally turned. Biden will be undoing Trump’s most egregious policies and one of these, the support for MBs will fall by the wayside. Biden will demand al-Saud respect for certain norms and acquiescence to Washington’s policy demands that will include more respect for human rights, less regional adventures and better relations with neighbors.”

■ What changes will Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy will undergo in absence of King Salman?

A: “Salman’s death will not significantly affect Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy. But I think that Saudi foreign policy depends much more on the result of the U.S. elections. If Trump goes, then I believe MBS will reach out to Iran and cement his budding relations with Israel. With this, he would be in better stead in Washington and in the region. But if Trump stays, I think MBS will continue on his current course. Belligerence in the region in his attempt to crush Iran and later Iraq.”

“MBS is universally hated in the United States. He has been riding high because of the corrupt support he has received from Trump-Kushner, support that is founded on their personal financial gains and not on the best interest of the United States.”

Trump’s ‘beautiful’ failures

By Marwan Bishara

Listening to U.S. President Donald Trump tell Fox News on Sunday that “We won two world wars, beautiful world wars, that were vicious and horrible,” one does not know whether to laugh or cry.

It is certainly a shocking statement, but the fact that it is no longer surprising to hear such crudity from the American president is, in itself, disturbing.

The president boasts of having an Ivy League education and knowing the “best words”, but his poor and slurred speech and repetitive use of a very few words like “tremendous”, “amazing” and “beautiful”, tell a different story.

The use of “beautiful” in this context of world war may be another slip of the tongue, caused by dementia - something psychologists have claimed he may have.

But this is different from “Belgium is a beautiful city” which slipped Trump’s tongue in 2016.

It signals something more sinister.

Regardless of whether Trump meant it or not, the record shows his use of “beautiful” may rather be associated with his long history of salesmanship. Well, “used-cars”-style salesmanship to be precise.

In other words, it is linked to deception.

Trump has boasted of reviving “beautiful clean coal” and called the environmentally controversial Dakota Access oil pipeline “beautiful” as well. He has lamented the taking down of “beautiful” Confederate statues that are associated with the dark past of fighting to maintain slavery in the South, and bragged about his appointment of “brand new, beautiful conservative judges”.

Trump has spoken of a “beautiful” healthcare bill to replace Obamacare, although it is yet to materialize as the administration continues its assault on what is left of the much-needed program amid a pandemic.

Trump has also committed to building a real, high and “beautiful” wall along the border with Mexico, which Congress and most Americans have opposed, prompting the president to declare a national emergency for the sole purpose of paying for it.

Trump has justified his extraordinary decision to build his “beautiful wall” on the grounds of ending undocumented immigration, stopping drugs from coming into the U.S., and making Mexico pay for it. He has even warned of

threats to national security.

In reality, the construction of the border wall has not curbed border crossings, which have recently increased. It is also unlikely to have much effect on drug trafficking, as drugs are mostly smuggled through legal ports of entry. And, last but not least, Mexico is a trade partner, not an enemy - it has not and will not pay for the wall.

Nowhere is the use of “beautiful” more disturbing than in association with weapons and the Middle East.

During his first foreign trip in 2017, Trump boasted in Riyadh of his eagerness to sell “beautiful weapons” worth tens of billions of dollars to Qatar and other rich (Persian) Gulf countries to create more American jobs and better Gulf security.

But a few days later, Trump sided with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain when they imposed a blockade on Qatar based on false pretexts and fabricated pretenses.

Trump soon reversed his position, but has not been able to pressure his (Persian) Gulf allies to end their siege on Qatar and cease the unnecessary divisions and instability.

Instead, the Trump administration has inflamed regional instability by walking away from the Iran nuclear deal and, along with Israel, escalated tensions with Tehran.

After the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, the head of Al Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Trump boasted of spending \$2 trillion on arms and threatened to target Iran with “brand new beautiful” weapons.

Trump bragged about these and other Middle East (West Asia) policies to the Israeli American Council, which is subsidized mainly by his own “patron-in-chief”, casino owner Sheldon Adelson.

There, he sang the praise of a “beautiful and mighty” Israel and ridiculed Arab and other leaders, who appealed to him not to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel or recognize its annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights.

And to top it all off and take it to a whole new level of absurdity, Trump later described the happy reaction of his once personal lawyer and present U.S. ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, as that of a “wonderful, beautiful baby”.

The preposterousness of the image is matched only by the farcicality of the story behind the decision on the

Golan Heights. As Trump tells it, he asked for a “quickie” explanation about the Heights, then “I went Bing! - it was done”.

This has all been part of the “big, big beautiful difference” between his and his predecessor’s commitment to Israel - one which comes at the expense of its Palestinian and Arab neighbors, and which ended up torpedoing decades of U.S. Middle East (West Asia) diplomacy.

Trump’s beautiful policy failures in the Middle East (West Asia) are only matched by his failures in East Asia.

Trump praised and mused about his “love” relationship with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, who apparently sent him “beautiful letters”. After their 2018 summit, he declared that Americans can “sleep well at night” knowing that North Korea was prepared to give up its nuclear weapons.

The following year, Trump praised Kim’s “great and beautiful vision” for his country which, as anyone who knows anything about the totalitarian regime knows, is a big lie, a political heresy, an utter humbug.

And soon enough, it turned out his buddy Kim has been using their bromance to perfect his vision of North Korea as a nuclear power with long-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

For the record, Trump also said he received “beautiful” letters from Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader, Xi Jinping.

Need I say more?

Trump even got a “beautiful birthday card” from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as the latter cracked down on royal family members, journalists and human rights advocates.

And so, the president with the “beautiful temperament” and “beautiful [some say small] hands” promises to continue to work for a “bright and beautiful” future for the new generations across the Middle East (West Asia) and beyond.

A beautiful man indeed.

The question is: Would you buy a beautiful used car from him?

H Trump’s beautiful policy failures in the Middle East (West Asia) are only matched by his failures in East Asia.

Egypt, Turkey on clash course over Libya

Imminent battle over the key city of Sirte; Ankara, Moscow seek lasting cease-fire

➡ Russian and Turkish delegations met Wednesday in Ankara and released a statement agreeing to press ahead with efforts to create “conditions for a lasting and sustainable cease-fire” and agreed to work towards a political dialogue.

Turkey and Russia will consider creating a joint working group on Libya and were scheduled to hold more consultations in Moscow “in the near future,” according to the statement.

The LNA suffered a blow last month when GNA forces – with air and logistics support from Turkey – pushed it back and gained the upper hand in the fighting. Armed with sophisticated domestically-made Turkish surveillance and combat drones, Tripoli forces retook the capital’s airport, all main entrances and exit points to the city.



The powership Raif Bey docks in a shipyard in Yalova’s Altinova district, Turkey, June 16, 2020. Turkey plans to send the floating generators to supply power to western Libya. (Photo: AFP)

GNA has vowed to retake Sirte, which Haftar captured earlier this year. In televised remarks after inspecting military units in an army base near the border with Libya, Sisi warned that the fall of Sirte or the Jufra airbase would be a “red line” for Egypt. The GNA denounced Egypt’s military threat, calling it a “declaration of war”.

As the battle for Sirte was shaping up, the acting head of the UN support mission for Libya, Stephanie Williamson Monday called for “immediate ceasefire” and “an end to the blatant violations of the UN arms embargo.”

Sirte, hometown of Muammar al-Gaddafi, is the last major urban outpost before Libya’s “oil crescent,” which includes refineries, storage facilities and export terminals of Ras Lanuf, Brega and al-Sidr.

With 46.4 billion barrels as of 2010, oil reserves in Libya are the largest in Africa. Much of Libya’s oil wealth is located in the east but the revenues are channeled through Tripoli-based state oil firm National Oil Corporation (NOC), which says it serves the whole country and stays out of its factional conflict.

According to Libyan Herald, an independent online daily, NOC confirmed on July 12 that Libya’s oil exports and production have been blockaded again condemning the UAE for being behind it.

NOC had reported that potential lost revenues in the past 175 days have reached \$6.74 billion due to the blockade.

Prior to the 2011 overthrow of Colonel Gaddafi’s regime, Libya produced over 1.5 million barrels a day. As a result of the blockade of export terminals by LNA the production level on March 17 was declared at 91,221 barrels a day.

■ Foreign players

French President Emmanuel Macron insists France no longer backs Haftar while Turkey has announced that there will be no ceasefire unless Haftar retreats. However, this doesn’t mean France and Turkey, both NATO members, see eye to eye on Libya. France’s growing spat with Turkey over the Libyan civil war has exposed cracks in the NATO military alliance.

Macron accused Turkey of importing large number of fighters reportedly from Syria into Libya and lambasted Russian President Vladimir Putin’s ambivalence over his country’s mercenaries operating in the oil rich North African state. However, Macron said Putin had told him that private contractors fighting in Libya did not represent Russia.

Ties between the two NATO allies have soured during the summer over Libya, northern Syria, and drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean by Turkish firms. Tensions further escalated following a June 10 incident between Turkish warships and a French naval vessel in the Mediterranean Sea.

Turkish builders had worked projects in Libya before Ankara officially threw its support behind the GNA in November. The backlog of Turkish contract works amount to \$16 billion, a sector official said in January.

Turkey’s Karadeniz Holding, which runs a fleet of 25 powerships (with a combined output of 4,100 megawatts) or floating power generators plans to send its team to Libya within weeks and could start supplying power to western Libya, Chief Commercial Officer Zeynep Hazeri told Reuters.

Floating generators plugs into electricity grids after berthing. The company says the plants could use Libyan-produced diesel or natural gas, delivering as much as 1,0000 MWh, ending power cuts in areas supplied via the ports.

The Turkish firm specializes in producing and selling electricity from ships anchored off the coast. It sells electricity to more than 10 countries, including Lebanon and several African nations, that cannot meet the demand with onshore plants.

France has played a critical role in the rise of warlord Haftar. Under former president Nicolas Sarkozy, Paris led NATO military intervention in 2011 toppled Gaddafi’s regime, killing the dictator in the process.

Cairo has flown air strikes in Libya since the overthrow of Gaddafi and supported the ex-Gaddafi general Haftar since 2014. Last month Cairo announced a proposal, dubbed the Cairo Declaration, that included ceasefire and a new elected presidential body representing the Libyan factions. How will Turkey react to Egypt’s military intervention in Libya remains to be seen.

The United State has said Moscow sent warplanes to al-Ju-fra via Syria to support Russian mercenaries fighting alongside Haftar-led LNA. Russia and LNA both deny this.

In this dangerous cocktail of foreign forces, how will different parties react to each other’s moves remains to be seen, especially Turkey’s reaction to possible Egyptian deployment of troops.

Trump’s Muslim ban: For the sake of safer America or anti-Muslim bigots

➡ Later in March 2016, Trump said, “I think Islam hates us. There’s something there that — there’s a tremendous hatred there. There’s a tremendous hatred. We have to get to the bottom of it. There’s an unbelievable hatred of us.” In the same time, soon after three suicide bombings in Brussels tied to a group of French and Belgian Muslims, Trump told Fox Business: “We’re having problems with the Muslims, and we’re having problems with Muslims coming into the country.”

Form Trump’s deeds and words, one can perceive that he has just tried to expand kind of a racist policy over the past couple of years

through ongoing attacks on Muslims and many communities of color.

Based on the Global Terrorism Database compiled at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland, no American has ever been killed in a terrorist attack in the United States that has been carried out by a national of the now-banned countries, according to a 2017 report by the Center for American Progress.

In the current political scene, the Muslim travel ban acts as a trump card for former Vice President Joe Biden, who has pledged

that if he is elected president, he will end the ban on his first day in office.

“Muslim communities are the first to feel Donald Trump’s assault on Black and brown communities in this country, with his vile Muslim ban. That fight was the opening barrage in what has been nearly four years of constant pressure and insults... If I have the honor of being president, I will end the Muslim ban on day one,” Biden said on Monday.

Meanwhile, in a recent speech at the White House, Trump accused Biden of wanting to “end all travel bans, including from jihadist

regions”, and he implied Biden would allow “people that are going to come in and blow up our cities, do things”.

Does Trump’s decision undermine the so-called “religious freedom” in the United States? Opponents believe it discriminates based on religion, saying the U.S. immigration policy should never be based on anti-religious sentiment. They also suppose the revoke of the ban as an objective test of the nation’s commitment to religious freedom, believing that targeting people based on their faith is an affront to “American ideals of religious freedom for all”.

Visit Qazvini Quran at National Library in Tehran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – One of the masterpieces of illuminated Quran in the world is being kept at the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI).

Known as Qazvini Quran, the Qajar-era (1789–1925) manuscript was written in naskh by Zein al-Abedin Qazvini, who was one of the masters of calligraphy and the special scribe for Fath Ali Shah, a Qajar monarch who reigned from 1797 to 1834.



Dating back to 1805, the exquisite and precious Quran has over 600 different illuminations from every school of illumination that existed in Iran at the time, which is one of the reasons that makes it a unique work.

Nearly four kilos of pure gold and precious stones were used in illuminating it and 35 masters of art worked on it for about 10 years.

The unique features of this Quran, which remained in the Qazvini family for generations, had led some Saudi and English collectors to buy it in any way possible, but the last owner refused to send Quran to abroad and it was sold to NLAI in 2008.

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

By Pashmina Binwani

(Part 8/8)

This was a nice lush park that we found at Soffeh Mount Park while casually strolling through the streets in Isfahan. Every other time I would see Iranians lounging in the park, catching up on family affairs, jamming to Iranian folk music, or simply shisha-ing up in the parks. I thought merry Asians had it down with our tartan rugs but you ain’t seen nothing until you have seen an Iranian picnic.

Being a Tea-totaller at Azadegan Teahouse

In a country where alcohol is banned, many coffee and tea shops have sprung up in Iran, where coffee and tea are now seen as the beverage of choice. For many Iranians, drinking coffee or tea in a cafe is a sweet escape from the shackles of society and a choice of elevating their Western palette. The cafe often serves as an important place for the young and the political to connect and share conversations and stories.



A notable cafe is Azadegan Teahouse where it is a wonderland with knick-knacks hanging everywhere. Every inch of the walls and ceiling are covered in pictures, paintings, lamps, and other intriguing finds - almost looks like it has been hacked to looked artistically presentable. Although it is a venue for tea-drinkers, desserts along with shisha are frequently served to locals and tourists all whilst puffing away and regaling their stories of Persia.

Stunning Armenian Church at the Vank Cathedral
Iran has always been a religious country and all the cities across Iran you will find numerous places of worship depending on the religion of the residents. However, in Isfahan, while the majority may be Muslims, you’ll still find minority groups who have devoted themselves to the religion of Messiah; thus the construction of the Vank Cathedral.

I found the history of this place particularly intriguing. The Vank Cathedral was founded in 1606, devoted to thousands of Armenians who were deported from their homes and resettled with the help of Shah Abbas I after the Ottoman War from 1603-1618. The architecture of the Vank Cathedral comprised of a domed sanctuary, resembling a typical Iranian mosque with just subtle differences of European churches.

The ceiling was awashed in golden splendor and had marvelously intricate floral motifs in Persian miniature style depicting what happened to Jesus during his lifetime and just below it illustrating Armenian martyrs and their emotions.

Tabriz

Of modern-day Iran, Tarbiz holds the largest city in the north-west of Iran and is the center of the country’s Azeri community. After my three-week trip in Iran, I hitchhiked to the border town of Tabriz where we spent the afternoon and evening walking the European-styled streets and exploring the network of galleries at Tabriz’s Bazaar complex which earned its UNESCO heritage status in 2010 because of its historical importance as a cultural and commercial hub and its majestic, one-of-a-kind structure.

Ending the trip with Iranian hospitality; Ta’arof

Traveling mirrors what I know to be true: our differences are what make us beautiful and special. Sameness doesn’t exist. Everything changes and everything has a season but in Iran, I truly found the kindest people who went out of their way to connect with us - not because of our origins, because they just simply wanted to have a conversation and break the perception of what people have to say about Iranians.

Vahid and his wife from Tabriz were two people that we accidentally met in one of the Iranian shoplots when we were looking for a printing shop to send some postcards back home. He gladly helped us deliver the postcards, and allowed us to use his printing shop facilities to print the photos and his WiFi without taking a single cent from us. We felt truly humbled and felt terrible for not being able to pay for this, and to top it all he even took us to a fancy bathhouse converted into a teahouse.

Times like this, I rediscover how people matter to places and inspires me of the goodness that surrounds us. If not for the conflict that continues to plague this region, I hope opening the doors to tourism might ease the hardships affecting the extraordinarily gracious people who welcomed us with such open arms.

Iran documenting inscriptions in Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rostam

TOURISM d e s k

TEHRAN – A documentation project has been commenced on the inscriptions in Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam, near the southern city of Shiraz, ISNA reported.

The project aims at documenting all the written works from the Achaemenid-era (550-330 BC) to the contemporary era, which are unique in terms of linguistics, Hamid Fadaei, director of the world heritage site of Persepolis said on Friday.

The experts expect that the documentation of the inscriptions will put the restoration projects of the sites on the right track and will help archeology studies and even the tourism in these areas, the official added.

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

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

The city’s immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire’s king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings,



People visit massive rock-hewn tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam, an Achaemenid necropolis northward of Shiraz, southern Iran.

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.

Persepolis was the seat of the government of the Achaemenid Empire, though it was designed primarily to be a showplace and spectacular center for the receptions and festivals of the kings and their empire. Situated near Persepolis, the Achae-

menid necropolis of Naqsh-e Rostam, meaning “Picture of Rostam” is named after mythical Iranian hero which is most celebrated in Shahnameh and Persian mythology.

One of the wonders of the ancient world, Naqsh-e Rostam embraces four tombs are where Persian Achaemenid kings are laid to rest, believed to be those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and Xerxes I, although some historians are still debating this.

There are gorgeous bas-relief carvings above the tomb chambers that are similar to those at Persepolis, with the kings standing on

Tehran museums reopen after weeklong halt

TOURISM d e s k

TEHRAN – Museums in Tehran have reopened their doors to the public after one week of closure following the increase in the number of people infected with the coronavirus, ILNA reported.

All museums in Tehran, which are under the supervision of the tourism ministry, reopened and started their activities, according to the announcement and decision of the Coronavirus Control Operations Headquarters, said Mohammadreza Kargar, the ministry’s director for museums and historical properties, on Friday.

However, the activity of museums in other provinces is subject to the decision of the provincial headquarters, the official added.

Back in June, the official announced that Iranian museums and historical sites have taken 600 billion rials (about \$14.2 million) hit from the coronavirus outbreak.

The country closed cultural heritage museums and historical sites across the country in a preventive measure amid

fears of coronavirus outbreak back in February, but as the coronavirus lockdown was eased, they were reopened in early May.

Due to a sharp rise in the number of coronavirus infections and deaths, museums and all art and cultural centers, universities, schools, seminaries, English schools, libraries, movie theaters, mosques, beauty salons, and several other entities had gone on lockdown during last week once again.

Earlier this week, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced that revenues from museums and historical sites were almost eight billion rials (about \$190,000) during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20), a sharp decline compared to around 300 billion rials (over \$7 million) in the same period last year.

He also noted that most of the income is spent on preserving the historical sites and museums, but due to the closure of the sites, the ministry is facing a challenge in



maintaining these places.

Several provinces including Bushehr, Hormozgan, and Zanjan have extended the closure of their museums and some historical sites as they are on the red risk zone.

Sassanid archaeological landscape to become major tourist destination

HERITAGE d e s k

TEHRAN – Parts of the Sassanid archaeological landscape in Kermanshah province are being excavated, restored, and documented to be prepared as a major tourist destination in western Iran.

Series of [archaeological] excavation and restoration projects have been commenced in Sarpol-e Zahab region and its villages, which is home to important Sassanid era architectural remains, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Omid Qaderi as saying on Tuesday.

Ruined forts, fortresses and strongholds, bridges, temples, and bas-relief carvings are subjects for the project that aims to prepare them for being a major tourist destination route in western Iran equipped with needed travel infrastructure, the official explained.



A view of the ruined Temple of Anahita near Kangavar, Kermanshah province, western Iran.

The provincial tourism department aims to define a vast route for domestic and foreign

sightseers by incorporating new destinations with already-established ones such as Taq-e Bostan, Bisotun, and the Temple of Anahita.

Inscribed into the base of a towering cliff, Taq-e Bostan comprises extraordinary Sassanian bas-reliefs of ancient victorious kings divide opinions. Late afternoon is the best time to visit, as the cliff turns a brilliant orange in the setting sun, which then dies poetically on the far side of the duck pond.

UNESCO-tagged Bisotun is a patchwork of immense yet impressive life-size carvings depicting the king Darius I and several other figures. UNESCO has it that Bisotun bears outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing, reflecting ancient traditions in monumental bas-reliefs.

Temple of Anahita in the city of Kangavar

is believed to have been built circa 200 BC. Several column bases and ruins of a wall remain from the magnificent Greek-style temple. The temple was used during the Parthian era (248 BC-224) as well as the Sassanid era (224-651).

In 2018, UNESCO added “Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region”, which is an ensemble of Sassanian historical cities in southern Iran, to its World Heritage list. The property comprises eight archaeological sites, including fortified structures, palaces, and city plans in Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan, all located in modern Fars province.

In many ways, Iran under the Sassanian rule witnessed tremendous achievements of Persian civilization. Experts say that during Sassanid times, the art and architecture of the nation experienced a general renaissance.

Historical fortress to undergo restoration after six decades

TOURISM d e s k

TEHRAN – Shahrab historical fortress in Ardestan county, central Isfahan Province, will undergo some rehabilitation works after it suffered damage from natural disasters some 60 years ago, a provincial tourism official has said.

The restoration project aims to repair and strengthen the fortress, which was damaged and destroyed by flood, drought, and the destruction of the gardens around it during the 1960s and 1970s, Mehdi Mashhadi said on Friday, CHTN reported.

The fortress, which is privately owned, was abandoned for years and gradually became a landfill for the villagers, the official added.



Landscaping project to start around Prophet Habakkuk’s tomb tower

HERITAGE d e s k

TEHRAN – A landscaping project has been scheduled to trim surroundings of the Prophet Habakkuk’s tomb tower, which stands tall near Tuyserkan, a historical city in Hamedan province, west-central Iran.

Maintenance, beautification of green space, and new lighting of the area are amongst landscaping plans scheduled for the surroundings of brick tomb tower, which is capped by a conical dome in an octagonal pattern, IRIB reported on Thursday.

The mausoleum is a destination for the faithful, sightseers, anthropologists, holiday-

makers, and pilgrims of the Jewish faith. The antiquity of the tower dates back to the Seljuk era (1037–1194). The structure is lavishly decorated by the means of tile and brickworks painted by the famous Jewish star.

Sources quite unanimously assert that almost nothing is known about Habakkuk, aside from what is stated within the book of the Bible bearing his name, or those inferences that may be drawn from that book.

For almost every other prophet, more information is given, such as the name of the prophet’s hometown, his occupation, or information concerning his parentage

or tribe. For Habakkuk, however, there is no reliable account of any of these. Although his home is not identified, scholars conclude that Habakkuk lived in Jerusalem at the time he wrote his prophecy. Further analysis has provided an approximate date for his prophecy and possibilities concerning his activities and background.

Narratives say that Habakkuk’s main prophecy was directed against the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, and Media, which were later to grow into world powers, conquering some Mediterranean lands and the rest of the ancient world.



IRCS, Austrian Red Cross to sign MOU on humanitarian trade

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and the Austrian Red Cross will soon sign a new memorandum of understanding to enhance cooperation on humanitarian trade.

Karim Hemmati, the head of the IRCS, and Stefan Scholz, the Austrian ambassador to Iran, met in Tehran on Wednesday to explore avenues of mutual cooperation.

Medicine and medical equipment have always been exempt from sanctions, but unfortunately, this principle is obviously not being followed at the moment. We hope that, given the recent openings, Austria will have more humanitarian cooperation with the IRCS in this regard, Hemmati wrote on his Twitter account on Wednesday.

A new memorandum of understanding between the Austrian Red Cross and the IRCS will be signed soon. Previously, we held a joint training course between the relief and rescue workers of the two countries, all of whom were influenced by the knowledge and skills of the Iranian rescuers. I hope that the training courses will continue in 2021, Hemmati tweeted quoting Scholz as saying.

"Courtesy call on the head of Red Crescent to pay tribute to volunteers in support of Iran's COVID-19 response. We appraised cooperation b/w Red Cross and IRCS, our Urban Search & Rescue external classification partnership, and C-19 services to our communities," Scholz also wrote on



his Twitter account.

So far, Swiss delivered 180,000 packages of medicine needed for cancer patients and transplant operations to Iran in February in an attempt to facilitate humanitarian trade following the implementation of the Swiss payment mechanism.

The government of the Republic of Korea also started close consultations with the United States and Iran in order to facilitate humanitarian trade with Iran with won-currency deposits made by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) at banks in the ROK. As a result of such consultations, the ROK

government resumed humanitarian trade with Iran on April 6, which was suspended after the U.S. tightened sanctions on the CBI in September 2019.

So, South Korea sent by air a shipment of medical supplies and medicine worth \$500,000 needed for genetic diseases to Iran on May 29, which will mark the first case of shipment of goods for the recently resumed humanitarian trade and is expected to be followed by exports of medicine and medical equipment worth about 2 million U.S. dollars in June.

Building on the resumption of exports of

humanitarian items, the ROK government will continue consultations with the U.S. and Iran on ways to broaden the scope of trade items to include not only medicine and medical equipment, which are currently the main trade items, but also foods and agricultural products, according to the Relief Web website.

Although food and medicine were claimed to be exempted from the U.S. sanctions, financial and banking sanctions have limited the life-saving medicine trade which harshly targeted the patients suffering from rare diseases.

Moreover, fears of falling afoul of Washington have restricted exports to Iran.

Exemptions for humanitarian trade (such as food, medicine, and medical equipment) have not been effective in protecting Iranian patients from access to imported medicine, such as the bandages used for patients suffering Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare genetic disease that causes painful blistering of the skin.

With the return of sanctions, over a year (May 2018-May 2019), 15 patients covered by EB Health House lost their lives, including Ava, a two-year-old girl in Ahvaz city, who died of infection and lack of skincare.

Companies exclusively producing medicine for Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) patients, such as BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc. of the U.S. and a South Korean company, have refused to export these drugs to Iran, threatening the lives of 335 patients in Iran.

Development of aquaculture in drought-affected areas on agenda

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The development of aquaculture in drought-affected areas is one of the government's programs on optimal use of water resources, which also creates job opportunities and boosts production, IRNA reported on Friday.

Due to the limitation of fresh water resources in the eastern regions of Iran mainly due to low precipitation during the last decade, in order to use water efficiently and increase production, construction of dual-purpose ponds downstream of springs, aqueducts, and water wells has been considered for agriculture.

Due to distance from the sea and the lack of a permanent



river, South Khorasan province is always exposed to water scarcity, but having saline and brackish waters, which are suitable for some aquatic species, has provided a good op-

portunity for fish farming.

Mohammad Mehdi Saeedi, director of fisheries organization of South Khorasan, said that Tilapia farming is compatible with brackish waters.

Stating that more than 700 aquaculture ponds are active in the province, he noted that it is expected to harvest 50 tons of tilapia this year.

Fish farming along with agriculture is one of the methods of optimal use of water resources, which, while creating employment and helping the farmer's income, enriches agricultural water and increases agricultural and horticultural products, he concluded.

Iran plans building desalination plants along Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman



➔ The provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran, Golestan, Khuzestan, Bushehr, Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan in the north and south are among the coastal provinces that are struggling with water shortages.

A water transfer project has been proposed by the govern-

ment which looked to Oman seawater quenching the thirst of the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, as well as eastern provinces of South Khorasan and Khorasan Razavi. A budget of \$400 million was allocated by the government in March 2016.

The project aims to boost production, industry, and agriculture, as well as provide potable water to residents in arid areas.

Once an efficient permanent solution, water supply schemes are now being considered as the main cause of environmental depletion haunting many parts of the country leading to dried up lakes and rivers, and poor water resources management resulting in excessive water withdrawal is also a major threat to the country's future.

Experts believe that these projects entailing economic and environmental burden are no solution to droughts, and demanded the water transfer projects to be dismissed due to the irreparable damages to the environment namely deforestation, wildlife habitat destruction, biodiversity degradation, improper land change use, and contaminated seawater.

Ocean plastic could triple by 2040 and outnumber fish by 2050, study says

The volume of plastic entering the ocean annually could nearly triple in the next 20 years and by 2050 lead to more plastic in the planet's waters than fish, according to new analysis.

The study, by researchers from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, University of Oxford, University of Leeds, and Common Seas, found that nearly 11m tonnes of plastic was dumped into the ocean in 2016.

The study found that this volume could almost triple to 29m tonnes each year by 2040. Since plastic does not degrade, it would amount to a total of 600m tonnes of plastic in the ocean, the Independent reported.

The vast quantities forecast are based on the researchers' anticipation that the volume of plastic on the market will double by 2040, if governments and businesses fail to act.

"We very strongly believe trying to change the system as individuals is pretty much impossible. We're focusing on changing the cards our people are being dealt by changing the options companies are offering to people," Rob Opsomer, Executive Lead of Plastics, Fashion, and Finance at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, told The Independent.

"The main focus is working on businesses and government because they actually have the power to change the system," he added.

Plastic wreaks havoc on marine ecosystems, breaking down into tiny pieces. Microplastics have invaded all depths of the world's oceans and a recent study found there may be double previous estimates.

At least 600 wildlife species are impacted by ocean trash, according to Ocean Conservancy. Many fish species consume plastics debris by confusing it for real food, which then enters our food chain through the seafood market.

Plastic waste in the ocean was previously tackled in areas of the world improving their waste management systems or companies banning and reducing plastic products like straws and bags. But researchers noted that neither of these options

would properly mitigate the issue.

"We've seen much less action on eliminating plastic," Mr Opsomer said, compared to companies offering to reduce or reuse certain plastics.

Large corporations have offered to alter their packaging in the coming years to reduce plastic waste but the study found this would only reduce plastic "leakage" in oceans by 7 per cent. While modifying packaging may help, it will not be enough to curb the rising tide of plastic waste.

"We cannot recycle our way out of plastic pollution, and neither can we simply reduce our way out of it," the Ellen MacArthur Foundation said, in its published response to the Breaking the Plastic Wave analysis.

Instead, a "comprehensive, circular economy approach" was recommended by the researchers as a way to rethink the current plastics market.

This plan would demand that large corporations and businesses eliminate the plastics they no longer need, and go far beyond straws and plastic bags. New models would be necessary for customer delivery, with a focus on eliminating plastic packaging for individual items and replacing with reusable materials.

Thus far, 850 organisations have endorsed the circular economy approach to plastics, Mr Opsomer said. The organisation has received commitments from about 20 per cent of the global plastic producers for its Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Global Commitment. However, more companies are needed to make a difference prior to 2040.

"We need many more people to join in," he said. "We have about 80 per cent that are doing much less."

Curbing the amount of plastic in the ocean, would require businesses to completely redesign how items can be reused, recycled, or reconfigured. In addition, it will take more infrastructure to collect and circulate the plastic items already out there, which could cost an estimated \$30bn, according to the study.

\$600m earmarked to rehabilitate Anzali Wetland

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — A budget of 25 trillion rials (nearly \$600 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated for the rehabilitation of Anzali Wetland, deputy interior minister Babak Dinparast has said, noting that the budget has not been provided yet, ISNA reported.

Rehabilitation of Anzali Wetland is a priority for the Department of Environment and its implementation will start in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2021-March 2022) and will take 10 years to be completed.

The most urgent problem that must be solved in Anzali Wetland is the invasive species of common water hyacinth, which is a dangerous invasive plant that grows rapidly in the wetland and is now our only way to counteract is the physical removal of the plant, this invasive plant speeds up water evaporation 13 times and poisons the environment and creates competition for survival among native species.

The plan is prepared, through which, an eco-friendly approach with two important features will be implemented, including cross-sectoral cooperation that involves all stakeholders in reviving the wetland.

Covering more than 19,000 hectares, Anzali Wetland is located near the northern port city of Bandar Anzali, neighboring the Caspian Sea. The wetland was designated as a Ramsar site on June 23, 1975. It is fed by several rivers and separated from the Caspian Sea by a dune system. The lagoon is home to submerged and floating vegetation and also extensive reed beds. It bears international importance in terms of breeding, staging, and wintering waterbirds.

While dams have contributed to human development by providing reliable sources of drinking water and irrigation, hydropower, recreation, navigation, and income, they also can cause considerable damages to the rivers, or deplete fisheries, and alter recreational opportunities.

The lagoon has been listed in Ramsar Convention since December 21, 1975.

Anzali Wetland has suffered huge sediment and sludge accumulation due to the entrance of domestic and agricultural sewage of five surrounding cities, which resulted in a decrease in the wetland's depth and capacity along with threatening biodiversity.

One of the most important concerns regarding Anzali Wetland is a constant drop in depth which has decreased from 11 meters in the past to 1 meter or even 50 centimeters in recent years.

According to a report published by the University of Tehran in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), the amount of sediment accumulated in Anzali Wetland is usually 1 to 7 millimeters per year.

If the average sedimentation rate is three millimeters, one meter should be reduced from the depth of the wetland every 30 years, while the wetland's depth has decreased by 3 meters in the past 30 years.

Undeniably, human involvement has led to such a situation in Anzali Wetland.



Like a mother

Accompanied by Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes and forces from Hashd al-Shaabi, he came to Shadegan to help the flood victims.

We set the table for them, he called each of the forces and bodyguards to come to the table.

He put morsel of food in their mouths, like a mother.

UN rights office urges U.S. to rein in police at protests

U.S. police and security forces must not use disproportionate force against protesters and journalists in U.S. cities including Portland or detain them unlawfully, the United Nations human rights office said Friday.

Law enforcement officers and federal forces must be clearly identifiable so that they can be held to account for any incidents of abuse, it said.

U.S. cities including Portland have been rocked by protests against racial injustice sparked by the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis on May 25, Reuters reported.

“It is very important that people are able to protest peacefully, that people aren’t subject to unnecessary, disproportionate or discriminatory use of force,” Liz Throssell, UN human rights spokeswoman, told a Geneva news briefing.

Citing reports that peaceful protesters have been detained by “unidentified police officers”, she voiced concern that such detentions may give rise to arbitrary or unlawful detention. “The authorities should ensure that federal and local security forces deployed are properly and clearly identified and would use force only when necessary, proportionately and in accordance with international standards,” Throssell said.

White Helmets collude with terrorists in Syria under humanitarian guise: Russia

Russia’s Foreign Ministry says members of the so-called civil defense group White Helmets continue to collude with foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorists operating in Syria, and are involved in acts of looting and robbery under the guise of humanitarian activities.



“Western sponsors have not yet abandoned their support for the White Helmets and its affiliated outfits. We have repeatedly pointed to the fact that the humanitarian label of the group actually lies in plunder, extortion, robbery, intentional misinformation, false-flag chemical attacks, air and artillery strikes, and simply direct collusion with terrorism,” the Arabic service of Russia’s Sputnik news agency quoted spokeswoman for Russia’s Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova as saying during a press briefing in Moscow on Thursday.

Earlier this year, Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergey Naryshkin, said Western intelligence services are sponsoring White Helmets and offering complete support to them to propagate fake news in a bid to incriminate Syrian government forces as a pretext for possible acts of aggression on army troops.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry says members of the so-called civil defense group White Helmets continue to collude with foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorists operating in Syria, and are involved in acts of looting and robbery under the guise of humanitarian activities.

“Western sponsors have not yet abandoned their support for the White Helmets and its affiliated outfits. We have repeatedly pointed to the fact that the humanitarian label of the group actually lies in plunder, extortion, robbery, intentional misinformation, false-flag chemical attacks, air and artillery strikes, and simply direct collusion with terrorism,” the Arabic service of Russia’s Sputnik news agency quoted spokeswoman for Russia’s Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova as saying during a press briefing in Moscow on Thursday.

Earlier this year, Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergey Naryshkin, said Western intelligence services are sponsoring White Helmets and offering complete support to them to propagate fake news in a bid to incriminate Syrian government forces as a pretext for possible acts of aggression on army troops.

Resistance News

Israeli police storm Bab al-Rahma prayer area, arrest 3 worshipers

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— Israeli police forces on Thursday afternoon raided Bab al-Rahma prayer area at al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and arrested three Palestinian citizens.

Eyewitnesses said that Israeli police officers broke into Bab al-Rahma prayer area with their shoes on and wreaked havoc on it.

The police further arrested three Palestinians who were standing near Bab al-Rahma cemetery. The detainees are Khaled al-Zir, Adham Zaitoun, and Mohammed Sandouka.

Local sources reported that the detainees were transferred to an interrogation center near Bab al-Asbat in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Earlier on the day, dozens of Jewish settlers defiled al-Aqsa Mosque amid heavy police presence, with restrictions tightened on the Palestinian worshippers entering the site.

Israeli undercover soldiers kidnap Palestinian child in Isawiya

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— Israeli soldiers disguised as Arabs on Thursday evening kidnapped a Palestinian child in al-Isawiya town in Jerusalem.

Eyewitnesses said that a number of undercover Israeli soldiers stormed al-Isawiya in a private car and snatched Mu’ath Awiwi, 12, from the street.

Undercover Israeli soldiers, locally known as Musta’ribeen, are special agents who pose as Palestinians and carry out missions, mostly arrests and abductions, within Palestinian towns and villages.

Rights groups urge Bahrain to stop execution of protesters

Sixteen international and Bahraini human rights groups have urged Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to commute the death sentences handed down to two nationals, stressing that the pair who suffered alleged torture were not afforded a fair trial.

Back in February 2014, Bahraini security forces detained Hussain Moosa, 34, and Mohamed Ramadhan, 37, accusing them of attacking police “with terrorist purpose,” and an alleged bombing that year in the village of al-Dair that led to the death of a policeman.

In December that year, Moosa, a hotel employee, and Ramadhan, a security guard at Bahrain International Airport, were initially handed down death sentences by a criminal court.

The pair appealed the sentences and the case was referred to the High Criminal Court of Appeal, which confirmed the verdicts in March 2015. Eight months later, the case reached the Court of Cassation that upheld the rulings.

The death penalties were later overturned after the emergence of a previously undisclosed medical report by the Bahraini Interior Ministry. The report, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), appeared to corroborate assertions that both men had been tortured to give false confessions.

However, an appeals court finally reinstated the death sentences in January 2020, and earlier this month, Bahrain’s Court of Cassation upheld them against the two anti-regime activists.



Addressing the Bahraini king, the letter by 16 human rights groups, including the HRW and Amnesty International, urged him not to ratify the death sentences imposed on Moosa and Ramadhan, and to ensure that they are not executed.

“There are 10 other detainees in Bahrain sentenced to death and who are at imminent risk of execution pending your ratification.... Bahrain should join the many countries already committed to the UN General Assembly’s December 18, 2007 resolution calling for a moratorium on executions, with the aim of

abolishing the death penalty,” the rights groups said in the letter.

They added, “Therefore, we further urge you to: immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing capital punishment in Bahrain; commute all outstanding death sentences to terms of imprisonment, and conduct a comprehensive review of Bahrain’s death row, with a view to ensuring that victims of human rights abuses unlawfully sentenced to death receive redress.”

Both defendants said their confessions

U.S protests: Chicago on edge over Trump’s federal forces, violence

➔ But given the longstanding animosity between city officials and Trump, leaders from the mayor on down worry that those promises will not hold up.

City officials will be on guard for any “steps out of line,” particularly from agents with the Homeland Security Department, and they will not hesitate “to take the president to court,” Lightfoot said.

Trump announced the plan on Wednesday, saying he would send agents to Chicago and Albuquerque to help combat rising crime. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf and Attorney General Bill Barr both said the mission in Portland - to protect federal property - differs from the focus in Kansas City, Chicago and Albuquerque.

Barr said the number of agents being deployed to Chicago is “comparable” to the Kansas City surge of more than 200.

Trump painted Democrat-led cities as out of control and lashed out at the “radical left”. Criminal justice experts say the increase in violence in some cities defies easy explanation. “In recent weeks, there has been a radical movement to



defend, dismantle and dissolve our police department.” Trump said, blaming the movement for “a shocking explosion of shootings, killings, murders and heinous crimes of violence”.

■ ‘Scare the middle class’

Lightfoot has repeatedly said she does not support pro-

testers’ calls to pull money from police in favour of social services, despite the Chicago police’s reputation for civil rights violations and use of excessive force.

If the federal agents do as they have done in Portland, one prominent minister on the city’s West Side said the situation will turn the city into a “magnet” for the same kind of people who infiltrated the statue protest, put on dark clothes and distributed and threw projectiles at police from behind umbrellas.

“It’s going to be like that, but on steroids,” the Reverend Marshall Hatch warned. “Chicago is one of those epicenters where you already have an unsettled social situation and racial situation. And you’re going to find out that Chicago is a lot more volatile in the middle of a long hot summer than Portland is.”

He fears such a chaotic scene is exactly what the president wants as he seeks re-election.

Chicago might offer Trump an opportunity “to somehow scare the middle class into thinking he’s the only one standing between them and the barbarians,” Hatch said.

China orders closure of U.S. consulate in Chengdu

China has ordered the United States to close its consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu, retaliating against Washington’s move earlier this week to shut down the Chinese consulate in the city of Houston.

The Chinese foreign ministry said on Friday the Chengdu mission’s closure was a “legitimate and necessary response to the unreasonable measures by the United States”.

“The current situation in China-U.S. relations is not what China desires to see,” it said in a statement, adding that “the U.S. is responsible for all this”.

“We once again urge the United States to immediately retract its wrong decision and create necessary conditions for bringing the bilateral relationship back on track.”

It did not say when the consulate must be vacated, but Hu Xijin, the editor-in-chief of the Communist Party-owned Global Times newspaper, said the notice period



was 72 hours. “It means U.S. Chengdu consulate will be closed Monday morning,” he wrote on Twitter.

The tit-for-tat moves come amid a dramatic escalation in tensions between the world’s two biggest economies. On Tuesday, Washington gave Beijing 72 hours to close its mission in Houston, Texas, alleging the theft of intellectual property and espionage - a claim the Chinese side called “malicious slander”.

Inside the America

and destabilized.

In her intense rebuttal, AOC notes that her reaction is not just to a single incident, but that the actions of Rep. Yoho reflect the strong cultural perceptions of impunity with which men may insult, harass and abuse women, daring even to levy such attacks on female members of Congress, arguably one of America’s highest stations. The real message seems to be that these acts are all the more disgraceful because they echo the overt, explicitly expressed messages of xenophobia, Islamophobia, racism and sexism legitimized in Washington since Donald Trump began his bid for the presidency.

While AOC’s outcry is absolutely valid and this issue deserves to be addressed, it seems like her almost 10 minutes on the House floor could have been better used if she had devoted at least a segment to address to the root of her disagreement with Yoho—the disparity of wealth in the wealthiest nation on earth and the connection between crime, poverty and unemployment. AOC certainly seems to have struck a nerve with the Republican congressman, pushing him to furiously rant in public. Traditionally, the Democratic Party positions itself as the party of “the peo-

ple”, concerned with lower taxes and increasing public programs to benefit the poor and underserved, however the last few presidential administrations have seen less and less difference between the two parties, and more and more perks and bonuses for multi-national corporations and banks who soak up gigantic sums in stimulus packages. While some Democrats actually consider how much presidential hopeful Biden will correct America’s ills, and continue spreading the false promises of multi-millionaire Dems, a glance at many dedicated progressive blogs and commentaries shows that they’ve totally skipped AOC’s remarks in order to continue coverage of the real issues plaguing Americans—a growing militarized police force used to crush the Constitutional right to protest; the absolute confusion surrounding Covid19 statistics, shutdowns and reopenings and what that means in real life. While the words of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ring out bravely, only time will tell if she and the other Democrat members of Congress will actually act upon their rhetoric and claims and work to bring some stability to America’s working poor. In the meantime, we can take some small pleasure in her demands for civility.

IPL 2020-21 to start in early October: official

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Fariborz Mahmoudzadeh, head of the Transfer Committee of the Iran Football League Organization, said that the new season of Iran Professional League (IPL) will start in early October.

The 2019-20 Iran Professional League (IPL) season has been extended because of the coronavirus pandemic and the next season will start in October.

There are no dates set for when the 2020-21 season will begin but Mahmoudzadeh has said it will most likely start in early October.

“The exact date of the competition will be determined by the league organization’s board of directors,” he said.

“We are going to start the new season of IPL and Azadegan League (First Division) in early October. The first four weeks of the 2020-21 season will take place with the transfer window still open, so we could see players move late in the window and after the new season has begun,”

The Iran Professional League is the highest division of professional football in Iran.

The league was also known as the



Persian Gulf Cup from 2006. It is the top-level football league in Iran since its foundation on Nov. 2, 2001.

Each year, the top finishing team in the league become the Iranian football

champions, and the lowest finishing teams are relegated to Azadegan League.

Persepolis are the most decorated football team in the IPL with six titles out of 18.

Sardar Azmoun wins RPL Golden Boot

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Zenit striker Sardar Azmoun ended the 2019-20 Russian Premier League (RPL) season as top scorer.

He scored a goal in the 2-1 win against Rostov Wednesday night.

Both Azmoun and teammate Artem Dzyuba played 28 games, with both forwards scoring 17 goals, but the Iranian was ahead of the Russian striker by virtue of fewer goals from the penalty spot. Azmoun scored one penalty, whereas Dzyuba scored seven.

In the history of the RPL, Azmoun is the third Zenit player to finish a season as top scorer. In 2004 first place was taken by Aleksandr Kerzhakov, while in the 2014/15 season the honor belonged to Hulk.

“I want to say thank you to everyone who has supported me in the current



season. I worked very hard to win the award. I used to find many people disappointed me but I am happy to reach my goal,” Azmoun posted on his Instagram account.

The Golden Boot is awarded to the highest scoring player in the league.

Esteghlal’s title hopes suffer jolt after Nassaji draw

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal’s faint title challenge took another blow with a 1-1 draw here against Nassaji in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Thursday.

The Blues should have won the match if they wanted to keep their faint title hopes alive.

Cheick Diabate put Esteghlal into the lead from the penalty spot in the 40th minute but Mohammad Miri equalized the match with a long-range strike after two minutes.

The draw left Esteghlal 17 points behind arch rivals Persepolis who have one game in hands. From now on, Esteghlal must focus on winning a berth in the next season’s AFC Champions League.

In Mashhad, Tractor were held to a 0-0 draw by Shahr Khodro and also missed their chances of winning the title for the first time ever.

Foolad also earned a late 2-1 win over Zob Ahan in Isfahan.



Rock-bottom Shahin drew 1-1 with Saipa in Bushehr, Paykan and Pars Jonoubi played out a goalless draw in Tehran and Sepahan edged Sanat Naft 1-0 in Isfahan.

Gol Gohar defeated Machine Sazi 2-1 in Tabriz and the result leaves them three points above the drop zone.

MLB players protest racial inequality at season opener

Every member of all four teams playing on Major League Baseball’s Opening Day took a knee to protest racial inequality prior to the playing of the U.S. national anthem on Thursday.

The Washington Nationals and New York Yankees, who kicked off the COVID-19 shortened season in the nation’s capital, also held a 200-yard band of black fabric to support the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement.

All of the players then stood during the playing of the anthem.

In Los Angeles, the Dodgers and San Francisco Giants mostly followed the same playbook though both clubs continued to kneel during the anthem.

Athletes from around the world have united in solidarity behind anti-racism protests sparked by the



death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis.

MLB said it would allow players to wear ‘Black Lives Matter’ batting practice t-shirts, patches that say ‘Black Lives Matter’ or ‘United For Change’ on their sleeves, and a wristband featuring an inverted MLB logo where the silhouetted batter is black.

MLB posted the message “United as one” on its Twitter account along with a photo of the Giants’ Alyssa Nakken, the first woman on-field coach in league history, wearing a ‘Black Lives Matter’ t-shirt.

The league has also lifted its restrictions on cleats for the 2020 season, giving players the freedom to express opinions related to social justice on their footwear.

(Source: Reuters)

Tokyo 2020 must be simple and safe, says IOC’s Coates

SYDNEY (Reuters) — Senior Olympic official John Coates has reiterated that Tokyo must stage a simplified Summer Games next year with the health and safety of athletes the most important consideration in the planning.

Australian Coates heads up the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) Coordination Commission for the Tokyo 2020 Games, which have been postponed until 2021 because of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

“The good news is that all 42 Games’ venues ... have been resecured. The competition schedule is the same,” the IOC Vice President wrote in Sydney’s Daily Telegraph on Friday, a day after the one-year countdown to the opening ceremony.

“But we must reduce the cost impact of postponement as well as simplify the Games to ensure they can be organized efficiently, safely and sustainably, in this new context.

“With one year to go, there is no clear picture of what shape the simplified Games will take. The situation with COVID-19, both domestically and internationally, is constantly changing.”

Coates wrote that putting in place counter-measures against COVID-19 would be no easy task but welcomed the top level commitment from the Japanese government, Tokyo regional government and Games organizing committee to get it done.

“The IOC and our Japanese partners ... are doing everything in their power to



ensure that not only will the Games go ahead next year, but the athletes remain first and foremost in all our planning,” he added.

“Yes, we want the athletes of the world to have their Olympic moment of competition, just as they would have dreamt. But critically, they must experience that moment in an environment where their health and safety ... is assured.”

Coates is also President of the Australian Olympic Committee and added that the reaction of his country’s athletes to the postponement had been “inspirational”.

“All athletes with a Tokyo dream in their hearts have had to recalibrate their plans for a Games ... they have demonstrated remarkable resilience in making that adjustment,” he wrote.

Do Graham Potter’s latest comments signal the end for Alireza Jahanbakhsh at Brighton?

One of the many difficult transfer decisions for Brighton and Hove Albion to make this summer is the future of Iranian winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh.

Jahanbakhsh, 26, has started just three times from his nine appearances in the Premier League under Graham Potter and didn’t once complete a full 90 minutes.

He scored in his first start against Bournemouth last December and also netted a memorable overhead kick when he came off the bench in the following match against Chelsea.

It didn’t however result in a sustained run in the team for a player who joined Brighton for £17m in 2018 from AZ Alkmaar and is contracted until June 2023.

His other two outings in the starting XI were during the 3-1 loss at Bournemouth and the 1-0 defeat at Everton.

He failed to make the Premier League match day squad entirely on 19 separate occasions this season and his only run out since the restart was for the final 20 minutes during the 5-0 home loss against Man City.

Jahanbakhsh scored 34 goals from 79 appearances

at his previous club AZ Alkmaar and reports from Holland suggest Ajax want to bring the Albion man back to the Eredivisie as a replacement for Chelsea-bound Hakim Ziyech.

In 2017/18 he was the leading goal scorer in the Dutch top-flight with 21 goals and finished joint third with 12 assists. Jahanbakhsh is the first Asian player ever to finish top goalscorer in a top level European league.

Ajax team director of football and former Arsenal winger Marc Overmars has apparently been in contact with the player but it’s unclear how much Ajax would have to pay Brighton for his services.

“He’ll be frustrated of course because he wants to play and I understand that,” said Albion head coach Potter. “He’s been great around the club, great with me, he gives his best all the time but he’s like any footballer - they want to play more.

“So it’s something we have to think about over the break and do what’s right for him and the club.

“But he’s a good player and he can help us. But again you can understand it from his perspective that



he wants to play more regularly than he has.”

(Source: brightonandhoveindependent.co.uk)

Mousavi going nowhere: Mostafa Karkhaneh

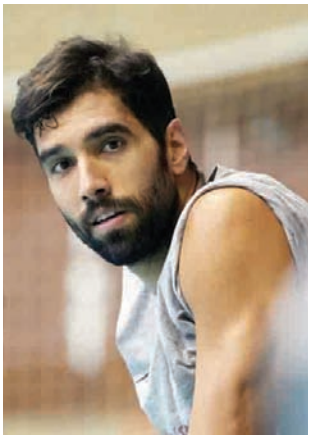
Volleyball.ir — Saipa volleyball coach Mostafa Karkhaneh says that Mohammad Mousavi will remain committed to his current club.

The Iran international middle blocker has been recently linked with a move to Czarni Radom but Karkhaneh said that he is going nowhere.

Mousavi, who played at Polish volleyball team Indykpol AZS Olsztyn last season, joined Iranian club Saipa in mid-June but there are rumors that he will leave the team to join Polish volleyball club Czarni Radom.

“Mousavi is a great player and it’s not strange that so many teams are going to sign him but he will stay here,” Karkhaneh said.

Karkhaneh also said he has recovered from coronavirus. “I tested positive for COVID-19 two weeks ago but I am now fully recovered and will return to the training from Saturday,” Karkhaneh added.



Aris Thessaloniki eye Iran’s Ehsan Hajsafi

Aris Thessaloniki football club have shown interest in signing Iran international midfielder Ehsan Hajsafi.

The Greek Super League side want to sign the 30-year-old midfielder for the upcoming season.

Hajsafi is not unfamiliar with playing in Greece football since he has already played at Panionios and Olympiacos.

He joined Tractor in 2018 and has scored eight goals in 45 matches for the Iranian top-flight football team.

Hajsafi is under contract with Tractor until next summer.

(Source: SID.gr)

Jordan Henderson wins FWA Footballer of the Year award

Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson has won the Football Writers’ Association Footballer of the Year, it was announced on Friday.

The award, voted on by the FWA’s members, has been running since 1948 and crowns the player adjudged to have been the best of the season in English football.

Henderson said: “I’d like to say how appreciative I am of the support of those who voted for me and the Football Writers’ Association in general. You only have to look at the past winners of it, a number of whom I’ve been blessed to play with here at Liverpool, like Stevie [Gerrard], Luis [Suarez] and Mo [Salah] to know how prestigious it is.

“But as grateful as I am I don’t feel like I can accept this on my own. I don’t feel like anything I’ve achieved this season or in fact during my whole career has been done on my own. I owe a lot to so many different people -- but none more so than my current teammates -- who have just been incredible and deserve this every bit as much as I do.

“We’ve only achieved what we’ve achieved because every single member of our squad has been brilliant. And not just in matches. Not just in producing the moments that make the headlines and the back pages but every day in training.”

(Source: liverpoolfc.com)

Lampard says Liverpool staff crossed a line

Frank Lampard has said he regrets swearing in the direction of the Liverpool bench during Chelsea’s defeat at Anfield but insisted members of Jurgen Klopp’s staff “crossed the line” with their behavior.

The Blues were beaten 5-3 on Wednesday in a joyous occasion for the home side as they lifted the Premier League trophy after the game, ending a 30-year wait for a top-flight title.

Lampard warned Liverpool not to get “too arrogant” in a postmatch interview having earlier become involved in a heated exchange of words on the touchline with Klopp and his backroom staff.

Klopp responded to Lampard and said the Chelsea boss should learn to not talk about whatever happens on the touchline postmatch.

Speaking in a news conference ahead of Sunday’s Premier League visit of Wolves, Lampard sought to clarify his comments after video of the touchline fracas went viral on social media.

“To be honest, I think it was... I’ve seen the video and I was obviously there,” he said. “In terms of the language I used, I do regret that. These things get replayed a lot on social media. I’ve got two young daughters on social media so I regret that.

“In terms of regretting having the passion to defend my team, no. I could have maybe handled it slightly differently to keep that language in but what I felt was, and I want to be clear about this actually as some of the reports were that I was upset with the celebrating of the Liverpool team.

“Far from it. I think Liverpool should celebrate as much as they want with the season they’ve had. They can celebrate like they did after the game, like they can celebrate every goal they score, like they celebrate when they won the league a month ago and like they’re talking about celebrating one more time with their fans.

“That’s what got me agitated but it is done. Emotions run high amongst most managers, players and fans in this game. I regret the language, move on.”

Chelsea need a point against Wolves to qualify for next season’s Champions League and N’Golo Kante has a chance of being fit after resuming full training on Friday following a hamstring problem.

(Source: ESPN)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com
 ■ 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
 » **Subscription & Distribution Dept.:** Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
 » **Webmaster:** webmaster@tehrantimes.com
 » **Printed at:** Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
 P.O. Box: 14155-4843
 Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Why should a human being boast? His beginning is a sticky embryo, and his end a terrible corpse. He can neither secure his subsistence, nor ward off death.

Imam Ali (AS)

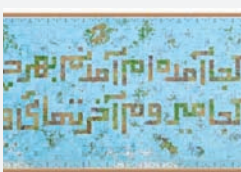
WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES



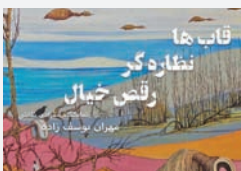
Multimedia
 ■ An exhibition of artworks in various media by Zeinab Zafari, Sepideh Khalafi, Melika Qorbani, Shadi Torkian, Fruzeh Abdollahi, Alireza Nikukar and several other artists is currently underway at Ayrik Gallery. The exhibition titled "The World Is Wearing a Face Mask" will run until July 30 at the gallery, which can be found at Ayrik Center on East Ferdows Blvd.



■ Entezami Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of artworks in various media by Nasrin Rostami, Mina Effati, Reza Dehaqin, Marzieh Beiglari, Raha Judi, Raheleh Kheiri and several other artists. The exhibit named "Fiction" will be running until July 29 at the gallery that can be found at 608 Shariati Ave. near Motahhari St.



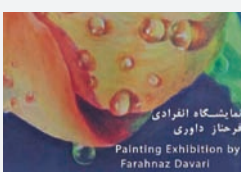
■ Artworks by Niku Voslari, Iman Safai, Hossein Valamanesh, Amir-Hossein Shahnazi, Mahur Tusi, Mahdieh Pazuki and several other artists are currently on view in an exhibition at Aran Gallery. The exhibition will run until August 10 at the gallery that can be found at 5 Lolagar St., Neauphle-le-Chateau St.



Painting
 ■ Mehran Yusefzadeh is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Shalman Gallery. The exhibit named "Frames, Observer, Fantasy, Dance" will continue until August 3 at the gallery located 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.



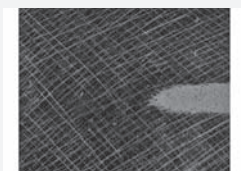
■ An exhibition of paintings Marzieh Azizi is currently underway at Golhaye Davudi Gallery. The exhibit titled "Under the Shadow of Poetry" runs until July 29 at the gallery that can be found at 263 near Nejatollahi St., Taleqani Ave.



■ Farahnaz Davari is hanging her latest paintings in an exhibition at Atashzad Gallery. The exhibit runs until July 29 at the gallery located at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.



Calligraphic painting
 ■ Negar Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of calligraphic paintings by Nasrollah Afjei, Bahman Panahi, Saeid Naqqashian, Maryam Qnabarian, Babak Rashvand, Ahmad Ariamanesh and several other artists. The exhibition will run until August 4 at the gallery located at 154 near Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Blvd.



Drawing
 ■ Vaali Gallery is currently showcasing an exhibition of drawings by Mahdieh Sohrabi, Marzieh Khoshtarkib, Mina Bahreini and Fatemeh Afshari. The exhibition titled "Inanimate" runs until August 11 at the gallery located at No. 71, Khoddami St. off of Vanak Square.



■ Mojtaba Amini is displaying his latest drawings in an exhibition at Mohsen Gallery. The exhibit entitled "I Will Return" runs until August 12 at the gallery located at 42 East Mina Blvd., Naji St., off Zafar St.



Photo
 ■ A collection of photos by Setareh Heidari Nuri is currently on display in an exhibition at Saye Gallery. The exhibit named "My Beloved" will run until July 29 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.

Iran's Graphic Design Week to pay tribute to Morteza Momayyez

A R T TEHRAN — Iran's Graphic Design Week plans to pay tribute to Morteza Momayyez, who is considered to be the father of modern graphic art in Iran.

The festival plans to organize a poster exhibition named "Morteza Momayyez: Art as Profession", the organizers announced on Thursday.

As the main organizer of the Graphic Design Week, the Iranian Graphic Designers Society commences the weeklong festival every year on April 27, which has been designated World Design Day by the International Council of Design (ico-D).

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Iran, the festival was postponed indefinitely.

The society's decision to pay tribute to Momayyez refers to ico-D's decision to select the theme "Be Professional!" for World Design Day 2020.

"Due to a new outbreak of the virus in Iran, no exact date has been set for the week yet," Onish Aminollahi said and added, "However,

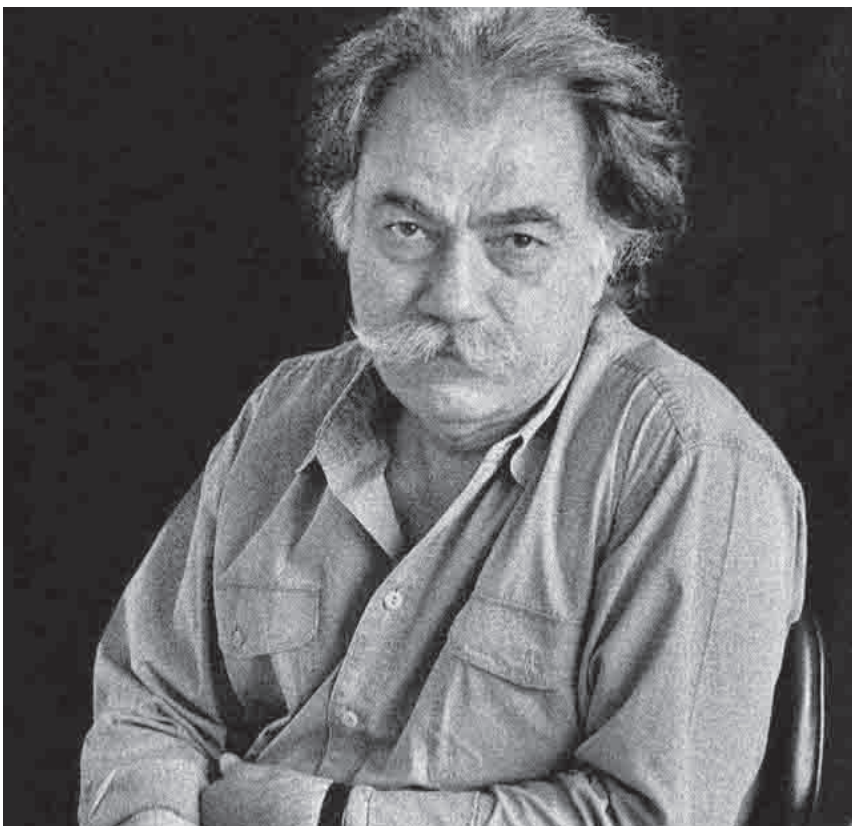
in addition to the exhibitions that we will organize at the Iranian Artists Forum, we plan to hold several open-air exhibits."

In a statement published on Thursday, the selecting committee of the week composed of Kurosh Parsanejad, Mehdi Saeidi, Majid Abbasi, Kianush Gharibour and Mehdi Mahdian wrote, "As history confirms, Morteza Momayyez is a powerful symbol of professionalism in graphic design and tribute to him is homage to a professional life."

"Finding examples of professionalism and a new approach to Morteza Momayyez is really pleasant, however, it is difficult to express it through designs."

Twenty-five posters have been selected to be showcased in the official section of the festival. Momayyez died of cancer in 2005 at the age of 70.

The theme "Be Professional!" is a reflection on the designer's role, not only in designing, but in their greater responsibilities towards humanity, the planet and culture, ico-D wrote in its statement for World Design Day 2020.



Graphic designer Morteza Momayyez in an undated photo.

"If we consider ourselves professionals, then we must adhere to a set of commonly held principles that we are not willing to compromise. If we consider ourselves professionals then we must consider the

impact of our work on more than the client and the individual end-user; we are accountable for the social, cultural and environmental costs of our professional actions," the council stated.

Director merges plays by Tennessee Williams and Persian writer to stage "extraordinary performance"

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director/actor Hamed Sheikh has merged Persian play "Shut up, Honey!" and American playwright Tennessee Williams' "The Case of the Crushed Petunias" and "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen" to make an "extraordinary performance" for the audiences.

Sheikhi himself, Sharareh Sabur and Yeganeg Sarvari are acting in the play named "Talk to Me", which is currently on stage at Tehran's Malek Theater.

"I want to tell the audiences that I've done my best to present them with an extraordinary play," Sheikh told the Persian service of Honaronline on Thursday.

"Its poster and pictures or interviews on the play will never help guess what will be happening in the performance," he added.

"I planned to stage the plays separately and we also did some rehearsals, but since all the plays have something in common and all focus on divine and mundane matters, I decided to write a new play based on the three dramas," he stated.

He wrote the play during the home quarantine for coronavirus and held some rehearsals virtually and onstage to prepare for the performances, which have been running since July 15.



A scene from "Talk to Me" at Tehran's Malek Theater. (Payamekhabari/A.A. Ez'hari Khoskhar)

Sheikhi who is opposed to the shutdown of theaters during the pandemic said, "To prevent the spread of the virus, it is better to close metros and ban unnecessary gatherings in bazaars."

"I staged this play to show my love of theater; I don't like seeing theaters empty of people," he noted and added that online theaters and film screenings will lead to the closure of cinemas and theaters.

Iranian scholar writing book on director Hossein Qashqai

CULTURE TEHRAN — Scholar Mohammad Tabatabai is writing a book on stage director Hossein Qashqai, who was martyred a month before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Tabatabai, who is the director of the Veteran Artists Institute that is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, said that he wanted to complete and unveil the book on the 40th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution last year, however, the book was not completed due to a lack of sufficient information.

"I really wanted my first book to be about Qashqai because he was not only a theatrical figure, but also was known as

one of the champions of the early days of the revolution," he said.

"It was in 2018 when I decided to hold a memorial ceremony for the martyr, which was held at the Qashqai Hall of complex," he added.

Qashqai was born in Shiraz and was a graduate of dramatic arts from the University of Tehran. During his career in dramatic arts, he staged plays that mostly reflected the oppression in the country under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran's last monarch, and this led to his dismissal from the then Theater Office.

He later was martyred during the funeral ceremony of martyr Kamran Nejatollahi on Karegar Street in Tehran by the regime



A portrait of martyr Hossein Qashqai in an undated photo.

on December 26, 1978.

"Horufieh Movement," and "Petrol" are among his written plays in addition to several articles and research works.

After his martyrdom and the victory of the revolution, a group of his friends decided to stage his play "Horufieh Movement".

The play was staged by director Davud Daneshvar with actors Tajbakhsh Fanaian, Saeid Kashen-Fallah, Mahmud Hendiani, Siavash Hashemian, Mohammad Kasebi, Kazem Baluchi and Jalil Farjad in 1980 at Charsu Hall of the City Theater Complex in Tehran.

The Qashqai Hall of the complex has been named after martyr Qashqai.

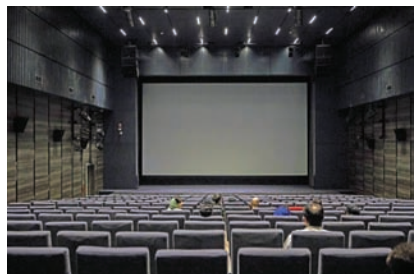
Iranian Baluchi qaychak virtuoso Rasulbakhsh Zangshahi dies at 79

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian Baluchi qaychak virtuoso Rasulbakhsh Zangshahi died of a heart attack at his home on Thursday. He was 79.

He had been suffering from diabetes for several years, which led to the amputation of one of his legs, his son Nadim said.

Zangshahi was from the southeastern Iranian region of Sistan-Baluchestan, where the qaychak is mostly used. He will be buried in the Artist's Section of the Beheshte Zahra Cemetery in Zahedan.

The musician had received an honorary doctorate after his performance in a music festival in France, and was believed to be one of the best musicians of Baluchestan in Baluchi epic music.



People wait to watch a movie at a theater in Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on June 21, 2020 after the reopening theaters amid the COVID-19 pandemic. (ISNA/Mona Hufefekr)

He performed with other great masters of Baluchestan such as Molla Jan Mohammad, Shahdad Nosrat and Molla Kamalkhan.

Rasulbakhsh learned music from his father when he was only 14. His father and master Dormohammad played great roles in the development of his knowledge of music.

The Sistan-Baluchestan Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance in collaboration with a local organization in the province has recently released an album of his performances.

Zangshahi was honored with a lifetime achievement award at the 32nd Fajr Music Festival.

He is survived by 22 children and three wives. Nadim and Soheil are the only two children who learned music from their father.



Iranian qaychak virtuoso Rasulbakhsh Zangshahi in an undated photo.

Coronavirus causing habit of going to cinema to fade away: filmmaker

→ "Anyone who is working in the field of cinema certainly has one screenplay ready for production. I have also some, but I have no plans to present any for production, because I know that conditions to produce a film these days are not good," said Damadi, director of the acclaimed movie "A Little Mistake".

He said that it seems every now and then an important event occurs in the history

of mankind where some can pass through safely and others lose out.

"We are not in a good condition socially, and the spread of coronavirus has halted many artistic jobs. There is a large pause and people are not aware of their future, therefore, one cannot predict what will happen," he asserted.

"That is why launching a new film production and involving a team in the

production where there is no bright future is a hard thing to do. I do not mean to be disappointed and I hope everything ends happily, but I prefer to be more cautious rather than brave," he noted.

"I have no project for production but I completed the novel 'Legend of an Iranian Noble', which recently has been published," he concluded.