



**Top MP rejects claims of missile attack on Natanz nuclear facility** **2**



**Pompeo suggests U.S. behind deaths of 300 Russians in Syria** **10**



**Iran football to start training camp on Aug. 27** **11**



**Celluloid Dreams handles global sales for "Sun Children"** **12**

# Leader: Americans will topple U.S. system



See page 2

**'U.S. govt. names Iran, China and Russia as enemy but the American people are its biggest enemy'**

## Rouhani inaugurates projects worth over \$1.3b in 3 provinces

**TEHRAN** – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated five major industrial projects worth 56 trillion rials (about \$1.3 billion) in three provinces on Thursday, IRNA reported. As reported, the said projects were inaugurated in Fras, Khuzestan, and Mazandaran provinces in the eighth week of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program.

Based on the mentioned program, the

Industry Ministry plans to inaugurate 200 major industrial, mining, and trade projects across the country by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (begins on March 21, 2021).

The inaugurated projects included some steel projects in southwestern Khuzestan province, a sodium carbonate production plant and two wheat silos in central Fars province and a medium-density fiber (MDF) board production plant in northern Mazandaran province. **→ 4**

## New rules for traveling to Iran to take effect today

**TEHRAN** – New regulations and instructions for traveling to Iran will take effect today as the country is fighting back against the global spread of the coronavirus, ISNA reported on Friday.

Issuing visas on arrival for tourists has been suspended until further notice.

A health certificate with a negative coronavirus PCR test result, issued at most 96 hours before arrival, is required for travelers.

Iranian citizens without a negative coronavirus PCR test result are subject

to medical screening and quarantine for 14 days at their own expense, while non-Iranian nationalities without the certificate are not allowed to enter the country.

All passengers are subject to the medical screening on arrival, and if they are suspected of having the disease, non-Iranian nationalities will be quarantined at a place specified by the Health Ministry at their own expense and Iranian citizens will need to self-isolate for 14 days. **→ 8**

## U.S. has failed to garner support to extend arms embargo on Iran: embassy

**TEHRAN** – Iran's embassy in London said in a tweet on Thursday that the United States' government has failed to garner support for extending arms embargo on Iran at the UN Security Council.

"Another failure for the US maximum pressure policy against Iran: the US government has failed to garner support for extending Iran's arms embargo in the UN

Security Council. After the US Secretary of State, Brian Hook also left London empty handed," says the tweet.

Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, was in London on Wednesday to meet Foreign Office officials as part of his attempt to drum up support for the U.S. policy of extending the arms embargo. **→ 2**



## ARTICLE

**Faranak Bakhtiari**  
Tehran Times journalist

## All shall pay tribute to guardians of nature

July 31 is World Ranger Day, which celebrates the work rangers do to protect the planet's natural treasures and cultural heritage, and commemorates the guardians nature killed or injured in the line of duty.

Climate change, poaching, and armed conflict, in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic, are the issues affecting natural resources and those who protect them, particularly during this difficult time across the globe.

Humans may have not thought about environmental protection since urbanization reached a point that severely affected nature and made them think of a solution, because humans were highly depended on nature and could not survive without it.

Therefore, institutions such as the Department of Environment in Iran and others were formed in the world, but it was the beginning of human involvement, so the relevant institutions were forced to physically protect these areas and unfortunately, a large number of them lost their lives defending the environment.

The international community decided to designate July 31 as World Ranger Day to commemorate rangers killed or injured in the line of duty and to celebrate the work rangers do to protect the world's natural and cultural heritage.

In Iran, rangers have been working for about half a century in four protected areas under the management of the DOE, to protect wildlife and biological species, and during this period 140 rangers lost their lives, in the world also more than a thousand environmental defenders have been killed over the last 12 years.

To preserve the existing biodiversity over the wide geographic expanse of Iran, four types of areas have been designated for preservation and protection, including, national parks, wildlife refuges, protected areas, and natural national monuments. In 1997, the DOE held supervision over 7,563,983 hectares of such areas. By the year 2003, the size of the DOE supervised areas reached 11,791,788.225 hectares. **→ 9**

## India can only blame itself for Iran-China strategic partnership

**TEHRAN** – Indian media has strongly criticized a nascent Sino-Iranian partnership plan that could cloud India's investments in some Iranian development projects, but an India expert tells the Tehran Times that India's decision to abide by U.S. sanctions on Iran has led to its loss of the Iranian market.

Iran and China are carefully negotiating over a strategic partnership plan that will raise the economic cooperation between Tehran and Beijing to unprecedented levels. The plan, officially known as "Comprehensive Cooperation Plan between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran," has raised some concerns in many countries in the region and beyond, though it is yet to be finalized.

India is one of the countries that clearly voiced concerns over the deepening of economic ties between its archrival China and Iran. It sees

the plan through the prism of its competitions with China and Pakistan.

"India has literally lost Iran, probably for good. Now that Iran has landed in the Chinese jaws, chances of any release from its deadly grip is almost remote. That's the fact of life and the sooner India gulps this unpalatable truth, the better," said an op-ed published by the New Delhi Times newspaper.

The newspaper put the Iran-China cooperation plan in the context of India's competition with China and the risks it poses to the Indian investments in the Iranian port of Chabahar. It was also keen to take a jab at Pakistan.

"Pakistan need (s) not jump with glee. Chabahar port will adversely impact Pakistan's Gwadar port also. This also means that the CPEC [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor] is out. Looks like China has abandoned Pakistan-its iron brother," the newspaper added. **→ 2**

## U.S. protests: Federal agents show stronger force at protests

*By staff & agencies*

Federal agents accused of behaving like an occupying army were expected to begin pulling out of central Portland, Oregon, on Thursday in an embarrassing climbdown by the White House.

But on Wednesday night the forces that have been dubbed by some as "Trump's troops" made it clear they did not intend to leave quietly.

The Department of Homeland Security paramilitaries guarding the federal courthouse in downtown Portland that has become the focus of protests fired teargas, projectiles and stun grenades into the early hours of Thursday morning against hundreds of demonstrators, The Guardian reported.

Some protesters turned out to proclaim victory over the paramilitaries sent to the city by the U.S. president.

The federal agents then drove the demonstrators back several blocks in a stronger use

of force than other recent nights, and made more arrests.

The announcement by Oregon's governor, Kate Brown, earlier on Wednesday that she had secured an agreement with the White House for most of the federal forces to withdraw from the courthouse, and for it to be guarded by state police instead, was greeted with a mix of glee and scepticism by the protesters.

Some regarded the move as a humiliating defeat for Trump who sent the federal agents to Portland a month ago, proclaiming they would bring an end to "anarchy" in the city after weeks of Black Lives Matter protests. That has clearly failed.

"I'm still here and they're leaving. I'd say that whatever it was they came to do, they didn't do it," said Amy Tulip, wearing a helmet and gas mask, and holding a "Fuck Trump, Fuck the Feds" sign. **→ 10**

## Persepolis in danger of losing six points

**TEHRAN** – Iranian football club Persepolis are facing a possible deduction of six points from the 2019-20 table after they failed to pay their former coach Branko Ivankovic.

The football club, who won Iran league title last week with four matches to spare, must pay one million euros until the next week. If not, they will face six-point deduction.

Also, the Iranian giants will have to pay the sum of \$ 580,000 to ex-coach Gabriel

Calderon who parted company with the team in January.

Persepolis have always faced financial problems due to mismanagement over the past years.

Persepolis were handed from signing players for two transfer windows in 2017 after their striker Mehdi Taremi breached his contract with Turkish football club Çaykur Rizespor.

The Reds were deducted six points by

FIFA in 2008 for non-payment of former employees, however they won the title at last.

The Iranian clubs, especially Esteghlal and Persepolis who are owned by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, are not awarded TV broadcast rights and are always facing financial problems.

Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, has recently said two Iranian popular clubs Esteghlal and Persepolis will be ceded to the private sector.



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## PhD entrance exam held under health protocols

The national entrance exam for PhD admission was held on Thursday in 60 cities across the country under health protocols amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The exam included seven majors, namely Human Sciences, Basic Sciences, Technical and Engineering, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Arts, Veterinary, and Foreign Languages.

## Iran-China co-op can shift oil, gas global balance: ex-advisor to Turkish PM

*By Zahra Mirzafarjouyan*

**TEHRAN (MNA)** – A former advisor to the Turkish prime minister says Iran, like many of its rivals, wants to upgrade partnership with China in order not to be left out of the Chinese global investment.

Mehmet Ogutcu, currently chairman of the London Energy Club, says the partnership can shift oil and gas global balance.

In a meeting on June 21, Iran's cabinet of ministers approved the final draft of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation plan between Iran and China.

On July 5, Iranian FM Zarif said the 25-year document is "transparent" and that the two countries have nothing to "hide" about it.

However, some specific foreign-based media outlets launched intensive propaganda campaigns against the agreement, airing baseless claims and reports.

To know more about the significance of Iran and China's agreement, Mehr News Agency reached out to Ogutcu to clarify about the pros and cons of the partnership.

Here is the full text of the interview:

■ What is the importance of the 25-year cooperation agreement for Iran and China?

A: There are deep-seated, mutually beneficial ties between Iran and China - tested historically as the two ancient Sino-Persian civilizations since at least 200 BC, working in many spheres today and projecting to the future. **→ 7**



## U.S. has failed to garner support to extend arms embargo on Iran: embassy

**1 →** The United States has stepped up calls for an extension of UN arms embargo on Iran since April. The arms embargo on Iran is set to expire in October.

Under the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, arms embargo against Iran expires in October.

On June 30, the U.S. was rebuked at the UN Security Council meeting, including by the five European countries on the council.

Russia's Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia slammed the U.S. for pursuing a "maximum suffocation" foreign policy against Iran, saying Washington's goal was to "achieve regime change or create a situation where Iran literally wouldn't be able to breathe".



"This is like putting a knee to one's neck," said Nebenzia, in a veiled reference to the death of black man George Floyd in Minneapolis after a white police officer knelt on his neck.

China also voiced opposition to the anti-Iran move, urging Washington "to stop its illegal unilateral sanctions" on Iran.

In a statement to the UN Security Council, Zhang Jun, China's permanent UN representative, said the root cause of the current crisis is the U.S withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and the reimposition of unilateral sanctions against Iran, Xinhua reported.

"This has again undermined the joint efforts to preserve the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]," Zhang said, referring to U.S. efforts to extend the arms embargo. "We urge the U.S. to stop its illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, and return to the right track of observing the JCPOA and Resolution 2231 [of the UNSC]," he said.

## Iran struggles to buy medicine under U.S. sanctions

*By staff and agency*

In a report published by Reuters on Thursday, it is said that Iran is struggling to buy medicine and food under the United States' sanctions despite such supplies being exempt from sanctions.

Pointing to the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Agreement (SHTA), a trade channel launched by the Swiss government to facilitate such Iranian purchases from Swiss companies, it said, "Yet Iran's central bank (CBI) has been unable to transfer the billions of dollars worth of oil export cash it had built up between 2016 and 2018 to bank accounts working with the SHTA, the five sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters."



It added, "That money was accumulated in bank accounts in countries that Iran sold oil to, especially in Asia, with its biggest customers including South Korea and Japan, in the years after Iran signed the nuclear accord with world powers, but before the Trump administration withdrew and reimposed sanctions in 2018."

"The funds were frozen when the sanctions, which target the CBI as well as dollar transactions with Iranian entities, were reintroduced. As a result, international banks and their governments - whom they seek clearance from - are wary of allowing funds to be released without specific authorisation from Washington for each transfer, the sources said."

It is also said in the report that the blockage, according to the sources, illustrates how the complexity of the U.S. sanctions has made many banks, companies and countries wary of doing any business with Iran, even when exemptions exist, because breaches can involve even financial penalties and being effectively shut out of the crucial U.S. financial system.

"The impact has also been felt in other areas, with Reuters previously reporting many foreign shipping companies and insurers are unwilling to provide vessels or cover for voyages, even for approved commerce," it added.

Switzerland's government said on Monday that a Swiss pharmaceutical company had completed the first transaction under the new humanitarian trade channel with Iran, adding more transactions would follow.

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) told Reuters that the SHTA needed "regular transfers of Iranian funds from abroad for its functioning", adding that U.S. authorities had given assurances that they would support such transfers.

"We are in talks with the USA and other partners on this matter. However, we cannot provide information on individual transfers," SECO said, without providing further details.

SECO also did not comment on how the first confirmed transaction was funded.

An Iranian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Tehran had been in contact with countries where it had funds to try to transfer the money under the Swiss initiative.

"These countries have approached the U.S. to secure its approval for such a transfer, but to no avail," the official said.

Swiss bank BCP is the only financial institution that has committed to the SHTA so far and agreed to receive Iranian funds under the scheme, the sources said.

BCP did not respond to requests for comment.

# Leader: Americans will topple U.S. system

‘U.S. govt. names Iran, China and Russia as enemy but the American people are its biggest enemy’

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — In a tweet **d e s k** on Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said that the "biggest enemy" of the U.S. regime isn't other countries like Iran, China or Russia, rather it is "the American people," who will eventually topple the current U.S. system.

"The U.S. govt needs to create enemies in order to further its goals. Sometimes they introduce #Iran as the enemy, sometimes #China, sometimes #Russia. But the U.S. establishment's biggest enemy is the American people, and they will eventually bring down the current U.S. system," tweeted the Leader.

In a recent statement, William Evanina, the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC), warned the American public about "foreign threats" to the U.S. election, accusing China, Russia, and Iran of pursuing efforts to sway the 2020 elections.

"Today, we see our adversaries seeking to compromise the private communications of U.S. political campaigns, candidates, and other political targets. Our adversaries also seek to compromise our election infrastructure, and we continue to monitor malicious cyber actors trying to gain access to U.S. state and federal networks, including those responsible for managing elections," the statement said.

**■ Leader: It's unacceptable that foreign currency keep rising against national currency**

In a live televised speech on the occasion of Eid al-Adha or the Feast of Sacrifice, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution also said it is "by no means acceptable" that the value of foreign currencies keep rising constantly against the national currency rial.

However, the Leader said, according to reports that he has received there is more "security and political reasons" behind the devaluation of the currency rather than economic ones.

The Trump administration illegally and unilaterally pulled out of the 2015 nuclear agreement and introduced the harshest economic sanctions in history against Iran in line its "maximum pressure" strategy against the Islamic Republic.

In his speech, the Leader stressed that the U.S. dream to stop the Iranian nation's



progress will never come true.

Ayatollah Khamenei said circles in the U.S. have admitted failure to achieve goals through maximum pressure.

The Leader added, "The U.S. has always sought to weaken Iranians' morale since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution."

Ayatollah Khamenei insisted that the Iranian nation are "not impressed by enemies' propaganda."

Noting that the Iranian economy has become resilient in the face of sanctions, the Leader said, "The Iranians have turned U.S. brutal sanctions into an opportunity to gain self-sufficiency. Today Iran is capable of domestically producing equipment sanctioned by the U.S."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution noted that the U.S. sanctions are ostensibly against the government, but in reality, they are against the Iranian nation and these are examples of "crime".

"There is no doubt that the sanctions that the U.S. has slapped against the Iranian nation is a crime. Superficially, it is against the Islamic Republic, but in reality it is against the Iranian nation."

**■ 'Washington's aim is to crumble Iranian economy'**

Elaborating on the purpose behind U.S. sanctions, the Leader said, "Their mid-term aim is to create limitations so that there would be no progress in scientific areas. Their long-term is to bankrupt the government and crumble the country's economy so that it would no longer be able to survive."

Along with these three purposes, the Leader pointed out, they want to cut Iran's relations with countries which are members of the Axis of Resistance in the region, but "the cat dreams of mice".

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say that sanctions have created problems for the country but part of the problems are linked to mismanagement. The Leader said recently the coronavirus has aggravated the problems.

"Sanctions have created problems for us and there is no doubt in it, but all of our problems are not from sanctions. Sometimes it is because of management and recently it is also related to Corona."

**■ "Scene of wills"**

The Leader said along with the sanctions

a "distortion" campaign is also underway against Iran.

The enemies are seeking to reverse the realities in Iran in order to demoralize the people and give a "wrong address".

"If the distortion current is defeated, the sanctions current will definitely suffer defeat too because" the world is "the scene of wills", Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

The Leader went on to say that efforts to "separate" the country's economy from oil is a "very important issue" and now foreigners either do not buy the Iranian oil or buy a small amount and "this a practice that we separate our economy from oil".

The Leader went on to say that definitely there is a "cure" for sanctions and definitely that "cure" is not giving in to U.S. pressure, because if "we back down they will raise new demands".

They want Iran to abdicate its nuclear industry and reduce its deterrence capability to "one-tenth" and give up its regional power, the Leader noted, adding, "If it becomes so, they will not become content and make another demand."

**■ 'All should follow guidelines to fighting coronavirus during Muharram rituals'**

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that health-care guidelines set by the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus should be observed during the Muharram rituals.

"All the mourners, mourning gatherings and eulogists must follow what is announced by the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, because it is a very important issue," the Leader asserted.

He added, "What is announced by the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus must followed during mourning. I will respect what they announce as necessary. I advise all the mourners, mourning gatherings and eulogists to respect guidelines of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, otherwise, there will be a big disaster."

During the Muharram rituals, millions of Muslims commemorate martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad.

## Top MP rejects claims of missile attack on Natanz nuclear facility

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mojtaba Zolnour, the head **d e s k** of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has rejected claims of missile or drone attacks on the Natanz nuclear facility.

"Explosion had internal origin, and for the time being we cannot say the details," ISNA quoted Zolnour as saying on Friday.

Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said on July 2 there was an incident in "one of the industrial sheds under construction" at the

Natanz uranium enrichment plant.

He noted that the incident caused no stoppage or slowdown of enrichment because the affected shed was actually under construction and not part of the enrichment process yet.

His remarks came hours after an informed Iranian security official told Press TV that there was no evidence to show that the incident has been an act of intentional sabotage.

Kamalvandi said, "The incident took place at about 02:00 local time this morning and caused no loss of life," adding, "We have many open-space sheds at the Shahid Ahmadi

Roshan enrichment complex. Our enrichment activities are mostly done underground."

"Our open-space sheds do different things. This was one of those sheds, which was under construction. We have material damage, but no loss of life," he explained.

Natanz is a uranium enrichment center located in the city of the same name in Isfahan Province, some 250 kilometers (155 miles) south of the capital, Tehran.

It is among the sites now being constantly monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

## Rouhani calls Qatari emir, says security possible only through regional co-op

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President **d e s k** Hassan Rouhani has said that regional security and stability can only be achieved through regional cooperation.

"Security and stability in the region can only be reached within the framework of regional cooperation and definitely we can bring better situation to the region through increasing cooperation," he told Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in a phone conversation on Thursday.

Rouhani also attached great importance to expansion of Tehran-Doha relations.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has no impediment or restriction to strengthen relations and cooperation with Qatar as a friendly and brotherly country," he said.

The Qatari emir also called for cementing

relations.

Sheikh Tamim also congratulated Eid al-Adha to the Iranian government and expressed hope that the feast would be good and blessed for Muslim nations around the world.

In another phone conversation with the Qatari emir in April, Rouhani said that there is no way but cooperation among the countries in the region to establish security and stability.

"We believe there is no way but cooperation and friendship among the regional countries to establish long lasting security and stability in the region," Rouhani said.

In another phone call in January, Rouhani said that Iran has stood and will stand beside Qatar in the future.



Rouhani said that the two countries have very good relationship in various areas of economy, science and culture.

"A joint commission will be formed in future months and we hope that the two countries would reach agreements

in economic cooperation, investment, technology and other areas," the president stated.

He also said that Iran and Qatar will expand political ties.

At the time, the Qatari emir also said his country will never forget Tehran's help in difficult days.

In June of 2017, Saudi Arabia along with Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) abruptly cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar and closed land, sea and air routes to the country. The severing of relations also included withdrawing ambassadors and imposing trade and travel bans on Doha.

The Islamic Republic opened its airspace to about 100 more Qatari flights a day during the blockade.

## India can only blame itself for Iran-China strategic partnership

**1 →** In separate articles, the Indian think tank, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), echoed the same concerns.

"Iran is already part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and in September 2019 China announced its intent to infuse \$400 billion worth of investments in Iran's oil and gas, infrastructure and transportation sectors. These massive numbers are a direct challenge to both Western, and more specifically, American economic might on a regional and global stage, but also creating new geo-political flash points as Beijing expands its reach around the world, which now includes a base in Djibouti, operations of Gwadar port in Pakistan, ever increasing naval port calls across the world and so on," the ORF said in an article authored by Kabir Taneja, a fellow with Strategic Studies Program.

Taneja added, "The U.S.-China tussle arriving in Iran would be a new challenge within a challenge for New Delhi, which has over the past few years been balancing its relations with the U.S. and Iran."

With respect to the 25-year Iran-China partnership plan, India's concerns center around a possible Chinese investment in Chabahar port, which some Indian analysts call it "India's strategic magnum opus in Iran," and the prospect of China finding a naval footprint in the Western Indian Ocean, where New Delhi has strategic interests.

"New Delhi's strategic interests are 'weighted west': the oil flows are from west, the bulk of trade is west, as is the diaspora, and India major investments. Not only are India and the U.S. badly coordinated in the Western Indian Ocean, observers say Washington's Iran policy actively impinges on



Indian interests," wrote Abhijit Singh, a former Indian naval officer, who currently heads the Maritime Policy Initiative at the ORF.

Indian analysts also express concern over the possibility that China replaces India in development projects in Iran such as Chabahar port and the Chabahar-Zahedan railway, but an India expert told the Tehran Times that India's concern is a problem of its own making.

"India was involved in Chabahar port's development project, and it was expected to complete the project as soon as possible, but India didn't complete the project due to U.S. pressures. The Indian government was eager to move forward with its investments at Chabahar port, but the Indian firms were dragging their feet about continuing the project,

because they had business dealings with American firms," Mohsen Rouhisefat, an India expert, told the Tehran Times, adding that Iran can't wait for India to complete the port project at a later time, because it urgently needs to develop its economic infrastructures given its growing population.

According to the expert, Iran has already invested \$1b in Chabahar port, and it invited other countries like Australia and Japan to invest in the port, while India was working there.

"The Chabahar port development project includes five phases. Only one phase has been developed with the participation of India. Iran has invited all countries to make investments in the port, and thus a possible Chinese investment in Chabahar port is natural," said Rouhisefat, noting that the Chinese have already paid a visit to the port.

He also said that Iran and India have signed an agreement similar to the current Iran-China one about two decades ago, but the Indians failed to take advantage of their agreement with Iran.

Under the Iran-China agreement, Tehran will supply Beijing with oil for a period of 25 years in exchange for Chinese investment in many sectors in Iran, including oil and gas projects. The Indian media expressed concern that the agreement could allow for China to deploy its navy forces in areas of great importance for India like the Western Indian Ocean.

However, Rouhisefat ruled out the possibility that China deploy military forces according to the agreement, saying the Iran-China partnership plan is only an economic blueprint that doesn't entail any military aspect.



# No country entitled to ignore Iran's rights, Tehran tells Seoul

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi says no country is entitled to ignore Iran's rights in favor of a third country, making a reference to South Korea's freezing of Iran's money under illegal demand by the United States.

"We informed them that the U.S. sanctions were unfounded and unilateral and no country must succumb to the U.S. sanctions," Mousavi said on Thursday, according to Mehr.

"No country is entitled to ignore Iran's rights for a third country," he added.

Iran has been escalating pressure on the Asian country to release about \$7 billion of oil-export revenues, arguing that Seoul is buckling to pressure from the U.S. and illegally withholding funds needed by Iran to counter the coronavirus outbreak.

Also on Thursday, the Foreign Ministry released a statement in response to an article titled "Who emboldened the Koreans?" which was published in the Iranian press and was critical of alleged remarks made by the Iranian ambassador to Seoul in an phone call with the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

"Basically, there was no phone call between the spokesperson of the South Korean Foreign Ministry and the esteemed ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Seoul, and this is a baseless claim altogether," the Foreign Ministry said



in its statement.

"The meeting which took place between the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Seoul and the director general for Middle East affairs. In the meeting, no mention was made about

the comments of the esteemed governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)," the statement read.

It explained that following the meeting, the Korean news agency Yonhap published a groundless report claiming

that the Iranian ambassador had been "summoned", and attributed certain remarks to the ambassador.

According to the Foreign Ministry, over the past two years, high on the agenda and a pivotal issue in Iran-South Korea relations has been to provide access to the financial resources of the central bank in South Korea.

It added that in addition to receiving South Korea's special envoy, dozens of meetings were held in Tehran and Seoul with South Korean authorities.

"Obviously, the nature of the responsibilities of the Foreign Ministry requires that it should not publicly announce all of its activities," the ministry highlighted.

"In accordance with its fundamental duties, the Foreign Ministry deliberately facilitates foreign relations, including economic ties with other countries, and stands by other institutions in the country in line with carrying out this mission," the Foreign Ministry wrote.

It added, "It goes without saying that this does not negate, nor does it replace the basic duty of other institutions, and the Foreign Ministry cannot act on their behalf. So, pertinent authorities are filing a lawsuit against the delinquent Korean banks at competent courts, and this has been announced by the respected governor of the central bank."

## Arrogant powers received message of memorable drill: IRGC



**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has successfully concluded its large-scale drills in Iran's southern waters, saying the drills conveyed the message of Iranian forces' readiness to counter threats.

"The arrogant [powers] and those who had greed toward our interests received the message of readiness, vigilance

and resistance of the Iranian nation and armed forces through the fields of this memorable event," the IRGC said in a statement on Thursday.

The statement came at the end of the large-scale military war game, codenamed Payambar-e A'zam (The Great Prophet) 14.

"We are the children of Imam Khamenei and soldiers of jihad and martyrdom, and we're determined to devotedly defend the achievements of the Islamic Revolution, the establishment and the dear people of Iran," the statement read, according to Mehr.

It added that the Islamic Republic of Iran has never started any war and will not do so, but it will act decisively when defending the country's independence, territorial integrity, security and national interests.

The IRGC said the drills ended successfully with implementation of all determined sequences and combined operational drills across the land, sea, air, and space.

It also enumerated some of the "elaborate operational drills" carried out during the event, such as unprecedented firing of ballistic missiles from underground launch facilities, destruction of enemy radar facilities, and successful firing of coast-to-sea and sea-to-sea missiles that led to destruction of enemy warships.

On Tuesday, which saw the first day of the war game, the IRGC staged "all-out and multi-layer" strikes against the life-size replica of a Nimitz-class U.S. aircraft carrier, which the U.S. navy usually sails into the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

The IRGC's servicemen began the episode by destroying the mock carrier's accompaniment with coast-to-sea fire.

The national television aired footage showing the damage caused to the mock aircraft carrier following the operational juncture.

On Wednesday, the IRGC Aerospace Force successfully launched a series of ballistic missiles from well-camouflaged underground missile systems during the military exercise.

It was for the first time that the IRGC launched missiles from under the ground.

The IRGC's Sukhoi-22 fighter jets also destroyed targets on the Farur Island with winged bombs.

The war game was announced to be monitored for the first time by the Noor-1 Satellite.

The IRGC successfully put Noor into orbit on April 22. The Iranian satellite was launched with the three-stage satellite carrier Qassed (messenger) from a launch pad in Dasht-e Kavir, a large desert in central Iran.

## Iranian embassy blasts Brian Hook for Iranophobic rhetoric

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian embassy in Kuwait has reacted to recent remarks by the U.S. special representative for Iran about transfer of the coronavirus from Iran to regional states, saying American officials are insulting the intelligence of the regional people through their Iranophobic rhetoric.

"We advise [Brian] Hook not to wade into such an argument," the embassy said in a statement, according to Press TV.

The statement advised Hook to compare the large number of the coronavirus-infected people who have traveled to Kuwait from the United States, to the number of the infected people who have traveled there from Iran.

"Coming up with this style of Iranophobia amounts to an insult to the intelligence of the regional people and the understanding of Kuwaiti nation," the diplomatic mission added.

It also pointed out that the new highly-infectious virus was a global phenomenon that has entangled the entire world alike and did not discriminate among countries.



On a recent tour to West Asian countries, including Qatar and Kuwait, Hook had al-

leged that the Islamic Republic exported the novel virus to littoral Persian Gulf countries.

Also recently, Kuwait began allowing its citizens and residents to travel to and from the Arab country, but has barred those trying to reach there from seven states, including Iran.

The Iranian embassy in Kuwait further censured Hook's regional tour for trying to encourage regional countries toward non-commitment to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.

The United States has been seeking support for its demand of extending a 13-year UN weapons embargo on Iran. However, Russia and China, which are both members of the UN Security Council, oppose the embargo.

The UN arms embargo is due to expire in October under United Nations Security

Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The U.S. abandoned the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, and pursued a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran to force it to negotiate a new deal but to no avail.

In his visit to Riyadh, Hook claimed that lifting the UN arms embargo on Iran will trigger an arms race in West Asia.

"This is not an outcome that the UN Security Council can accept. The council's mandate is clear: to maintain international peace and security," he claimed.

The U.S. diplomat made similar remarks in Bahrain and the UAE.

The Iranian embassy further said, "Before starting to be [supposedly] sympathetic towards the people of the region, the U.S. had better be concerned about its own citizens, especially the people of color."

"Those who are not merciful towards their own people, would definitely not have mercy on others either," the mission concluded.

**"Those who are not merciful towards their own people, would definitely not have mercy on others either," the Iranian embassy says in response to Hook's claims.**

## 5th anniv. of Mina tragedy, Mecca crane collapse: Iran says is pursuing victims' rights

**(Press TV)** — Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization and the Representative of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Hajj Affairs have issued a joint statement ahead of the fifth anniversary of the Mina disaster and the Mecca crane collapse, saying Tehran is seriously pursuing the rights of victims.

The statement, which was released on Thursday, said that Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) reminds Muslims and the Iranian nation of a "bitter memory."

On September 24, 2015, a human crush occurred during Hajj rituals in Mina, near Mecca, leaving thousands of Muslims, including 465 Iranian pilgrims dead.

Unofficial sources, based on individual reports from countries whose nationals had been among the victims of the incident, put the death toll at almost 7,000 people.

Earlier that month, a massive construction crane operated by the Saudi Binladin Group conglomerate collapsed onto Mecca's Grand Mosque, killing more than 100 pilgrims, including 11 Iranians, and injuring over 200 others, 32 of them from Iran.

The statement criticized the silence of international rights bodies and media on the deadly incidents, saying it was only Iran that spoke in defense of the victims' rights.

"Although the Mina tragedy and the crane collapse incident at Mecca's Grand Mosque happened before the eyes of the Islamic Ummah, the silence of international organizations and media added to the pain of the families of the two disasters' martyrs," read the statement.

Iranian officials in charge of the Hajj affairs have

always underlined the need for clarifying the dimensions of the Mina tragedy through the formation of a fact-finding committee including the representatives from the countries that lost their pilgrims in the incident, it added.

It further complained that the Saudi government has not published an official report on how the tragedy occurred and has not taken responsibility for it.

"On the fifth anniversary of the Mina tragedy, the Representative of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Hajj Affairs and Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization ... emphasize that they have diligently followed up on the rights of the martyrs of Mina and Grand Mosque and will keep doing so until the desired results are achieved," the statement read.

## Twitter: Ayatollah Khamenei's tweets don't violate our rules

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Twitter has defended its decision not to block or restrict tweets by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's office against Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Ylwa Pettersson, Twitter's head policy for the Nordic countries and Israel, said the tweets posted by Ayatollah Khamenei's account do not violate the company's rules.

Pettersson made the comments while speaking to the Israeli parliament (Knesset)'s Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs via video-conference on Wednesday.

"We have an approach toward leaders that says that direct interactions with fellow public figures, comments on political issues of the day, or foreign policy saber-rattling on military-economic issues are generally not in violation of our rules," she said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) has said that Twitter is violating sanctions on Iran by providing Ayatollah Khamenei with account services.

In a tweet on Thursday, Cruz also said that he has urged U.S. Attorney General William Barr to open a criminal investigation into the alleged violations including "antisemitic vitriol and hatred against America."

Ayatollah Khamenei's office has on many occasions posted tweets condemning the Israeli regime for its crimes, including appropriating Palestinian lands, and disregard for international law.

The Leader has urged an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land. But the mainstream Western media outlets claim that Iran wants the elimination of Jewish people.

This is despite the fact that Ayatollah Khamenei has clearly differentiated between "elimination" of the Zionist regime and what has been promoted by the West as Iran's ill-intention towards Jews.

"Eliminating the Zionist regime doesn't mean eliminating Jews. We aren't against Jews. It means abolishing the imposed regime & Muslim, Christian & Jewish Palestinians choose their own govt & expel thugs like Netanyahu. This is 'Eliminating Israel' & it will happen," the Leader's office said in a tweet in May 2020.

## JCPOA is annexed to UNSCR 2231 and U.S. has legal obligations to implement both: Iran

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said that the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, is annexed to the resolution 2231 of the UN Security Council and the United States has legal obligations to implement both of them.

"The US—with media stunts—continues to claim #JCPOA

has no legal standing at UN. But JCPOA is "annexed" to UNSCR 2231, and US has legal obligations to implement BOTH. Article 2 of 2231 calls upon members to support implementation of JCPOA: the US is shirking its responsibility," Takht-Ravanchi tweeted on July 29.

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

The JCPOA is endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The United States has stepped up calls for the extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran since April.

Under the Resolution 2231, the arms embargo expires in October. The Trump administration has threatened that it may seek to trigger a snapback of all sanctions on Iran if its attempts to extend the arms embargo fail.



## Judiciary dismisses hype on health of Australian-British prisoner

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iran's Judiciary rejected social media hype on the health conditions of the Australian-British prisoner, Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who has been sentenced for harming Iran's security and espionage, saying she is in fully good health conditions.

Iran's Judiciary reaction came after certain social media posts claimed that Moore-Gilbert is not in a good health conditions.

Moore-Gilbert is due to meet the Australian ambassador to Iran on Sunday.

In December 2019, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi had said Moore-Gilbert had been arrested on a charge of violating Iran's national security and "the competent court has also issued the appropriate ruling by observing all relevant laws."

"Experience has shown that the Islamic Republic of Iran would not give in to political and smear campaigns, and this Australian citizen is serving her sentence while enjoying all legal rights, like any other convict with a judicial verdict," the spokesman said.

"Public opinion would not forget the Australian government's treatment of (Iranian national) Ms. Negar Qods Kani who was kept in custody without committing any crime and was treated in an inhuman manner for 28 months. Among the examples of treatment of Ms. Qods Kani that were against the law and human rights were leaving her to have a delivery in prison, separating the infant from the mother, turning down a request for house arrest in lieu of imprisonment, barring her from seeing her baby regularly, and violating consular commitments by extraditing her to the U.S."



## ‘Iran, Pakistan enjoy great potential for agricultural co-op’

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Pakistan’s Minister of National Food Security and Research said that Iran and Pakistan have huge potential for economic cooperation, including cooperation in the field of agriculture, IRNA reported.

Syed Fakhar Imam made the remarks during a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini on Wednesday.

The minister reiterated that Pakistan greatly values its relations with Iran.

He also noted that the two countries may explore new areas of cooperation in the field of livestock.

Iran can share experiences and knowledge in the field of animal breeding with Pakistan and a technical team may be developed between two countries to take advantage of experiences of both countries, the official added.

Pakistan showed interest to export Halal meat and Halal meat products to Iran. Pakistan has 36 registered slaughter houses for export of meat.

Syed Fakhar Imam appreciated that Iran has granted market access to Pakistani agricultural products.

The Iranian ambassador for his part, expressed Iran’s desire to export tractors and other agricultural machinery to Pakistan.

The proposal was welcomed and the Iranian side was requested to share concept proposal with specifications of the machinery for further consideration.

## TEDPIX gains 3,000 points in a week

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), increased just 3,000 points to 1.904 million during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

As reported, Bank Mellat, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, Iran Khodro Investment Development Company, Ghadir Investment Company, and Bank Saderat were the major contributors to the index’s rise in the previous week.

TEDPIX has gone up 147 percent during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), compared to the first quarter of the previous year.

Last week, 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 July 20, 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 July 20, as it exceeded 1.9 million points. The index gained 46,814 points to 1.911 million during the daily 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.

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

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

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

Mentioning the prosperous status of the capital market in the present year, Qalibaf-Asl underlined that the current status of this market is not at all comparable with that of the past three years and even the previous year.

He put the amount of financing through the capital market at 2.6 quadrillion rials (about \$61.9 billion) in the past Iranian calendar year 1398 and said the figure was one quadrillion rials (about \$23.8 billion) just in the first quarter of the present year. Financing through this market stood at 1.2 quadrillion rials (about \$28.5 billion) in the calendar year 1397.

The SEO head also put the value of trades at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) and Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), at 8.3 quadrillion rials (about \$197.61 billion) in the previous year, while the figure was 7.8 quadrillion rials (about \$185.71 billion) in the first quarter of this year.

TSE is Iran’s major stock exchange, three other exchanges are IFB, Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Qalibaf-Asl further said that the number of trading accounts opened in the stock market in the past year was 820,000, adding that 1.6 million accounts have been opened in the first three months of the current year.

# Rouhani inaugurates projects worth over \$1.3b in 3 provinces

**1 →** The mentioned projects are going to create more than 1,700 direct job opportunities in the said provinces.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony, Rouhani noted that these inaugurations are an indication of the industry sector’s significance in the country and the importance that the government puts over this sector.

“A large portion of the burden of the country’s needs and non-oil exports, as well as the country’s development and production

is borne by the industry sector,” Rouhani said in the ceremony.

Meanwhile, the Acting Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Hossein Modarres Khiaabani, who traveled to Sari in Mazandaran Province to inaugurate the MDF production complex, stated that so far 38 major industrial and mining projects with 200 trillion rials (about \$47.6 billion) of investment have been inaugurated and 6,000 jobs have been created under the framework of the “Persistent Pro-



duction-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports” program.

The Industry Ministry’s “Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports” program was introduces following

the implementation of A-B-Iran scheme by the Energy Ministry in which several water and electricity projects are going operational in various provinces across the country on a weekly basis.

## About 4,000 industrial projects with 80% physical progress underway in Iran

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Acting Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Hossein Modarres Khiaabani said on Thursday that currently, about 4,000 industrial projects are underway across the country, IRNA reported.

Making the remarks in an inauguration ceremony of a Medium-Density Fiberboard (MDF) production complex in the northern province of Mazandaran, Khiaabani put the physical progress of the mentioned projects at over 80 percent.

He noted that most of the mentioned projects are expected to go operational in the next Iranian calendar year (starts in March 2021) which is the end of the current government’s incumbency.

“So far this year, 38 industrial projects worth 20,000 billion toman [200 trillion rials or about \$4.76 billion] have been put into operation and about 6,000 people have been directly employed,” Khiaabani said.

In late May, the Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade



Minister Saeed Zarendi had said that there are currently 12,500 projects with physical progress of over 60 percent

## Iran to hold 2 exhibitions in Afghanistan soon

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, who is the chairman of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Committee, said two commercial and industrial exhibitions are planned to be held in Afghanistan in near future, IRIB reported on Friday.

“Shortly, we will hold two exhibitions in the fields of trade, commerce, and industry, and we will also hold a joint Economic Committee meeting in Afghanistan,” Ardakanian told IRIB.

The official noted that the two countries also have it on the agenda to expand their energy cooperation, adding: “there is a great potential for expansion of trade and economic cooperation between the two sides.”

He further mentioned an agreement between the two neighbors for using the Helmand River, saying: “We are acting within the framework of the 1351 agreement between Iran and Afghanistan, in which the agreement envisages a commissariat in which both sides have members.”

“One of the duties of this commissariat is to monitor the implementation of the agreement, and fortunately, due to the good atmosphere of cooperation [between the two countries], the agreement is fully in place,” Ardakanian said.

Helmand Commissariat meetings are held regularly in Tehran and Kabul, he added.

Afghanistan is one of Iran’s top five trade partners and the two neighbors have a long



history for economic and political relations.

Back in 2019, during a visit to Kabul, Ardakanian had announced that Iran and Afghanistan were going to accelerate their cooperation in the electricity sector by setting up a joint taskforce.

The minister said: “The Afghan president has recommended the establishment of this task force and we are waiting for it to be set up as soon as possible”.

Iran and Afghanistan are also considering the realization of 16,000 megawatts potential of renewable energy projects in border areas.

“With good wind energy capacity in the two countries’ border regions, the two sides can use that capacity to generate nearly 16,000 megawatts of electricity,” Iran’s Deputy Energy Minister Homayoun Haeri said in a meeting with Afghan Minister of Energy and Water Mohammad Gul Kholmi during his visit to Kabul in last August.

## Weight of quarterly agricultural, foodstuff exports up 19% yr/yr

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The weight of Iranian exports of agricultural and foodstuff products increased by 19 percent in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20) compared to the same period last year, a senior official at Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said.

According to Mahmoud Bazari, director-general of TPO’s Export Coordination Office for agro crops and processing industry products, exports of the mentioned products in the Q1 of this year also increased by one percent in terms of value.

The share of agricultural and foodstuff products from the country’s total exports in the first quarter of the current year is estimated at 19.6 percent, which has increased by 66 percent compared to the same period in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (started on March 20, 2016) when the current government took office.

“This significant increase in the share of the mentioned products in the country’s non-oil export basket during the said period indicates that it is possible to further develop exports in this sector,” Bazari stressed.

According to the official, the exports of agricultural products during the Q1 of the current year increased by 36 percent in terms of value, while registering a 29-percent increase in terms of weight, compared to the same period last year.

“The export of fruits and vegetables



during this period also increased by 24 percent in weight, which indicates the very good export capacities of these products,” he noted.

According to Head of Agriculture Ministry’s Planning and Economic Affairs Department Shahrokh Shajari, Iran exported over \$5.8 billion worth of agricultural and foodstuff products in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

In the mentioned period, over 6.941 million tons of agricultural and foodstuff products worth \$6.392 billion were also imported into the country, according to Shajari.

Watermelons, apples, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, and shallots were the top five exported products in the previous year in terms of weight, while in terms of value, pistachios, apples, tomatoes, pistachio kernels, and watermelons were the five major export products.

## Aquatic products exported to Thailand from Chabahar port for first time

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** —Iran exported aquatic products to Thailand from its southeastern Chabahar port for the first time, a provincial official told IRNA on Thursday.

Behrouz Aqaei, the director-general of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, where the strategic port is located, said this was Iran’s first cargo ship of non-edible fishes which left Chabahar for the Indian commercial port of Mundra to trans-ship its goods to Bangkok port, Thailand as its final destination.

Also, Afghanistan has sent its cargo ship carrying different products, including dried fruits, to China and India through Shahid Beheshti port of Chabahar as well, Aqaei added.

As the official said, the ship carrying Afghan goods has been the fourth which departed for India, China, and Thailand via Chabahar port during the past month.

The departure took place based on the 2016 trilateral agreement between Tehran, Kabul and New Delhi, when Iran, India, and Afghanistan decided to jointly establish a trade route for the land-locked Central Asian countries.

India sent its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan through Chabahar port back in 2017.

Later on, Afghanistan officially started exporting goods to India through Chabahar port in a ceremony held in early February 2019.

The event was attended by the Afghan president, along with the Iranian ambassador to Kabul, and Indian ambassador to Afghanistan.

In November 2019, Afghanistan Ambassador to Tehran Abdul Ghafoor Liwal said his country was planning to increase commodity transit through Iranian Chabahar port.

“Chabahar is an economic and a transit bridge for Afghanistan and we are going to expand our economic relations through increasing exports and imports through Chabahar,” he said.

As Iran’s only oceanic port, Chabahar consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of



which has five berths.

Iran has awarded the development project of this port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

India has doubled the allocated funding for the development of the port in its national budget bill for 2020.

On Thursday, Hossein Shahdadi, the deputy director-general of Sistan-Baluchestan Province’s Ports and Maritime Department, told IRNA that the main goal of Chabahar port development plan is to give a boost to the volume of transit and exports from the country.

He said the loading and unloading of commodities in the port of Chabahar has witnessed a remarkable growth over the past two years.

He said that Chabahar port is the safest and the most economically efficient route for the export and import of commodities from India, Afghanistan and CIS countries.

Some 60,000 tons of wheat have been transited from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar port since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year which shows a significant growth in comparison to figures from the same period last year, Shahdadi said.

Chabahar is a port city located some 645 km south of Zahedan, the center of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, which

lies by Oman Sea.

Given its strategic location as well as infrastructure and capacities, Chabahar port will become the country’s third trade hub soon, Iran’s acting minister of industry, mining, and trade stated on July 10, in a meeting of Sistan-Baluchestan Province’s Economic Taskforce.

Hossein Modares Khiaabani said that Chabahar enjoys high potential for the exports and transit of commodities, which can make it Iran’s third trade hub after Bandar-Abbas Port (in southern Hormozgan Province) and Imam Khomeini Port (in southwestern Bushehr Province).

The official further put emphasis on the necessity of facilitating all trade processes in Chabahar to expedite its development. Chabahar is Iran’s only oceanic port and given its strategic location in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) development of the port is of high significance for Iran.

During a ceremony on starting the track-laying operations of Chabahar-Zahedan railroad on July 7, Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi underlined the significance of the railroad and noted that due to its strategic position, Chabahar port is going to be a gateway for the country’s trade.

The project which is aimed to connect Chabahar to Zahedan, is planned to be completed by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (March 2022).

The total length of this railroad is 628 kilometers (km), 150 km of which will be laid by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2021), Khademi announced.

Establishing an all-rail corridor in the east of the country, connecting Chabahar as the country’s only oceanic port to the national railway network, developing Makran coasts through rail transportation, connecting Central Asia and Afghanistan to open ocean waters, and establishing permanent cooperation with countries in the region and other countries with trade and transit exchanges are reported to be some of the goals of Chabahar-Zahedan railway project.



# Several water, electricity projects inaugurated in southwestern Iran

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (Tavanir) inaugurated 14 water and electricity projects worth 3.37 trillion rials (about \$80.2 million) in the Southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province in a ceremony on Wednesday.

The mentioned projects went operational in the 13th week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program, based on which, every week, the ministry inaugurates numerous projects in various provinces across the country.

A-B-Iran scheme [the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian] was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), during which the minister made 31 trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

The projects included a wastewater treatment plant, several electricity supply projects for rural areas, power grid optimization, increasing the capacity of several power distribution stations, etc.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony, Mohammad-Hassan Motevalizadeh stated



that the development of the energy sector in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province has provided a suitable platform for attracting investors, saying: "Today, we can announce to all investors that there are no restrictions in terms of electricity supply in this province."

He further expressed gratitude for people's cooperation with the ministry's consumption management programs and noted that over 5,500 megawatts of electricity was saved by people's optimal consumption during the summer.

He put the value of people's electricity saving in the peak consumption period at 1 quadrillion rials (about \$23.8 billion), stating that for supplying 5,500 MW of electricity a new power plant should have been constructed which would have needed over \$1 billion.

Motevalizadeh noted that the summer peak consumption period has been passed without any intentional blackouts with people's cooperation.

Earlier this year, Iran's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said in the second phase of the A-B-Iran program the ministry is going to inaugurate 250 major energy projects worth 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

According to Ardakanian, in the water sector, the mentioned projects include nine major dams, implementation of modern irrigation systems in 54,000 hectares of land, 20 water, and wastewater treatment plants and supplying drinkable water through a pipeline to more than 1400 rural areas across the country.

Since the beginning of the second phase of the scheme in the current Iranian calendar year, every week several energy projects have gone operational across the country.

## Shell and Total escape underlying losses on strong oil trading

Royal Dutch Shell and Total escaped underlying losses in the second quarter after stronger oil trading results helped offset plunging energy demand triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, Financial Times reported.

Anglo-Dutch oil major Shell revealed an 82 percent drop in adjusted earnings to \$638m, while France's Total said its adjusted profits had fallen 96 percent to \$126m. Analysts had expected the groups to report losses of \$674m and \$400m respectively.

The underlying figures, which are those most closely watched by analysts as a measure of core performance, exclude combined writedowns of almost \$25bn as the companies overhauled their price outlooks after the crisis hit.

Brent crude fell from almost \$70 a barrel in early January to below \$20 in April as consumption declined as much as a third at the peak of lockdowns, and has only recovered to just above \$40.

But while the wild price swings and loss of demand hurt the oil majors' core businesses, they were able to buttress their results in trading.

"These trading platforms always deliver positive surprises in terrible macro conditions," said Bernstein analysts.

Shell said "very strong" crude and oil products trading alongside lower operating expenses helped partially offset the plunge in energy prices and a drop in refining margins. Jessica Uhl, Shell's chief financial officer, said the trading

performance was "one of the best on record".

Patrick Pouyanné, Total chief executive, said its results were "driven in particular by the outperformance of trading activities, once again demonstrating the relevance of Total's integrated model".

Shell, Total and BP all have vast trading divisions but the companies provide little detail on their performance.

As demand for oil collapsed, energy companies and traders have tried to secure cheap crude to store and sell at a higher price in the future, while also betting on directional price moves.

In previous downturns, companies leant on their refining and marketing businesses to make up for losses in exploration and production as prices collapsed. But with demand for oil products such as gasoline and jet fuel falling in recent months as governments imposed travel bans and lockdowns, only those companies with robust trading divisions have been able to benefit.

In oil products such as petrol, diesel and jet fuel, Shell revealed that adjusted earnings for refining and trading had more than tripled in the first half of the year to \$1.7bn, despite lower refining margins.

Still, the pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the industry, spurring widespread capital spending cuts, operational cost reductions, new debt issuance and the suspension of share buyback programs.

The crash has prompted a reappraisal among companies

already facing the prospect of oil demand potentially peaking in the coming years, as the growth of electric vehicles depresses demand for transport fuels.

Reeling from the fallout of coronavirus, Shell cut its dividend in April for the first time since the Second World War as the pandemic halved its earnings, and has committed to cut emissions and invest more in renewables.

As the industry confronts the longer-term impact of coronavirus on finances, demand for energy products and the global economy, Shell and Total announced post-tax impairment charges, which they had both previously signaled. Shell slashed the value of its assets by \$16.8bn, while Total said writedowns would amount to \$8.1bn.

Total said on Wednesday it expected oil prices to average below \$60 a barrel over the next 30 years, far lower than previous estimates, highlighting its view that oil demand could peak in the next 10 years.

Shell's reported loss, including the non-cash writedowns, were \$18.1bn while it clocked in at \$8.4bn for Total.

While Total maintained its dividend, Italy's Eni on Thursday cut its payout after announcing an adjusted net loss in the second quarter of €714m from a profit of €562m a year earlier.

Eni had said earlier this year it would pay a dividend of €0.89 for 2020, and introduced a new policy tying the payout to the price of Brent crude. The latest price assumptions point to a dividend of €0.55 this year.

## Chinese oil giant CNPC eyes BP's \$1.5 billion stake in Oman gas field

China National Petroleum Corp. is in talks to acquire part of BP Plc's stake in a key gas field in Oman, according to people familiar with the matter.

China's state-owned oil giant is having advanced discussions with BP for a 10 percent stake in the Khazzan natural gas field, the people said. The minority stake could fetch about \$1.5 billion, said the people, asking not to be identified as the matter is private.

No final decisions have been made and others have also expressed interest in the asset, the people said. Representatives for BP and CNPC declined to comment.

BP was in early talks to sell about a 10 percent stake in the Khazzan natural gas field, Bloomberg News reported in June. The oil major owns a 60 percent stake in the project, while its partner Oman Oil Co. still has a 30 percent stake after it sold a 10 percent holding to Malaysia's state oil company in 2018.

China has been stepping up its presence in the West Asia as Beijing wants to increase its global influence and revive ancient trading routes under the Belt and Road initiative. Last year, State Grid Corp. of China agreed to acquire a 49 percent stake in Oman's



state-owned power transmission company in the first major privatization by the West Asia's largest non-OPEC oil producer.

CNPC has operations in five West Asian countries, including Oman, according to its website. It started in Oman with an acquisition of a 50 percent interest in oil field Block 5 in 2002. The Chinese oil giant paid about \$1.2 billion in 2018 for stakes in two oil and natural gas concessions in Abu Dhabi.

BP shares declined 3.6 percent Thursday, as Brent crude futures fell the most in more than a month following dramatic U.S. economic data. The recovery in global oil demand is faltering amid the resurgence in coronavirus, even as the OPEC cartel and partners, including Oman, next week plan to resume some of the crude output halted during the depths of the pandemic.

## North Sea oil output drops 5 percent in five months to May

UK upstream oil production fell 5 percent over the first five months of 2020 to 1.11 million bpd, while a demand slump meant exports outstripped imports for a second month in a row in May, government data showed July 30.

Crude production was down 4 percent on the year in the first five months, at 1.01 million barrels per day (bpd), with NGL production down 13 percent at 96,000 bpd, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy said.

May's monthly oil output, at 1.08 million bpd, was down slightly from April, when it recovered from a low point for the year of 1.03 million bpd in March. The UK's upstream oil industry was grappling at the time with how to respond to suspected coronavirus among offshore workers, resulting in a move to minimal workforce levels in mid-March, and a likely reluctance to push production to the maximum.

UK crude production has been recovering since 2014, but remains below half of levels at the turn of the millennium.

On the trade front, exports of crude and NGLs at 2.63 million metric tons (mt) exceeded imports by 745,000 mt in May, unusually

the second month in a row of net exports.

Total refinery intake was down 24 percent on the year in May, amid coronavirus lockdown measures, at 3.69 million mt.

"The last three months have seen some exceptional figures; whilst production on the UK continental shelf has been relatively stable...the patterns of refinery receipts and trade into the UK has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 disruption," BEIS said.

"Imports of crude oil have reached record lows and are down nearly a third on the same period last year, with UK refiners making far more use of indigenously produced crude oil, up 90 percent compared to the previous year. Imports of petroleum products are also down to multi-year lows as a result of reduced demand for fuel in the UK during the COVID lockdown."

The International Energy Agency has forecast UK oil production to remain virtually unchanged this year at 1.12 million bpd, before a slight fall to 1.09 million bpd next year.

Note: BEIS statistics for crude and NGLs converted at 7.55 barrels/mt and 11.5 barrels/mt respectively.

## U.S. oil & gas rig count falls 6, but Permian recovery extends

After a two-week uptick, the US oil and gas rig count resumed declines, falling 6 to 288 in the week ended July 29, Platts reported citing rig data provider Enverus.

Oil-focused rigs led the drilling decline, falling four to 202, while the number of active gas-focused rigs dipped two to 86, Enverus said on July 30.

Rig count declines were mostly constrained to smaller basins. Among the major named plays, rig counts were lower only in the Eagle Ford, which shed two rigs for a total 10, and in the Marcellus basin, which dipped one rig to 26.

Notably, the Permian basin rig count extend its run higher for a second week, climbing one to 138. Operators in the Denver-Julesburg play also added a single rig for a total of five.

Counts were flat in most other major basins: Bakken rigs were steady at 12, Haynesville at 33, SCOOP-STACK at 11, and Utica at seven.

The top line decline could be attributed to weekly "noise" as the nationwide rig count bottoms, according to S&P Global Platts Analytics analyst Matt Andre.

"We're expecting to see some slight up and down movement in the 280-300 rig range until something happens that



would entice operators to make a move and significantly increase (or decrease) rig activity," Andre said. "Looking at year-to-date rig activity, I'd say we've reached the 'bottom range' so it'll be important to closely track the major plays to spot an early trend."

Despite the pull back, the number of active oil rigs was still up 11 from a nadir of 191 during the week ended July 1. Increased drilling activity has coincided with a slight up-

tick in US crude production in July. Weekly crude output has averaged 11.1 million b/d since the week ended July 17, according to US Energy Information Administration, up from 11 million b/d.

While oil prices have steadily risen in recent weeks, forward structure has weakened, creating a situation where increased production is favored even as downstream demand languishes.

Front-month NYMEX WTI was about 5% stronger in the week ended July 29 compared to the week ended July 1. But the contango between front-month and year-ahead contracts widened to around \$1.90/b from \$1.30/b over the same period.

US commercial crude stocks fell 10.61 million barrels during the week ended July 24, the largest draw since December according to EIA data, but are still just 2.7% below all-time highs seen in mid-June and remain nearly 18% above the five-year average for this time of year. A widening contango coupled with rising crude output could herald a return to storage builds seen this spring, capping future price gains and holding rig counts range bound in the near term.

## The world is facing a solar panel waste problem

By Irina Slav

Solar panel installations hit a total 629 gigawatt (GW) last year—an increase of 12 percent from 2018. It was also a lot—really a lot—of panels. And in a few years, these panels could become a major waste management headache.

Solar panels vary in size and capacity, but here is an example of the relation between size—and number—and capacity. A solar power installation with a capacity of just 5 kilowatts (kW), for instance, could be made up of 20 panels, each with a capacity of 250 W or 16 panels, each with a capacity of 300 Watts (W). So, it takes 16 to 20 panels for a 5-kW installation.



One gigawatt of power equals one million kilowatts. If we take the larger-size, smaller-number panel installation from above, it would need 3.2 panels per kW of capacity. Now multiply this by the global solar capacity added just last year, which was 114.9 GW. We are talking about tens of millions of panels added last year alone. And there are millions more in operation, some of them nearing the end of their useful life.

In a recent study, researchers from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory warned that by the end of this decade, some 8 million tons of solar panel waste could find their way into landfills across the world. By 2025, this could rise to as much as 80 million tons. This is up from just 250,000 tons in 2016, so if anyone needed another proof of how fast solar has grown, they need look no further.

Some say the solar panel waste is not particularly harmful. The author of this article in Australia's Renew Economy, for instance, argues that "The typical panel working life is 30 years and so just 2 square meters of panel will retire each year per person, weighing 20 kg, almost all of which is suitable for recycling. This is 1 percent of annual solid waste generated per person and one part in a thousand of the weight of Australian annual carbon dioxide emissions per person. For comparison, a car typically weighs 1500 kg and lasts for 10 years, thus generating 150 kg of waste per year on average."

Andrew Blakers also notes that the majority of a solar panel is glass, a little silicon, which is non-toxic, and "small amounts of copper, silver, aluminum and very small amounts of solder."

The International Energy Agency also says that the most popular solar panels in the world carry little risk for human health. But not all agree.

In a 2018 article for Forbes, environmental activist Michael Schellenberg quoted solar industry insiders and researchers as saying that solar panel waste contains toxic elements that can leak into the ground if the panels are disposed of in landfills. What's more, it is because of these toxic elements—including cadmium, lead, and antimony—that the recycling of solar panels presents a challenge. The challenge lies in the fact that although 90 percent of a panel is glass, it cannot simply be recycled like any other glass because of the impurities.

The larger the installation, the more impurities, too. For instance, a massive solar farm proposed a few years ago for Virginia, if it goes ahead, would comprise as many as 1.8 million panels. These, according to opponents of the project, would contain about five tons of cadmium, which is a toxic element. Now, the amounts of cadmium and other toxic elements are naturally smaller in smaller solar farms, but the fact remains they cannot be eliminated from the makeup of solar panels to make them fit for regular recycling.

It may sound surprising, given the global drive to build solar power capacity that the recycling problem has not been addressed yet, but it appears this is the case. Earlier this month, a scientist from Australia's Charles Darwin University sounded the alarm for thousands of solar panels due to be decommissioned in the Northern Territory alone over the next few years.

"There's a perception that everything made can be recycled, but it's just not that easy. Solar panels were not made to be unmade," Deepika Mathur told Australian media. "As the oldest panels are already reaching their end-of-life, there is a critical need to start planning for the dismantling, removal, collection and recycling phases of management," she added.

But there is more than just a lack of recycling protocol. While theoretically, a solar panel's life could last for 30 years in a best-case scenario—many are being dismantled earlier—Mathur notes in the same report.

"Consumers are changing their PV panels after 10 to 12 years rather than their predicted end-of-working life of 20 to 25 years," she says. "Working panels are being replaced as technological advances increase efficiency and reduce costs of new panels."

Basically, people are treating their solar panels as they treat their cars, swapping an older for a newer model long before the older model reaches the end of its productive life. While such a decision is, in many cases, justified on the grounds of efficiency, safety, and performance, it does appear to aggravate the recycling problem. The longer this problem remains neglected, the worse it will become as tends to happen with neglected problems.

## Shell offshore wind farm to include floating solar

A consortium made up of Shell and Eneco is to develop an offshore wind farm that will incorporate a range of "technology demonstrations" including floating solar and hydrogen produced by electrolysis, CNBC reported.

The 759 megawatt (MW) Hollandse Kust (noord) facility will be subsidy free and able to produce at least 3.3 terawatt hours annually, according to Eneco, a Rotterdam-headquartered firm whose shareholders are the Mitsubishi Corporation and Chubu Electric Power Co. The project will use 69 turbines from Siemens Gamesa, which will have a capacity of 11 MW each.

The CrossWind joint venture, as it's known, is aiming for the project — which will be located in waters approximately 18.5 kilometers off the coast of the Netherlands — to be up and running by the year 2023.

While the scheme will not be the biggest offshore wind farm around — Hornsea One, in waters off Yorkshire, England, has a capacity of 1.2 gigawatts (GW), for example — it will do more than just produce wind power.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Netherlands' Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy said CrossWind would "test a variety of innovations in the field of energy storage and flexibility, with the possibility of rolling them out on a larger scale at other wind farms in the future."



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**Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output**

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thu. with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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# Iran-China co-op can shift oil, gas global balance: ex-advisor to Turkish PM

➡ This relationship has gained momentum when there is a sharpening of polarization between the U.S. and China, which I call the beginning of a new “Cold War” in the making. There are many uncertainties with regard to who will be in what alliance in the new world order, but for Iran, the choice is clear under the current circumstances.

Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors, undercutting the Trump administration's efforts to isolate the Iranian government because of its nuclear and military programs. The agreement, which is still fleshed out and finalized after more than four years of negotiations, is important for both Iran and China in varying degrees.

For Iran, a strategic 25-year framework agreement with China is yet another signal to Europe and a potential Biden administration after the U.S. November presidential election that it is not isolated in the new global system and, to the contrary, remains aligned solidly with the next superpower. Iran also means that when the chips are down, it will be Tehran, not Riyadh, to which China will possibly turn in the region.

For China, it shows that Iran is a strong bridge-head that can be relied on long-term in the Middle East at a time when Beijing relations with the West turns from tension into a confrontation. China's motives are straightforward but varied: It seeks to advance its interests, such as a pressing need for energy imports and for destinations for surplus capital and labor. It also tries to advance the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative, which is aimed at reshaping regional economic topographies in China's favor and counters what Beijing sees as an American effort to contain it.

Though nowhere close to implementation, the deal highlights an important moment of development at a time when U.S.-Chinese tensions have allowed Beijing to pay less heed to American policies and threats.

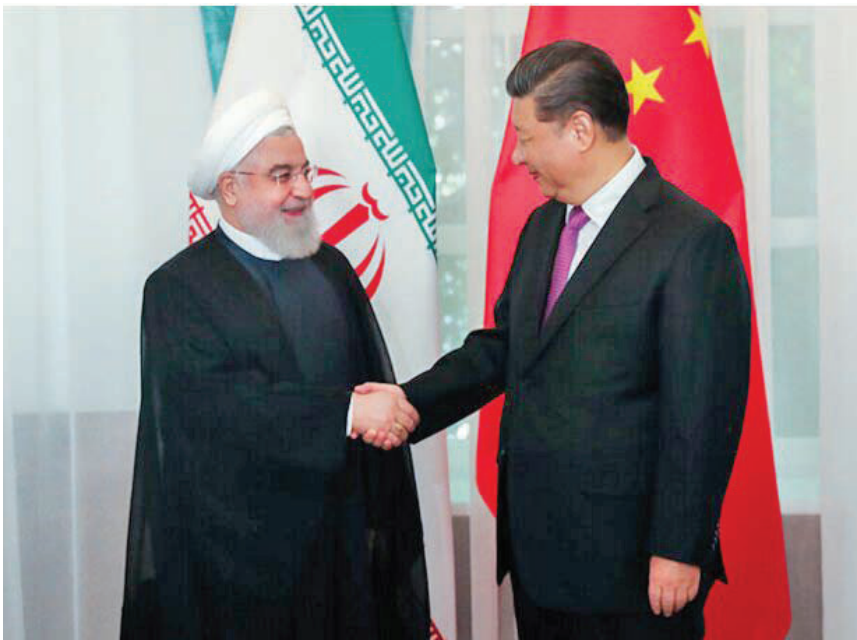
■ How can China's investment affect Iran's economy?

A: Amid its long-running conflict with the U.S., Iran has increasingly turned to China for aid to boost its military and help protect its economy from trade sanctions imposed by Washington. For more than two decades, China has unquestionably been the largest trade and investment partner of Iran. Bilateral trade in 2018 totaled \$35 billion, with crude oil accounting for about half, or \$15 billion.

The Chinese presence in Iran has grown over the years. As the second-largest and most diverse economy in the Middle East after Turkey, Iran was an early destination for many Chinese enterprises. But taking a comparative view of Chinese projects elsewhere, we find that Beijing's footprint has grown much more in other countries in the Middle East than in Iran. In the decade beginning in 2008, the average annual turnover of Chinese construction projects in Iran was \$1.7 billion, while the average annual turnover in Iraq was \$2.2 billion and \$4.8 billion in Saudi Arabia.

Whilst the imposition of U.S. and E.U. sanctions in 2008 did not completely deter Chinese firms from Iran; it did prevent much of the long-term investment China directed elsewhere in the region. This was clearest in the capital-intensive oil and natural gas sectors, where Chinese firms were slow to fulfill contractual obligations when international sanctions were at their height, leading Iran to unilaterally terminate some of the largest contracts with Chinese state firms.

Tehran is now pursuing an upgraded partnership with China not because it is dependent on Beijing's economic support, but rather because it has been largely left out of a decade of aggressive Chinese investment worldwide. Iran wants to put flesh on the skeleton of this 25-year partnership agreement that envisions up to \$400 billion in Chinese investment. China is reportedly considering investing \$280 billion in developing Iran's oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors; and another \$120 billion in upgrading Tehran's manufacturing infrastructure. The deal represents a potential shift to the global balance of oil and gas sector, as Iran has



## Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would undercut the Trump's efforts to isolate Iran

promised China guaranteed discounts on its oil and gas, and the right to delay payment for Iranian production up to two years.

Let's not forget that numerous agreements signed by Presidents Xi Jinping and Hassan Rouhani during the Chinese leader's visit in 2016 would, if implemented, expand economic relations between the two countries by a factor of 10 to \$600 billion and significantly enhance military cooperation.

Under the terms of the new agreement, China will be granted the right to delay payment for Iranian production for up to two years. China will also be able to pay in soft currencies that it has accrued from doing business in Africa and Central Asia, in addition to using renminbi should the need arise—meaning that no U.S. dollars will be involved in these commodity transaction payments from China to Iran.

Iran also signed a contract with China to implement a project to electrify the main 900km railway connecting Tehran to the north-eastern city of Mashhad. There are also plans to establish a Tehran-Qom-Isfahan high-speed train line and extend this upgraded network to the north-west through Tabriz, home to a number of key oils, gas, and patches sites, and the starting point for the gas pipeline to Turkey. This will be a pivot point of the 2,300 km New Silk Road that links Urumqi to Tehran, connecting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan along the way, and then via Turkey into Europe.

China helped the development of Iran's nuclear program, although most of this assistance had been, in principle, geared towards civilian uses of nuclear energy.

Substantial Chinese capital investments in Iran's energy and infrastructure projects mean that Beijing must take political risks seriously. Not only the factional feuds inside the Islamic political elite can lead to delays and cancellations of some projects, but China must also be mindful of geopolitical risks to its relations with Iran. The U.S., some Arab countries, and Israel are now fully committed to using economic pressure, cyber-attacks, and sabotage against Iran. These interventions can cause a direct disruption in China's investment projects by forcing Chinese firms to suspend operations under the threat of sanctions. They can also disrupt Iran-China economic relations indirectly by causing instability and encouraging anti-Chinese sentiments among opponents.

■ How will the agreement affect the U.S. maximum pressure policy against Iran?

A: The outsized role of the U.S. in the region ironically benefits Beijing as it

expands its economic ventures and power projections without providing adequate security for its capital and citizens deployed to the region. For all its “wolf warrior” bluster, China is careful in picking its battles with Washington. So far, it largely has chosen not to wage them in the Middle East — for example, doing little to shelter Iran from American secondary sanctions. So even as China seeks to make strategic gains in the Middle East, it does so without fanfare.

Iran's history has made it suspicious of external powers, and China's help in recent years — buying Iranian oil at a steep discount and crowding out Iranian domestic producers with low-cost imports — seems not to have engendered affection among the Iranian populace.

What Iranians seem to desire is to be no one's junior partner, but to be self-sufficient and stand among the likes of Russia and China as equals. This is likely to create some tensions between the two countries, which I believe are manageable given the bigger economic and geopolitical interests involved.

Let's make no mistake: The China-Iran relationship, whether in the form of formal partnership agreements or simply ad hoc cooperation, is most certainly to grow closer and stronger in coming years, as China tries to project power westward and Iran seeks to insulate itself from the debilitating effects of American power and enhance its own regional influence.

One particular issue is how to handle strong opposition from some Iranian groups to the “asymmetrical relationship” with China. While the Iranian government has not released the full text of the new agreement, opponents have referred to leaked documents to claim that it will compromise Iran's economic interests and undermine its sovereignty. However, it looks as though this agreement is similar to China's agreements with other countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative.

China has always maintained a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of its economic partners. This policy has served China well and encouraged many countries that have painful historical memories of Western intervention, to “look east.”

■ Can this agreement challenge U.S. unilateralism?

A: China needs allies to challenge U.S. unilateralism and be able to expand its global footprint. That is perfectly in fitting with Iran's goals as Tehran has been isolated and sanctioned for long years by

the U.S. While the deepening of the Iran-China relationship may be inevitable, the U.S. will surely not let it be easy for either Tehran or Beijing and continue to impose costs on Chinese companies that aid Iran.

Up until now, China has shown partial sensitivity toward U.S. sanctions against Iran because, as a trade partner, the U.S. has been far more valuable to China than Iran. But U.S.-China relations are deteriorating, and China might have welcomed the release of news about its comprehensive strategic agreement with Iran as a signal to the U.S. that “if you continue to escalate tensions, we will offer more support to Iran and neutralize your ‘Maximum Pressure’ strategy”.

China is believed to have helped Iran militarily in conducting training of high-level officials on advanced systems, providing technical support, supplying specialty steel for missile construction, providing control technology for missile development, and building a missile factory and test range. China is believed to be responsible for aiding in the development of advanced conventional weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, combat aircraft, radar systems, and fast-attack missile vessels.

China not only sold Iran small arms but supplied it with tactical ballistic and anti-ship cruise missiles such as the Silkworm. Chinese design and technology can be seen in many Iranian missile series. Beijing's assistance was seen as helpful for Iran to develop its defense capabilities, despite repeated international sanctions.

China and Iran signed an agreement to bolster defense and military cooperation and fight terrorism. The two nations held their first joint naval drill in Persian Gulf waters a few years ago. They also held four days of naval exercises between China, Iran, and Russia, covering 17,000 sq. Km, in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Oman.

■ Do you expect the agreement with Iran would affect China's relation with other Persian Gulf states?

A: One great difficulty for China is how tactful and balanced it must be in managing its relations with Iran versus its arch enemies in the Middle East and the Gulf region, except Qatar and Oman.

When looking at the multiple conflicts and crises that convulse the Middle East today, China rarely seems to play a major role. Whether it is the fight against ISIS, the conflict in Libya, the standoff surrounding Qatar, or the war in Yemen, China does not appear to have a major stake in any of these issues.

But perceptions can be deceiving. Indeed, China is already significantly economically invested in many countries in the region and has already surpassed the E.U., Russia, and the U.S. as the most important trade and investment partner in several countries. The further rollout of China's Belt and Road Initiative is only expected further to boost China's economic ties to the region. But with economic interests come political and security interests. The question is then to what extent China is willing and able to become more politically involved in the region and whether it will be forced to take sides, particularly when Iran comes into the picture with the Saudi-led PGCC countries.

Undoubtedly, Tehran and Beijing would like to cooperate on a far grander scale if geopolitical circumstances permit it. The region's deep political fissures make it difficult for outsiders to avoid taking sides in its many conflicts. This poses a risk for a China that aims to be a friend of everyone — Iran, Israel, Turkey, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states — to maximize its regional engagement while minimizing its commitments. Consistent with this balancing act, the China-Iran agreement roughly coincided with the biannual China-Arab States Co-operation Forum, which prompted numerous proclamations of Chinese friendship with Iran's Arab rivals.

The economic downturn, which affects China's economic ties to the region, could persuade Beijing to limit its exposure further if the Persian Gulf States fail to find a way to come to grips with Iran in a way that would dial down tensions.

Mehmet Ogutcu is Chairman of the London Energy Club and CEO for the Global Resources Partnership. He was a former Turkish diplomat, advisor to the Prime Minister, a senior executive of International Energy Agency, OECD, and British Gas.

## Ignorant, arrogant and all-pretentious

Another Western thriller by the lawless government of the United States

By Habib Ahmadzadeh

Once, as the narrative goes, Jesus Christ (PBUH) was hurriedly running away from someone. His disciples, who had never seen him in this condition, addressed him and said, “What has befallen on you, O’ dear lord?” He replied, “I’m running away from an ignorant one.”

“But you are the spirit of God incarnated, you breathe life into the dead and restore sight to the blind. Thus, make a prayer and make this ignorant one, wise,” the disciples asked.

“Ignorance accompanied by arrogance is incurable, so you have no remedy except running away from it,” Jesus Christ (PBUH) responded.

This is the third time that the passengers of a non-military Iranian airplane had been assaulted due to the U.S.-Iran dispute. The first time happened in 1988 when Iran's Airbus was shot down over the Persian Gulf by two missiles fired from USS Vincennes, a guided-missile cruiser of the United States Navy. The reason for the American cruiser to be there was to protect the ships that were under cover of transporting goods for Arab countries, carrying weapons and ammunition for Saddam Hussein. The same Saddam whose name was absent from all the Security Council's resolutions throughout the eight



years of Iran-Iraq war, never condemning him for the genocide he committed by the use of chemical weapons.

The second time happened after the cowardly act of assassinating the unequivocal Iranian hero who fought against the ISIS terrorists, General Soleimani, in Baghdad Airport, which was never condemned by the inert United Nations.

A few days later, while being in full preparation against any possible attack, a Ukrainian civil airplane with mainly Iranian passengers was mistakenly shot down by Iran's anti-air defense system.

This last incident was the third time the dispute between these two countries resulted in hurting civilians. An American F-15 fighter jet, which had no right to intercept the civil air corridor, flew threateningly in an Iranian passenger plane's vicinity during an authorized flight, injuring several passengers. The worst possibility would be that the jet's pilot had a mission to provoke Syria's air-defense to fire, or at best, the lives of innocent women and children in this flight didn't worth a straw for this U.S.'s air force pilot whose mindset seemed much like an Indian-killer cowboy with his rifle.

These shootings had one point in common; in all of them, the people of Iran were mournful while the American presidents, Reagan and Trump, were cheerful and delighted for the death of Iranians.

Imagine for a second that a bird crashes the front window of your car while driving. As a human being, you would feel sorry for some time, and your heart would sink. Now, look at the magnificent celebration for this cruiser after mass murdering 290 passengers in a non-military flight in support of Saddam. Look at its captain's gesture, holding a victory sign and the triumph of the U.S. navy in this military port. Do you suppose we kept the same feast after the death of American people in the brutal terrorist attacks to the twin towers in support of their Arab murderers?! ...

Let me tell you about my own experience. During the Iran-Iraq war, I was a sentry in the besieged city of Abadan. My duty was to destroy the artilleries that mercilessly fired at my people under siege and murdered them. Years later, I ran into the Iraqi artillery officer, now a surgeon in Baghdad Hospital. He told me he couldn't sleep at night for years. I told him that if he were following the commands in firing at my city, I wouldn't blame him, but if he were jumping up and down triumphantly at the moment of firing, I couldn't forgive him. Saddam might have put a gun on his head, yet he didn't have the power to make him feel deeply pleased with the blood he was shedding. Captain Will Rogers is awarded the Legion of Merit decoration for fulfilling his military mission by the American politicians, a few years later.

In his new book, John Bolton mentions an important point as a tribute to his previous mentor, Paul Laxalt, former Governor of Nevada, and as a life lesson: “In politics, there are no immaculate conceptions.” That is why the American government had celebrated over the people of Iran's sorrow for the passengers' death in Airbus and the Ukrainian plane crash. The opposite of what our nation did at the time of terrorist attacks on the World Trade twin towers, led by Saudi Arabia's government, murdering many innocent souls. People of Iran, humanely, mourned for the victims, lit candles for them, and sympathized with their families. Perhaps, ironically enough, this sympathy was why the people of my country, instead of Saudi Arabia's citizens, were banned from entering the U.S. land later. All these experiences had made us, people of Iran, expect the news of rewarding the F-15's pilot with the Legion of Merit decoration at any moment with Trump's own hand in a magnificent feast in the White House ...

Now, perhaps after reading this piece, the American nation would realize why we Muslims in the Middle East (West Asia) are continually running away from their ignorant, arrogant, and pretentious politicians.

People of America! I would suggest you get away, like Jesus Christ (PBUH), from these politicians who recommend injecting disinfectants to avoid the coronavirus! Take this advice seriously for the sake of your life and your family!

## Russia vows reciprocal response to EU's political sanctions

Russia's Foreign Ministry says it will respond in kind to travel and financial sanctions imposed by the European Union on a department of its military intelligence service over alleged cyberattacks.

“Of course, this unfriendly action by the EU will not be left unanswered,” the ministry said in a statement on Friday.

It slammed the bloc's politically-motivated sanctions and said, “In diplomacy, everything is reciprocal.”

The statement came after the EU on Thursday levied

sanctions on a department of Russia's military intelligence service over suspicions of participation in major cyber-attacks across the world.

The EU said in a statement that its first-ever cyber sanctions, which include travel bans and asset freezes apply to six individuals and three entities, had targeted the department for special technologies of the Russian military intelligence service, known as Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

The EU accused the Russian service of being behind two cyberattacks that hit several companies in Europe in June 2017 and resulted in large financial losses. The service was also accused of two cyberattacks against Ukraine's power grid in 2015 and 2016.

Brussels also targeted firms from North Korea and China over the same claim, with both countries rejecting any involvement in the cyber-attacks.

(Source: Press TV)



## Archaeological hill Khargush-Tappeh demarcated

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A team of Iranian archaeologists and experts has recently finished a demarcation project on Khargush-Tappeh in northern part of the country in a bid to safeguard the significant archaeological hill.



Iranian archaeologist Seyyed Meqdad Mirmousavi, who led the project, said Khargush-Tappeh is one of the top archaeological hills that have been found in northern Iran, adding that the site was subject to an archaeological survey led by French mining engineer, geologist, and archaeologist Jean-Jacques de Morgan some 130 years ago, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

“15 trenches were dug during the demarcation project, nine of which are connected to the archaeological site itself, while six ones are connected with the adjoining areas to the site,” Mirmousavi noted.

The break in the chronology of the second millennium BC in northern Iran has always been a major problem for archaeologists. According to an Academic Survey published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd., a number of studies have been devoted to the widespread distribution of the pottery in north-western Iran as a sign of “considerable cultural uniformity”. It seems that there are close affinities in material culture that exist between the data available from the sites in the north-east and those of the central regions of the Iranian Plateau.

## Four historical caves identified in northeast Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Four historical caves have recently been discovered in Torbat-e Heydarieh, northeast of the country, CHTN reported.

The caves are estimated to date back to the middle Islamic era, Ali Mohammadi, the head of Torbat-e Heydarieh Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, said on Friday.



According to archaeological studies, Torbat-e Heydarieh is home to several historical caves due to its favorable habitat conditions and traces of habitation from about 40,000 years have been identified in the caves of the region, the official added.

The history of the area stretches back to the Achaemenian Empire from the 6th to 4th century BC and the Parthian Empire from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century CE.

Exploring a cave may not be on the “to-do list” of travelers in Iran. However, Karaftu, Ali-Sadr and Quri Qaleh, and Katalah-Khor are amongst the most visited caves.

Iran is geologically a part of the Alpine-Himalayan organic belt. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the enigmatic evidence of human presence on the Iranian plateau is as early as Lower Paleolithic times.

The first well-documented evidence of human habitation is in deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites, located mainly in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran and dated to Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian times (c. 100,000 BC).

## Paveh, a town rich in wonderful natural sceneries

**TOURISM d e s k** As soon as one enters the ancient city of Paveh which dates from 3000 years ago, the person is amazed at how the people who live in this area, have managed to so skillfully and orderly build their homes in the shape of many long and wide stairs within the foothills of the mountain. These structures have been built in such a way, that in most instances, the roof of a house that is built in a lower altitude is actually the patio (balcony) of the house built just a few meters above it.

Because of the similarities in the type of city construction and housing between Paveh and the city of Massouleh in northern Iran, Paveh is also known as the City of Thousand Maasoulehs. The thousand is meant to refer to the fact that Paveh is many times larger than Massouleh.

Located in Kermanshah Province in western Iran, the path to this city is filled with winding and curvy mountainous (Zagros chain) roads. The route is filled with hills, springs and fountains, forests and farmlands located in the foothills, etc., which is quite beautiful and invigorating. Due to these wonderful natural sceneries as well as various caves, waterfalls and streams, Paveh has been nicknamed the “Bakhtaran (western) Paradise”.

The presence of water in the Paveh region is not limited to rivers, waterfalls and springs. The stone nature and penetrative waters of the area have created the largest water cave in Asia. The Ghoori Ghal' cave is a remarkably deep cave and up to now some 3700 meters of its length has been identified and 500 meters of it is open to tourist visitors. Due to this cave being relatively unknown and obscure for both local and foreign tourists, it has not only prevented this attractive and wondrous natural marvel to produce a notable amount of revenue for the area but also has left the development of the cave incomplete.

# New rules for traveling to Iran to take effect today

**→ 1** Iran has suffered an average 15.8 percent fall in foreign arrivals during the first three months of 2020 compared to the same period last year, according to data released by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) that analyzes the impact of the COVID-19 on international tourism.

The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill, and tourism has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors.

Back in March, the UN specialized agency for tourism announced that it expected international tourist arrivals would be down by 20 percent to 30 percent in 2020 when compared with 2019 figures.

Iranian deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri has said that international tourism could be recovered soon because it is



mostly relying on potential travelers and pilgrims from the neighboring countries.

“Given the policies of the country’s tourism industry over the past two

years to focus on tourism markets in the neighboring countries, the possibility of recovering and reviving international tourism in the shortest possible time is predictable,” Teymouri told the Tehran Times in May.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

## Coronavirus cuts tourists visiting Yazd by 99%

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Just 20,000 domestic tourists and 66 foreign tourists visited the historical province of Yazd during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20), equaling just one percent of the figure for the last year due to the global coronavirus pandemic.

In recent years, the cultural heritage authorities of Yazd and its hospitable people have made a special effort to demonstrate the city’s potential in the field of tourism especially cultural tourism.

With its winding lanes, a forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, the oasis city is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival.

A couple of weeks before the virus spread, Iran was emerging as the third fastest-growing tourism destination in the globe in 2019, with 27.9 percent growth year on year, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Coronavirus outbreak has squandered all efforts made to promote the tourism capacity of the province, IRNA quoted the provincial tourism chief Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi as saying on Wednesday.

People active in Tourism and handicrafts sectors have taken a severe hit from coronavirus pandemic and their activities are closing down one by one, he added.

While Yazd was the first province where hoteliers voluntarily closed their hotels to protect public health, now, they are operating at only 10 percent of their capacity, he said.

To improve the tourism industry in the region, cultural

heritage authorities of Yazd try to boost tourism infrastructures such as the implementation of development projects including the construction of hotels, guesthouses, and various accommodation centers in the heart of the desert, which leads to generating job opportunities for the locals.

However, according to the official, the province is at the risk of losing part of its tourism infrastructure, and its reconstruction will be time-consuming and costly.

He also noted that the government loans for coronavirus compensation haven’t been paid to the crafters of the province.

Back in April, the government announced it will support those which are grappling with fiscal problems by offering loans with a 12-percent interest rate. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts also suggested a rescue package for tourism businesses.

The government has also allocated a 750-trillion-rial (about \$18 billion) package to help low-income households and small- and medium-sized enterprises suffered by the coronavirus concerns.

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

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a “don’t miss” destination by almost all of its visitors.

Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs by



the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

Partially covered alleyways together with streets, public squares and courtyards contribute to a pleasant urban quality. The city escaped the modernization trends that destroyed many traditional earthen cities.

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

## Ancient aqueduct identified in western Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – An ancient hand-dug qanat, an old type of underground water-supply system developed and still used in arid regions, has recently been identified adjacent to an archeological hill in Lorestan province, western Iran.

“Social media have reported the discovery of an underground tunnel near the town of Rumeshkan..... Soon a team of archaeologists and experts was dispatched to inspect [the region] and to conduct scientific and comprehensive research,” provincial tourism chief Seyyed Amin Qasemi said on Wednesday, CHTN reported.

The team provided an all-inclusive report and documented parts of the aqueduct, including its entrance, concluding that it is related to “a series of ancient aqueducts”, the official said.

A qanat taps underground mountain water sources trapped in and beneath the upper reaches of alluvial fans and channels the water



downhill through a series of gently sloping tunnels, often several kilometers long, to the places where it is needed for irrigation and domestic use.

“[A newly-discovered] tunnel, which leads to a [attached] series of aqueducts from ancient times that are extended in the east-west direction across the Rumeshkan plain.... In the past, some traces of wells and shafts related to this aqueduct had been appeared

and been reported,” he explained.

[The entrance of] this qanat is situated near Chaqabol archaeological hill, Qasemi said.

“Parts of the qanat, which is stretched beneath the Chaqabol archaeological hill is proved to be completely excavated in ancient times.... During initial studies, a pottery vessel dating back to the Bronze Age was found beneath the cultural deposits in the lower layers of the hill.”

The official also noted that the entrance to the aqueduct is temporarily blocked in order to safeguard both the lives of the [curious] locals and the aqueduct itself.

“Unfortunately, some of the locals, despite the existing dangers, entered the aqueduct after the collapse of its shaft, out of curiosity and possibly profit. And they began to post pictures and videos to cyberspace.... So as to prevent profiteers and possible dangers, we blocked the entrance to the aqueduct.”

The development of qanats probably began about 2,500 or 3,000 years ago in

## 160 tourism projects worth \$660m underway in Fars province

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A total of 160 tourism projects, worth 28 trillion rials (some \$660 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are being implemented in Fars province, which is a top tourist destination in southern Iran.

Some 539 billion rials (about \$13 million) has been invested in the province’s tourism project over the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), IRNA quoted provincial tourism chief

Mosayyeb Amiri as saying on Thursday.

Over the 3-month period, 20 permits for carrying out tourism projects have been issued, which is anticipated to generate 300 job opportunities, he added.

The projects include traditional restaurants, hotel apartments, recreational and lodging complexes.

The ancient region of Fars, also spelled Pars, or Persis, was the heart of the Achaemenian Empire (550–330 BC), which was founded by Cyrus the Great and had

its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC.

The capital city of Shiraz is home to some of the country’s most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial capital which was the literary capital of Persia during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

## Ancient relics of Iran: Kneeling bull holding a spouted vessel ca. 3100–2900 BC

**(The Metropolitan Museum of Art)** – Soon after the political transformations of the Uruk period in southern Mesopotamia, similar innovations—including writing and cylinder seals, the mass production of standardized ceramics, and a figural art style—developed around the city of Susa in southwestern Iran, an area in which the predominant language was Elamite. While most of these innovations were adapted from Mesopotamian examples, they all took on distinctive Elamite characteristics in Iran.

This small silver bull, clothed in a robe decorated with a stepped pattern and hold-

ing a spouted vessel, shows a curious blend of human and animal traits. The large neck meets distinctly human shoulders, which taper into arms that end in hooves.

Representations of animals in human postures were common in Proto-Elamite art, possibly as symbols of natural forces but just as likely as protagonists in myths or fables. The function of this small masterpiece remains uncertain. Traces of cloth that were found affixed to the figure suggest that it was intentionally buried, perhaps as part of a ritual or ceremony.

Beginning in the eighth millennium BC,

agricultural communities form in western Iran. It is not clear if these represent an indigenous development or are the result of outside influences.

By the end of the fifth millennium BC, several settlements had grown considerably. The site of Susa is founded at this time with its political and artistic affiliation alternating between the nearby lowland cities of southern Mesopotamia and the highland civilizations of Iran.

During the third millennium BC, an Elamite kingdom emerges centered on the cities of Susa and Anshan, the latter in the Zagros Mountains.





# Over \$2m earmarked to revive Gulf of Gorgan

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — A budget of 9 trillion rials (nearly \$2.1 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been earmarked to revive the Gulf of Gorgan in the Caspian Sea, northern Iran.

Covering an area of about 400 square kilometers, the Gulf of Gorgan also known as Gorgan Bay, is the largest gulf in the Caspian Sea. It is located at the south-eastern shore of the Caspian Sea near the cities of Behshahr, Gorgan, and Sari and is separated from the main water body by the Miankaleh peninsula and extends until the Ashuradeh peninsula.

An amount of 9 trillion rials (nearly \$2.1 million at an official rate of 42,000 rials) was approved from the resources, Golestan province's governor general, Hadi Haghsheenas, said.

He went on to say that the Ports and Maritime Organization, the Department of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Energy are tasked with taking executive measures to save Gorgan Bay within 5 years.

According to the oceanographic studies, the most important solution to save



Gorgan Bay is dredging canals, he noted.

Also, dredging the rivers leading to the Gulf of Gorgan and providing water

rights of the rivers will be other executive strategies to save the Gulf, Haghsheenas stated.

Referring to the drying up of 10,000 hectares of Gulf of Gorgan, he said that if no action is taken to revitalize the gulf, it will be threatened like Lake Urmia and the cities around the bay will be affected by sand and dust storms.

Gorgan Bay was designated as a Ramsar site (defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value) along with Miankaleh Wetland.

The bay and its surrounding area are recognized as a valuable ecological complex in the world which had a direct impact on the livelihood of local communities in addition to conserving the marine life cycle.

Ashuradeh Island, which hosts a variety of native and migratory birds throughout the year, was also introduced and registered as one of the world's first biosphere zones in 1975.



## Iranian students win colorful medals at IChO 2020

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian students snatched 4 medals at the 52nd International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO 2020) held in Turkey on July 6 to 15, ISNA news agency reported on Friday.

The International Olympiad was held virtually due to coronavirus outbreak and restrictions, with 234 students from 60 countries attending the competition.

In the Iranian team, Mohammad Shahabodin Daneshvar claimed a gold medal, Mohammad Arian Taqvaei Arabi, Ramin Asempour won two silver medals and Amir Mahboubi won a bronze medal.

This result is similar to the result obtained in the previous period of this competition. The national team of the Chemistry Olympiad of Iran also won one gold, two silver, and one bronze medal in the IChO 2019 held in France.

The Iranian team ranked sixth in the world in this competition.

IChO is an annual competition for the world's most talented chemistry students at the secondary school level. Nations around the world send a team of four students who are tested on their chemistry knowledge and skills in a five-hour laboratory practical and five-hour written theoretical examination that are held on separate days with the practical examination usually being before the theoretical examination.

The idea of the International Chemistry Olympiad was developed in former Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the first International Chemistry Olympiad took place in Prague between 18th and 21st June 1968.

The 53rd International Chemistry Olympiad will take place in Osaka, Japan, from July 24 to August 2, 2021.

## Extra 23 million people could face coastal flooding within 30 years, even with emission cuts, study says

The combined impacts of human-caused sea level rise, storm surges and high tides could expose an extra 23 million people to coastal flooding within the next 30 years, even with relatively ambitious cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, a new global study has found.

In a worst-case scenario where emissions continue to rise and no efforts are made to adapt to the rising sea levels, coastal assets worth US\$14.2tn — about 20% of global GDP — could be at risk by the end of the century, the Guardian reported.

Rising sea levels caused by global heating that expands the oceans and melts land-based ice could mean that one-in-100-year floods occurring now would become one-in-10-year floods by the end of the century. As much as 4% of the world's population could be affected by flooding.

The study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, identified "hotspot" regions at risk of extensive flooding.

South-eastern China, Australia's north, Bangladesh, West Bengal and Gujarat in India were especially at risk. In the United States, North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland were considered to be most exposed, as were the UK, northern France and northern Germany.

But the study also shows how the risk of damage from rising sea levels and storm surges will continue to rise even if emissions are kept to a level that would keep the global temperature rise to well below 2C by the end of this century.

The new study builds on findings published by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2019 that predicted extreme sea level events could be near annual occurrences by the middle of this century on many coastlines.

Prof Ian Young, a co-author of the study at the University of Melbourne, said: "We certainly need to mitigate our greenhouse gases but that won't solve this problem."

"The sea level rise is already baked in — even if we reduce emissions today the sea level will continue to rise because the glaciers will continue to melt for hundreds of years."

According to the study, about 148 million people globally are exposed to flooding events today.

If greenhouse gas emissions rise moderately — the equivalent of 1.8C of global warming by the end of the century — a further 54 million people will be exposed. But if emissions are allowed to spiral in a worst-case scenario, then this number rises to 77 million.

About US\$10.2tn of coastal assets are exposed to coastal flooding in 2100, even with emissions kept at moderate level, according to the study.

All the figures modelled in the study assume that no adaptive measures are taken, illustrating the benefits of taking early action to reduce the impact of flooding events.

Young said: "When most people think of sea level rise they think about 3 or 4mm per year, but when flooding occurs it happens it's when you also have a storm."



"That happens today and we have seen that on the coast of New South Wales last week. Sea level rise exacerbates the magnitude — and increases the frequency — of these flooding events."

"There are significantly larger areas of land flooded and that will have significant economic impacts on infrastructure."

"Even if we mitigate greenhouse gases it does not make much effect. We have to adapt to this — it is going to happen so we have to look at either hard engineering solutions, or do we look at planned retreat and move populations and that's incredibly difficult, or there are nature-based coastal defence systems."

Ebru Kirezci, the lead researcher, also of the University of Melbourne, said: "We need to adapt to sea level rise and climate change."

"Adaptation is the only way out and we need to adopt some risk mitigation strategies like sea walls and dykes and develop forecasting and warning systems, or coastal retreat, which means the relocation of coastal communities to safer places."

Prof John Church, a leading expert on sea level rise at the Climate Change Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, who was not involved in the study, said the findings were valuable.

He said the study had brought together several elements to estimate extreme impacts, but there was more work to be done to understand additional impacts from changes to the severity of storms and waves.

He said there was also likely to be significant impacts along estuaries and it was important to note that "sea level rise will not stop in 2100 under any scenario".

He said: "With more emissions the higher the [sea level] rises, with commitments of metres of sea level rise over coming centuries with the higher scenarios. The impacts to 2100 are the introduction to the future."

While coastal flooding could impact 20% of global GDP this, he said, was a reflection of a society that "love the coast".

"We need more thoughtful and forward-looking planning."

## All shall pay tribute to guardians of nature

**1 →** According to the international standard, there should be one ranger per thousand hectares, but in Iran, there is one ranger per 12,000 hectares, which means that the number of rangers in Iran is one-twelfth of the world standard, while the rangers protect 11 percent of the country's natural areas, Jamshid Mohabbat-Khani, commander of the protection unit of the DOE has stated.



To compensate for this shortage, we obtained a license to hire rangers for 10 consecutive years, through which 300 ranchers were employed each year, he said, adding, but given the size of the country, it seems that we are still far from the international standard, and public participation seems to be the best way to make up for it.

Of course, the people have always been present and did not give up any help, so that we witnessed the death of seven people in the recent wildfires, he regretted, noting, but it shows that people are interested to participate in the environmental protection, so the slogan of the environment comes true as we have 80 million environmentalists.

But we also have a number of responsibilities towards these people, one of which is to educate them, he said, adding, in this regard, we also prepared a booklet on fire control in nature and sent it to the provinces and asked them to educate people and prevent any harm.

In the law for the protection of rangers, we made a clause in support of nature conservationists, which was not approved and was removed, but we are seriously pursuing the issue to protect them legally, he highlighted.

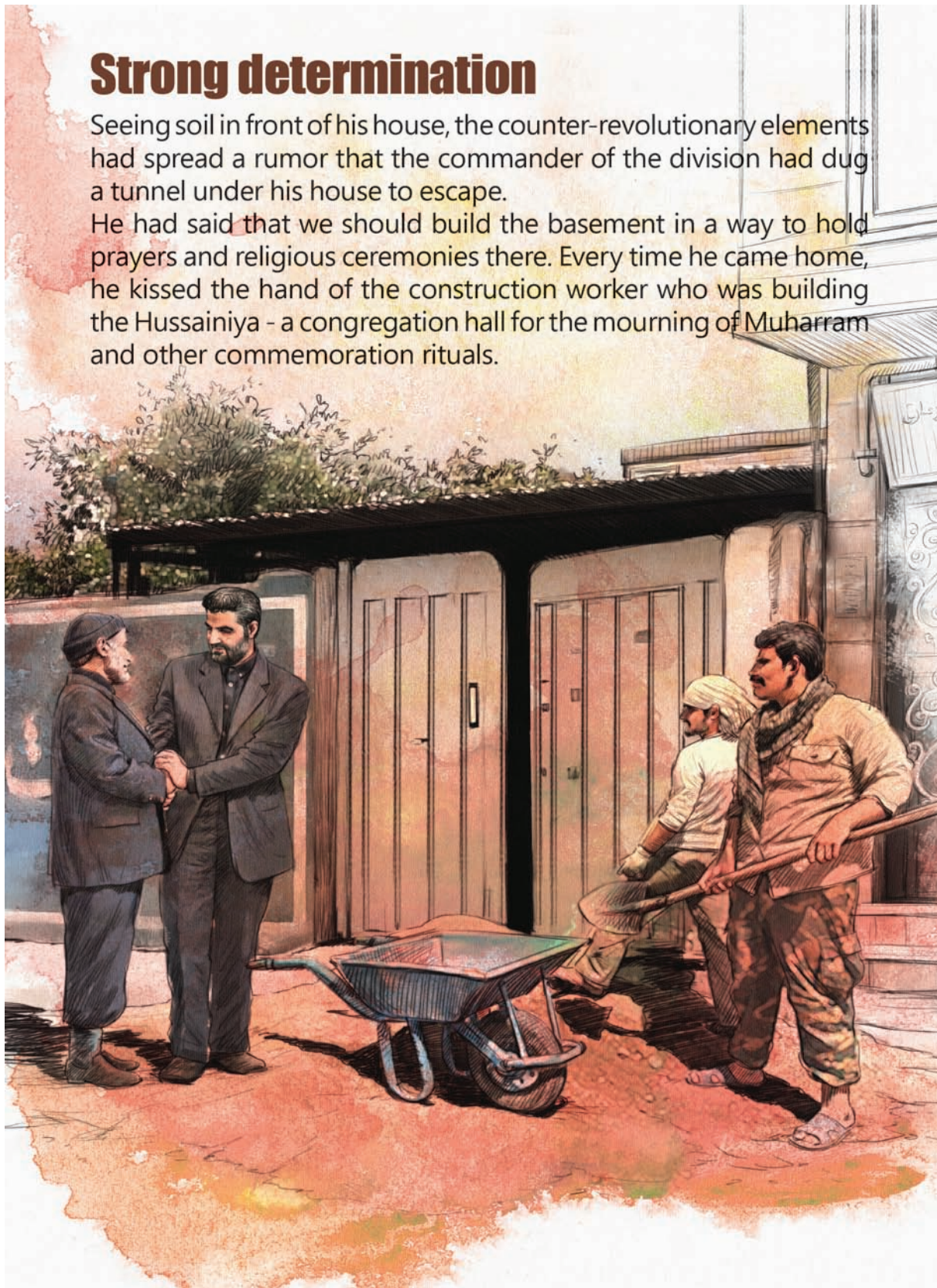
He went on to say that we are trying to provide equipment to the rangers by the end of this year, which will include bulletproof vests, electric shocker, tear gas, backpacks, and other necessary items.



## Strong determination

Seeing soil in front of his house, the counter-revolutionary elements had spread a rumor that the commander of the division had dug a tunnel under his house to escape.

He had said that we should build the basement in a way to hold prayers and religious ceremonies there. Every time he came home, he kissed the hand of the construction worker who was building the Hussainiya - a congregation hall for the mourning of Muharram and other commemoration rituals.





## Thousands of Yemeni patients at risk of death due to ongoing siege: Health Minister

The Yemeni health minister has warned that thousands of patients in the country are at serious risk of losing their lives as a result of the ongoing Saudi-led blockade and a decision by international humanitarian organizations to leave the war-torn country.

Speaking at a press conference in the capital Sana'a on Thursday, Taha al-Mutawakel said the tight blockade imposed on Yemen prevents the repair of medical equipment, adding that some 93 percent of medical devices in Yemen have worked way beyond their average life span, while all magnetic resonance diagnostic devices have stopped working.

He added that the Saudi-led coalition does not allow the entry of medicines, especially refrigerated ones, which has enormously aggravated the health conditions of Yemeni patients grappling with cancer and malignant tumors in particular.

## Egypt's new laws entrench el-Sissi's rule

Egypt's president has approved new legal amendments that further exclude any serious competitors from elections and give the military greater control over civilian affairs, a leading rights group said Thursday.

The amendments, published earlier this week in the country's official gazette, bar retired military officers from running for presidential, parliamentary or local elections without permission from the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Current military officers had already been prohibited from running in elections or joining political groups. The amendments also empower the minister of defense to appoint military advisors to governors in Egypt's 27 provinces, Daily Star reported.

## 1 U.S. marine dead and 8 others missing after amphibious vehicle accident off California coast

At least one US Marine is dead and eight others are missing after a training accident involving an amphibious vehicle off the coast of Southern California.

Search and rescue efforts are still underway Friday morning for the eight missing individuals with support from the Navy and Coast Guard, CNN reported.

At least two others were injured in the accident, which occurred Thursday, and have been transported to Southern California hospitals, according to a news release from the U.S. Marine Corps 1st Expeditionary Force.

One is in critical condition and the other is stable, according to the Marines.

The incident occurred during a 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit and Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group routine training exercise in the vicinity of San Clemente Island, according to the Marines.

The incident began around 5:45 p.m. local time on Thursday when Marines in an amphibious assault vehicle, or AAV, reported they were taking on water. Sixteen people were inside the vehicle at the time of the accident. Eight people have been recovered.

All of the service members in the incident are assigned to the 15th MEU based out of Camp Pendleton.

## Resistance News

### IOF kidnaps Fatah secretary in J'lem, other citizens in W. Bank

**INTERNATIONAL** **TEHRAN**— The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) on Thursday morning kidnaped secretary of the Fatah Movement in Jerusalem Shadi Matwar during his participation in a sit-in organized in solidarity with Jerusalem mayor Adnan Ghaith, who has been in detention for over a week.

Eyewitnesses said that police officers dispersed the solidarity sit-in and arrested Matwar from outside the Israeli magistrate court in Jerusalem as a court session was being held for mayor Ghaith.

Later, the court extended Ghaith's detention for five days at the pretext of giving the police more time to interrogate him.

Mayor Ghaith and other Jerusalemite officials from the Palestinian Authority and Fatah have been in detention for the second consecutive week.

Earlier, a number of West Bank citizens were kidnaped by Israeli soldiers in overnight arrest campaigns.

According to local sources, the IOF kidnaped at dawn three young men from their homes in Jabel Hindaza area in southern Bethlehem.

In Nablus, the IOF stormed the towns of Salem, Rujeib and Tell and kidnaped five citizens from their homes.

Another citizen was kidnaped from the southern area of al-Khalil city.

## Hamas calls for marching en masse to Aqsa during Arafah and Eid days

**INTERNATIONAL** **TEHRAN**— The Hamas Movement has urged the Palestinian masses to make the Arafah Day an occasion to march en masse to the Aqsa Mosque and intensify their presence at the holy site during the holy Eid al-Adha days.

In a statement on Thursday, Hamas warned the Israeli occupation state of persisting in desecrating the Aqsa Mosque and attempting to Judaize it and seize parts of it.

"Bab al-Rahma, the Marwani prayer hall, the Omar prayer hall, the Buraq prayer hall and the Buraq Wall are all part and parcel of our beloved Mosque," Hamas said.

The Movement also condemned the occupation state for persisting in persecuting and assaulting the Jerusalemite people, demolishing their homes and imposing exorbitant taxes on them to force them to leave the holy city.

It stressed that the occupation state would pay dearly if it did not halt its aggression against Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque, and called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League to assume their responsibilities and protect the Mosque and the holy city against Judaization.

# Pompeo suggests U.S. behind deaths of 300 Russians in Syria

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says the deaths of "300 Russians" in a failed attack on a military base held by U.S. and mainly Kurdish forces in Syria's oil-rich eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr more than two years ago sent a warning to Moscow.

Speaking at a Senate hearing on Thursday, Pompeo sought to forestall criticism over President Donald Trump's statement that he had not raised with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin accusations that Moscow paid the Taliban bounties to kill U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

"I don't think there's any doubt in the mind of every Russian leader, including Vladimir Putin, about the expectations of the United States of America not to kill Americans," Pompeo told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"I can promise you that the 300 Russians who were in Syria and who took action that threatened America who are no longer on this planet understand that, too," he said.

According to Press TV, on February 7, 2018, hundreds of Russian forces aligned with Syrian government troops were killed in U.S. airstrikes near the town of Khursham in Syria's Dayr al-Zawr province.

U.S. officials claimed at the time that the Russian fighters had crossed the Euphrates River and were shelling the positions of the



Kurdish-led militants from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), where American advisers were present.

Syria's state-run al-Ikhbariyah Syria television news network then condemned the "brutal massacre" by the United States, and said the bombing had left "dozens of people dead and wounded."

The Russian Defense Ministry also said Syrian government troops and their allies were hit as they launched an operation against the Daesh Takfiri terrorists in the region.

Russian jets have been carrying out air raids against targets belonging to the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group and those of other terror outfits inside Syria at the Damascus government's formal request since September 2015.

The airstrikes have helped Syrian forces advance against anti-Damascus terrorists, who have been wreaking havoc in the Arab country since 2011.

Earlier this month, the Kremlin roundly dismissed news reports that U.S. intelligence

had allegedly found Russia offered bounties on American troops in Afghanistan.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the reports "hoaxes," and stated that they damage the reputation of the media that publish them.

The Russian Foreign Ministry, for its part, said the initial story in The New York Times demonstrated the "low intellectual abilities of U.S. intelligence propagandists."

Trump said in an interview with "Axios on HBO" published on Wednesday that he did not bring up intelligence reports that Moscow paid the Taliban to kill American troops in Afghanistan, when he spoke with the Russian leader last week.

Senator Robert Menendez told Pompeo on Thursday that Trump's remarks were "astounding" and that the bounties marked an "outrageous escalation" by Russia.

Menendez also asked the U.S. state secretary how he would have acted if a Democratic president acted similarly to Trump.

"If you were sitting in your old House seat, would you be okay with a president who abandoned our troops but not even raising this with the Kremlin?" he said.

Pompeo said he had raised Afghanistan with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, but declined to comment on Trump's discussions.

## U.S. protests: Federal agents show stronger force at protests

### Obama aims criticism at Trump in eulogy for civil rights leader

→1 "I've been here every night saying the feds have to go because they were sent to terrorize us. So now they're going, yeah, that's a victory," she added.

Other demonstrators were skeptical that the federal agents would really leave after the head of U.S. homeland security said they would remain in the area until they were sure the courthouse was protected.

However, Brown said that was no more than an attempt by the White House to save face after what amounted to a defeat for Trump's attempt to use federal forces for political ends.

She told Oregon public radio "the plan is very, very clear" and that the federal agents "will be out of downtown Portland from Thursday."

Only U.S. Marshals, who routinely have responsibility for guarding federal buildings, would remain. She said they would not be taking the lead in protecting the courthouse.

"Trump's troops are leaving the city. That's a good thing," said Brown. "I was really clear in my conversations with the Trump administration. I told them that Trump's troops needed to leave. The federal officers here in the city brought violence and they brought strife to our community. That needed to end."

Trump tweeted that if the federal government had not sent in the agents then "there would be no Portland – it would be burned and beaten to the ground". He also threatened to send them back.

"If the mayor and governor do not stop the Crime and Violence from the Anarchists and Agitators immediately, the Federal Government will go in and do the job that local



law enforcement was supposed to do!" the president added.

For all Trump's bravado and statements from his officials trying to spin the withdrawal agreement as having secured the president's goal of ensuring the federal courthouse was protected, it amounted to a significant retreat.

Trump originally suggested that federal forces, drawn from the border patrol, immigration service and U.S. Marshals, were sent to Portland to end a weeks-long takeover of a small part of the downtown by supporters of Black Lives Matter. At the time, he implied they would restore order across the city.

■ **Obama aims criticism at Trump in eulogy for civil rights leader**

Former U.S. President Barack Obama launched his sharp-est attack to date on President Donald Trump on Thursday, condemning the use of federal agents against protesters and attempts at voter suppression in the United States.

## Trump floats election 'delay' amid claims of voting fraud

U.S. President Donald Trump suggested Thursday an unprecedented delay to the 2020 election, in which he is currently behind in the polls, claiming that attempts to provide safe voting during the pandemic will lead to mass fraud.

"Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???" Trump asked in a tweet.

"With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the USA," the tweet said.

The United States has never delayed a presidential election, holding one even during the Civil War, AP reported.

In any case, a delay this time is unlikely to happen. Only Congress can change the election date, which by law is held on the first Tuesday after November 1, and Democrats rule the lower House. This year's elections are set for November 3.

Trump has previously insisted that he sees



no problem going ahead with the election, where he faces Democratic challenger Joe Biden. The coronavirus pandemic remains out of control in swaths of the United States, including most recently in Republican-led states like Florida and Texas.

During the presidential primary contests earlier this year, several states delayed voting or opened fewer polling sites.

In addition, major sporting events have been canceled or curtailed and there are serious doubts across much of the country over whether schools and universities will reopen in September.

### Visual point of view



## EU, in first-ever cyber sanctions, hits Russian intelligence

The European Union Thursday slapped sanctions on six people and three organizations, including Russia's military intelligence agency, accusing them of responsibility for several cyber-attacks that threatened EU interests.

EU headquarters said in a statement that those targeted include people considered to be involved in the 2017 "WannaCry" ransomware attack, the "NotPetya" strike that notably caused havoc in Ukraine, and the "Operation Cloud Hopper" hacking campaign.

The sanctions are the first that the EU has ever imposed for cyber-attacks, AP reported.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that "the measures concerned are a travel ban and asset freeze to natural persons and an asset freeze to entities or bodies. It is also prohibited to directly or indirectly make funds available to listed individuals and entities or bodies."

Four members of Russia's GRU military



intelligence agency were singled out. The EU accuses them of trying to hack the wifi network of the Netherlands-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which has probed the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The 2018 attack was foiled by Dutch authorities.

Two Chinese nationals were also targeted over "Operation Cloud Hopper," which the EU said hit IT systems in companies on six continents, including Europe, and "gained unauthorized access to commercially sensitive data, resulting in significant economic loss."

## Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha amid coronavirus restrictions

Millions of people in Iran and across the Muslim world are celebrating the auspicious religious occasion of Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice), which marks the climax of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, while observing health protocols and social distancing rules amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The occasion, which falls on the 10th day of the lunar calendar month of Dhu al-Hijjah every year, was marked by saying prayers, sacrificing livestock and serving the meat to the needy.

In Iran, people attended the Eid al-Adha prayers and remembered the memory of 464 Iranian pilgrims, who lost their lives during a hajj stampede in Mina, Saudi Arabia, in September 2015, which Tehran blamed on the Saudi organizers' incompetence.

According to Press TV, in Iraq's northern semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, Eid prayers were conducted with massive throngs of worshipers in attendance in the

city of Sulaymaniyah despite a tight curfew.

The Iraqi government is imposing an 11-day full curfew during the Eid al-Adha holiday.

The Higher Committee for Health and National Safety, headed by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, said the earlier this week that the curfew would run from July 30 to August 9 to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Thousands of people attended the special congregational prayer at Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in Turkey's largest city of Istanbul on Friday to mark the holy Muslim day.

Turkish Parliament speaker Mustafa Sentop, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Ali Karaismailoglu, Istanbul Governor Ali Yerlikaya and Istanbul's Fatih district mayor Mehmet Ergun Turan joined the worshippers at the iconic building, which was reconverted to a mosque earlier this month.



# My dreams have no limits: Beiranvand

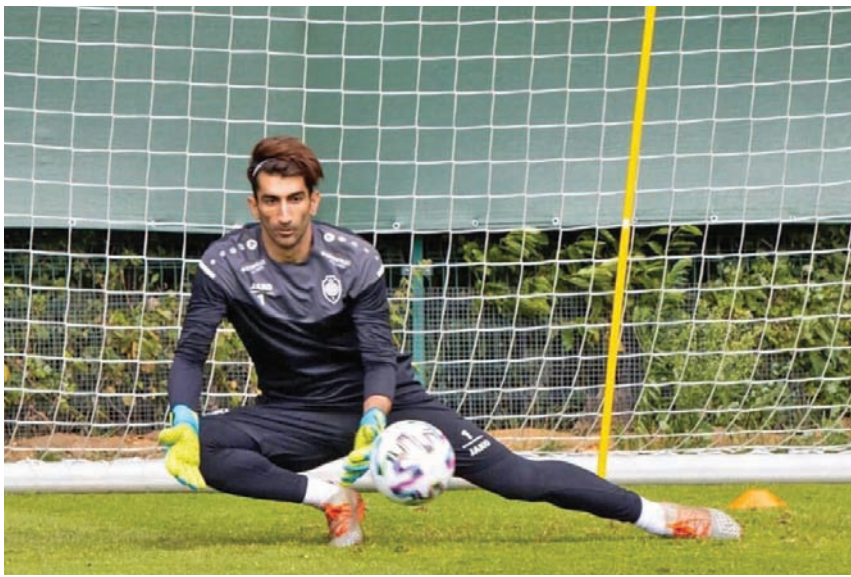
**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Alireza Beiranvand, the Iranian goalkeeper of Royal Antwerp, says that his dreams have no limits in his European adventure.

The Belgian top flight football club have recently completed the signing of Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Beiranvand has said that his life story has been filmed in Iran.

“To become a goalkeeper, I had to overcome the many obstacles that I encountered. I come from a nomadic family who was doing sheep farming. My father wanted me to follow in his footsteps and he considered playing football as a waste of time!” Beiranvand said in an interview with HNL website. “But to pursue my dreams of a career in professional football, I ran away from our home when I was 12 years old and went to the capital city, Tehran, where I could join a professional club.”

“Besides football, I did everything you can imagine, like working in a car wash or a pizzeria. Now, my father is proud of me and understands that I can have a bright future



for myself with football,” Alireza added. The 28-year-old goalie joined Antwerp a couple of months ago but failed to travel to

Belgium due to the flight restriction caused by coronavirus pandemic. However, he finally arrived in Antwerp in late July and

successfully underwent a medical.

Iran's first-choice keeper for Russia 2018, talked about his dream of playing in a European league.

“After the 2018 FIFA World Cup, I was determined to play abroad, especially in Europe but my former club, Persepolis, did not agree and I stayed there for another season,” he stated.

“When Marc Wilmots was appointed as the head coach of Iran national team, we had a good relationship with each other at that time. However, he did not stay in Iran for a long period. He encouraged me to play in European football. Wilmots also compared me to great Belgian goalkeepers like Thibaut Courtois and Simon Mignolet, which made me very happy,” Beiranvand added.

The Iran star has penned a three-year contract with Antwerp.

“Despite my late arrival in Belgium and the language barriers, I think I can make an impact quickly at Antwerp. We will see what happens. For me, there are truly no limits to achieving my dreams.”

## Mehdi Taremi among Primeira Liga top 10

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Following eye-catching performance in his debut season in Primeira Liga, Mehdi Taremi has been chosen as the eighth player in the 2019-20 season.

He was earlier named the Rio Ave's Player of the Month for July after shining in two matches against Boavista and Santa Clara.

Taremi was chosen among the Primeira Liga's top three goalscorers along with Benfica players Carlos Vinicius and Pizzi, netting 18 goals.

The Iranian international forward helped Rio Ave complete the Primeira Liga's top five in the ever-evolving tussle for the final qualifying spot for Europa League football.

The top 10 in 2019-20  
1st - Pizzi (Benfica) - Midfielder - 139 points  
2nd - Vinicius (Benfica) - Forward - 133 points  
3rd - Paulinho (Sp. Braga) - Forward - 127 points  
4th - Ricardo Horta (Sp. Braga) - Forward - 124 points



5th - Otávio (FC Porto) - Midfielder - 121 points  
6th - Alex Telles (FC Porto) - Defender - 111 points  
7th - Pedro Gonçalves (Famalicão) - Midfielder - 111 points  
8th - Mehdi Taremi (Rio Ave) - Forward - 110 points  
9th - Rúben Dias (Benfica) - Defender - 109 points  
10th - Kraev (Gil Vicente) - Midfielder - 102 points

## Iran football to start training camp on Aug. 27

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iran national football team training camp will start on Aug. 27 as part of preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

The 'Persian Leopards' will meet Syria and Uzbekistan respectively in friendly matches in early September.

The match against Syria is scheduled for Sept. 3 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium and will meet Uzbekistan on Sept. 7 at Bunyodkor Stadium in Tashkent.

The warm-up matches will be held as part of preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

Iran, who sit third in Group C behind Iraq and Bahrain, have four must-win matches ahead in the competition.

Deagan Skocic's team are scheduled to host Hong Kong on October 8 in Tehran and meet Cambodia five days later in Phnom Penh.

Iran's last two matches against Bahrain and Iraq will be on Nov. 12 and 17 in Tehran.



The eight group winners of the World Cup qualification's group stage and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

The FIFA World Cup in Qatar will run from November 21 to December 18, 2022.

## Switzerland launches investigation against FIFA President Gianni Infantino

A special prosecutor has launched criminal proceedings against FIFA head Gianni Infantino over his secret meetings with Switzerland's attorney general after “indications of criminal conduct.”

FIFA chairman Gianni Infantino faces charges over his dealings with Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber, authorities said Thursday. Swiss prosecutors have previously found indications of criminal conduct related to the meetings between the two men.

Last week, Lauber offered his resignation after a court found that, while Lauber's office was investigating FIFA-related corruption, the prosecutor had tried to hide a meeting with the FIFA head and lied to his supervisors in the Swiss judiciary.

Lauber is now set to leave his post at the end of August. Lauber and Infantino allegedly met in secret three times in 2016 and 2017. Both of the men have denied any wrongdoing. In April, FIFA slammed the accusations as “deliberately misleading and malicious.”

### ■ Infantino had mandate to clean up FIFA

Infantino, a lawyer by training, took over world football's governing body in 2016 in the aftermath of his Swiss predecessor Sepp Blatter's ignominious exit. Blatter resigned amid allegations of corruption tied to payments made to his presumed successor, then-UEFA President Michel Platini. Infantino was charged with cleaning up the organ-



ization, while Lauber was tasked with investigating it. But just over a year after his reelection as FIFA president, the undocumented meetings have endangered Infantino's credibility.

In a statement released on Thursday afternoon, Infantino insisted that meeting Lauber is “perfectly legitimate and it's perfectly legal.” FIFA also said it would cooperate fully with the investigation.

“As President of FIFA, it has been my aim from day one, and it remains my aim, to assist the authorities with investigating past wrongdoings at FIFA,” Infantino said. “FIFA

officials have met with prosecutors in other jurisdictions across the world for exactly these purposes. People have been convicted and sentenced, thanks to FIFA's cooperation, and especially in the United States of America, where our cooperation has resulted in over 40 criminal convictions. Therefore, I remain fully supportive of the judicial process, and FIFA remains willing to fully cooperate with the Swiss authorities for these purposes.”

The meetings allegedly took place while the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office was actively investigating FIFA concerning, among other things, the awarding of the 2018 World Cup to Russia and 2022 to Qatar.

### ■ 'Nothing secret'

Previously, Infantino has expressed his frustration at allegations of wrongdoing.

“What bothers me a bit is the wording about secret meetings. There is nothing secret in meeting a prosecutor in a civilized country. We are happy to be cooperating with the Swiss authorities as we do with authorities all the world,” he said earlier this year.

But it is the undocumented nature of those meetings that has raised eyebrows. There has been speculation that Infantino was looking into whether there was a criminal investigation into him and potentially interfering with other investigations into FIFA and its partners.

(Source: dw.com)

## Hossein Madani will always be missed

**Volleyball.ir** — On this day, six years ago, Iran volleyball missed a man who was key to the country's success in the new era.

Madani inspired Iran to win inaugural edition of Asian Men's Volleyball Cup in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

Under stewardship of Madani, Iran did a great job in 2008 and beat Asian giants China, Japan and South Korea and it was a turning point for the West Asian country.

Two years later, Iran defended their title at AVC Cup and once again overpowered the Asian great teams.

In the 2010 Asian Games, Iran claimed a silver medal after being defeated by Japan in the final match and it was a valuable medal for the Persians since the rising stars started to believe in their potentials.

As a player, he won one gold, two silver and two bronze medals with Paykan at the



Asian Men's Clubs Volleyball Championships.

Now, Iran are a powerhouse team in the world and owe the success to a man who left us too soon.

Madani died of liver disease at the age of 43 in Tehran's Laleh Hospital on Aug. 1, 2014.

He will always be remembered by the volleyball fans for what he did for volleyball.

## Tennis world backs world No.1 Ash Barty's decision to pull out of US Open

As the tennis world lends its support for Ashleigh Barty, Andy Murray says he expects more big names to follow the women's world No.1 in pulling out of the US Open.

Barty on Thursday announced her withdrawal from the grand slam in New York and a warm-up tournament at the same venue, due to fears of COVID-19.

Murray claims to have heard some of the top men's players will also pull out, even though his commitment to travel to the US remains firm.

World No.1 Novak Djokovic, who has already had coronavirus after hosting an exhibition event in Serbia and Croatia without following social distancing protocols, and defending champion Rafael Nadal have both previously expressed doubts about playing in the tournament.

But both are currently listed as being in the field for Western & Southern Open that precedes the US Open.

“The Ash Barty withdrawal, I think we will see it quite

a bit,” said former world No.1 Murray.

“I have heard some of the top male players aren't going to play. I would expect that would be the case. It's everyone's personal decision.

“If they don't feel safe and don't feel comfortable traveling and going there and putting themselves and their team at an increased risk, then it's completely understandable.

“All of the players will have some reservations and it's whether or not you feel comfortable taking that risk. Like I said the other day, my feeling is once we are inside that bubble they created, we will be OK.

“It's more the international travel and getting there which I will be a bit concerned about.”

While Murray was supportive despite his own plans to travel, three high-profile American tennis journalists felt compelled to speak out on Barty's behalf.

New York Times reporter Christopher Clarey noted a

“strange amount of dismissive commentary” about Barty's decision to stay out of the US.

“She's no dominant force yet but let's be clear: Any tennis tournament with Ash Barty in the field is a better tennis tournament,” he wrote.

Sports Illustrated veteran Jon Wertheim shut down similar concerns, warning fans against condemning any player's choice.

“Surprised - though we shouldn't be - at how many people are taking issue with Ash Barty's declining to play @ usopen,” he wrote.

“For the foreseeable future there is an outright ban on second-guessing any player's decision to forgo an event.”

In a bid to give players a penalty-free opportunity to curate their appearances based on COVID fears, the ATP and WTA tours recently introduced adjusted ranking mechanisms.

(Source: 7news.com)

## Iran futsal top Asian team in world ranking

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — The Iranian national futsal team are the best Asian team in the world futsal ranking released on Thursday.

Iran are sixth in the world with 1603 points.

Brazil and Spain are first and second with 1810 and 1801 points, respectively. Argentina remain third with 1694 points.

Russia and Portugal are fourth and fifth with 1642 and 1639 points, respectively.

Japan and Thailand are 16th and 17th in the ranking with 1368 and 1325 points, respectively.

Iran national futsal team prepare for the 2020 AFC Futsal Championship in November, where the Persians have been drawn along with South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Thailand in Group D.

## Kaveh Rezaei to remain at Charleroi

Kaveh Rezaei continues to play football on loan at Charleroi for one year more.

Rezaei joined Club Brugge for a reported club-record fee of €5 million in August 2018 but scored just one goal in 11 matches for the Blue-Black.



He was loaned to Charleori from Club Brugge last season and scored 14 goals and provided five assists in 25 games for the team.

Now, the 28-year-old forward will remain with the Zebras for one year more.

(Source: hln.be)

## Karim Ansarifard to stay at Al-Sailiya

Iran international forward Karim Ansarifard will not leave Qatari club Al-Sailiya at the summer.

The Qatari site Al Raya had reported the 30-year-old striker will not remain at the club but the Al-Sailiya vice-president has said the Iranian player will be a member of their team in the next season.

“Ansarifard, Nadir Belhadj and Kara Mbodji are our three foreign players and will remain at the club for the next season,” Muhammad Ali Al-Marri said.

Ansarifard joined Al-Sailiya from Nottingham Forest in July 2019 on a one-and-a-half-year contract.

(Source: Raya.com)

## Mehrdad Pooladi joins Muather SC

**Tasnim** — Iranian left-back Mehrdad Pooladi joined Qatari football club Muather.

The 33-year-old player has replaced Brazilian player Danilo Cirino de Oliveira in the second division football team.

Pooladi has most recently played at Al-Kharitiyath.

Pooladi was a member of Iran national football team in 2014 FIFA World Cup and also represented Team Melli in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.

The winger started his career in Paykan in 2006 and has also played at Iranian teams Esteghlal, Persepolis, Tractor and Mes Kerman.

## Iran basketball league to start on Oct. 15

**Tasnim** — The Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) 2020-21 Season will start on October 15.

In a session held on Wednesday at the Iran Basketball Federation headquarters here in Tehran, it was decided that the IBSL in the men's division would start on October 15 and in the women's division on September 24.

The Iranian Basketball Super League is a professional men's basketball league in Iran. It was founded in 1998. The league follows the promotion and relegation system in which the worst two teams are relegated to 1st Division.

Zob Ahan Isfahan are the most decorated team with nine titles.

## Vladimir Alekno rejects Iran approach

**Tasnim** — Vladimir Alekno says that he has turned down an approach from Iran Volleyball Federation.

Media reports suggest that Iran has been linked with the former Russia volleyball team coach because the team has been without a coach since parting ways with Igor Kolakovic in March.

The 53-year-old coach has most recently worked as head coach of Zenit Kazan.

“Iran volleyball federation negotiated with me but my answer is no. I need more time to think about taking charge of Iran volleyball team,” Alekno said.

In the Olympic Games, Iran have been drawn in Pool A along with Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela.

Pool B consists of Brazil, USA, Russia, Argentina, France and Tunisia.



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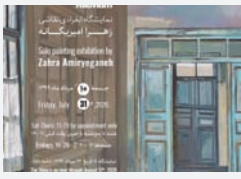


GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

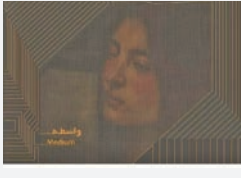
Forsaking a need is easier than requesting it  
from unworthy persons.

Imam Ali (AS)

## WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES



**Painting**  
■ An exhibition of paintings by Zahra Amirjeganeh is currently underway at Shirin Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Alluvium" will run until August 12 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Ave.  
■ Negar Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Afshin Kousha. The exhibit named "Medium" will run until August 19 at the gallery located at 154 near Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Blvd.  
■ Ebrahim Akbari Garaz is displaying his latest paintings in an exhibition at Saye Gallery. The exhibit named "Abstract World" will run until August 5 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.



**Bas-relief/painting**  
■ A collection of paintings and bas-reliefs by Neda Jalili is on view in an exhibition at Vista Gallery. The exhibit titled "The Silence of the Earth" will run until August 7 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.



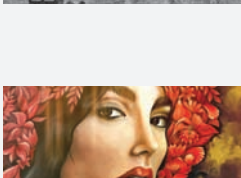
**Drawing**  
■ A group of artists, including Afsaneh Ghafari, Sara Baqeri, Hossein Vahabi and Farzaneh Akhavan, is currently displaying their latest drawings in an exhibition at Shangarf Gallery. The exhibition named "Freedom Spot" will be running until August 11 at 2 Sattari Alley, Jolfa St. off Shariati Ave.



**Painting/photo/sculpture**  
■ Atashzad Gallery is showcasing paintings, sculptures and photos by Sara Bakhtiari, Nasim Sadeq, Razieh Javadzadeh, Saman Abbaspur, Fereshteh Torabi and several other artists in an exhibition named "Contemporary Man". The exhibit runs until August 5 at the gallery located at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.



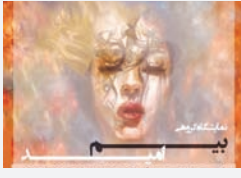
**Multimedia**  
■ A group exhibition entitled "Fears, Hopes" is hanging artworks in various media at Ehsan Gallery. Among the artists are Narges Vazifeh, Asghar Vatandoost, Amin Kermani, Marzieh Soltani and Sara Heidari, and the exhibit will run August 5 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.



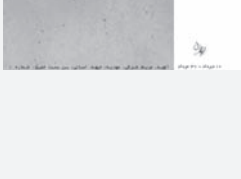
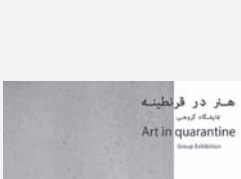
■ An exhibition named "Art in Quarantine" displaying artworks in various media is currently underway at Ei Gallery. Mohammadreza Vanaki, Akbar Nematirad, Farzaneh Qolizadeh, Taraneh Mosaddeq and Zeinab Fatemi are among the artists that created works for the exhibit, which will run until August 21 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebheh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.



■ Dozen of artists are displaying their latest artworks in various media in an exhibition at Entezami Gallery. The exhibit named "Combination" will be running until August 5 at the gallery that can be found at 608 Shariati Ave. near Motahhari St.



**Installation**  
■ Homa Gallery is displaying sets of installation by Saba Manuchehri in an exhibition named "Studio Visit". The exhibit runs until August 21 at the gallery located at No. 8, Forth Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.



# Celluloid Dreams handles global sales for "Sun Children"

**A R T TEHRAN**  
d e s k Celluloid Dreams, a major French film production and distribution company, is handling international sales for Iranian director Majid Majidi's drama "Sun Children", Variety announced last week.

The acclaimed movie is scheduled to be screened in the official competition of the Venice Film Festival, which unveiled its lineup last week.

The film tells the story of 12-year-old Ali and his three friends. Together, they work hard to survive and support their families, doing small jobs in a garage and committing petty crimes to make fast money. Everything changes, however, when Ali is entrusted to find a hidden treasure underground but must first enroll at the Sun (Khorshid) School, a charitable institution that tries to educate



"Sun Children" by Majid Majidi.

street kids and child laborers.

Majidi's 1991 feature debut "Baduk" was previously represented by Celluloid Dreams. He was the first Iranian director to receive an Academy Award nomination for his "Children of Heaven" in 1996.

"The message of 'Sun Children' is that we are all responsible for these children, many of whom are extremely talented and all of whom are precious," Majidi once said.

"It is simply not tolerable that their social and economic status consign them to a future of limited opportunities and poor prospects," he added.

The drama won the Crystal Simorgh for best film at the 38th edition of the Fajr Film Festival in Tehran in February.



"Girl Flies in Prayer" by Iranian photographer Ahmad Khatiri won an honorable mention at a contest organized by the Gruppo Operativo Fotografico Ascoli Piceno, Italy.

## Photographer Ahmad Khatiri honored at Italian competition

**A R T TEHRAN**  
d e s k Iranian photographer Ahmad Khatiri has been awarded an honorable mention at a contest organized by the Gruppo Operativo Fotografico Ascoli Piceno – GOFAP (Ascoli Piceno Photographic Operational Group) in Italy.

Khatiri received the honor for his black and white photo named "Girl Flies in Prayer", which depicts a little girl opening her arms like wings among a group of Muslims during a congregational prayer.

Italian photographers Cappuccini Gianfranco, Falsetto Massimiliano and Presta Antonio Salvatore won first, second and third prizes respectively.

Khatiri has participated in numerous photography competitions around the globe and won prizes in some of them.

In 2009, he won the UAFB gold medal at the 7th edition of the Romania Bucovina Mileniul III International Salon of Photographic Art.

In 2017, he won the FIAP Gold Medal for his single photo "Prayer and Mourning for the Martyrdom of Their Fathers in War Zones" at the Through the Viewfinder, an international photo contest that was held in Kragujevac, Serbia.

The Fifth International Photo Salon Plovdiv in Bulgaria awarded him a PSA honorable mention for his photo "Balance" in 2018.

The 2nd Danube Digital Circuit in Belarus also gave him a FIAP Honorable Mention for a photo named "Flying Harmony" in 2018.

## Iran's "Diapason" scoops awards at AVANCA festival

**A R T TEHRAN**  
d e s k Iranian director Hamed Tehrani's drama "Diapason" has been the big winner of the 24th International Film Festival AVANCA, the organizers have announced.

The film won the Cinema Prize for Best Feature Film, Best Screenplay Award and the D. Quixote Award from FICC - International Federation of Film Clubs at the festival, which was organized through the drive-in cinema in the Portuguese city from July 22 to 26.

Starring Jaleh Sameti, Rana Salehi, Behnush Bakhtiari and Alireza Ostadi, "Diapason" starts from a place of happiness and hope.



A scene from "Diapason" by Iranian director Hamed Tehrani.

It focuses on a single mother facing the tragic death of her young daughter and problems in its aftermath.

It is Hoda's 17th birthday. She plans to study dentistry, and has spent the morning taking exams alongside other girls with their own dreams of college, a profession and a life in which they are able to provide for themselves.

Hoda's proud mother Rana organizes a modest celebration and promises a big party when she passes her university entrance exams.

In addition, the festival also awarded an honorable mention to Iranian filmmaker Behnam Asadollahi for his movie "The Heavy

Shadow of the Crow".

Asadollahi is a film graduate from the Kosar Art University in the northwestern Iranian city of Ardebil.

He has been making films since 2009 and been mostly involved in sound editing for over 30 short and feature films as well as TV productions. He has made three shorts and one animation film, and his "Speaker" has won several awards at various film festivals around the world.

The award for best short film went Serbian film "Moon Drops" by Yoram Ever-Hadani, and the best animation award was presented to "Hello My Dears" by Sasha Vasiliev from Russia.

## Hong Kong festival picks films by Abbas Kiarostami, Nader Saeivar

**A R T TEHRAN**  
d e s k The 44th edition of the Hong Kong International Film Festival has announced its lineup with three films by Abbas Kiarostami and one by his fellow Iranian filmmaker Nader Saeivar.

"In First Case, Second Case" (1979), "Tribute to the Teachers" (1977) and "Two Solutions for One Problem" (1975) are the three short films by Kiarostami to be presented at the restored classics section of the festival.

Saeivar's "The Alien" will also be presented in the Young Cinema Competition.

"In First Case, Second Case" (1979), the filmmaker poses a double-edged question: Is it better to betray your classmates or show solidarity against the punishment of an angry teacher?

"Tribute to the Teachers" is a short documentary featuring interviews with teachers and officials on the profession of teaching.

In "Two Solutions for One Problem", two young boys are classmates. When Nader returns his friend's notebook, the cover of which he has inadvertently torn, the other is faced with two solutions, either he takes revenge or the two boys look for a solution together, glue for example, and thus remain good friends.

Kiarostami, the winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for his "Taste of Cherry", died of cancer on July 5, 2016 at the age of 76.



A scene from "Two Solutions for One Problem" (1975) by Abbas Kiarostami.

Iranian actor of "The Alien" Bakhtiar Panjei was crowned best for his role in "The Alien" ("Namo") at the Taormina Film Fest in Italy in July.

Panjei portrays a teacher who is dispatched along with his family to a remote area.

"The Alien" had its world premiere at the Forum section of the 70th Berlin International Film Festival, which was held from February 20 to March 1.

The Hong Kong International Film Festival will not have

a screening program this year due to the rapid rise in cases of COVID-19 infection in the country.

The organizers have also confirmed that this year's Firebird Awards and FIPRESCI Prize competitions will proceed with online judging, with plans to announce the winners on August 20.

The festival will present ten restored classics from master filmmakers whose undiminished brilliance continues to inspire and resonate with generations of audiences.

Other highlights of the restored classics section are Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now: Final Cut" (2019), Robert Bresson's "Four Nights of a Dreamer" (1971), Hou Hsiao-Hsien's "Flowers of Shanghai" (1998), and Tsai Ming-Liang's "Goodbye, Dragon Inn" (2003).

"PiedraSola" by Alejandro Telemaco TARRAF (Argentina), and "The Shepherdess and the Seven Songs" by Pushpendra Singh (India) are other films at the Young Cinema Competition.

The festival's executive director Albert Lee has said the decision to announce the original program is to pay tribute to filmmakers whose works merit continuous support and recognition.

"We have come across many outstanding films during our year-long preparation for the festival," Mr. Lee has said.

"By highlighting these films, we hope to promote and champion the art of cinema, even beyond the festival," he added.

## Tehran gallery hangs works by calligraphy icon Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani

**A R T TEHRAN**  
d e s k Tehran's Arte Gallery is hanging a collection of calligraphy works by celebrated Iranian artist Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani in an exhibition that opened on Friday.

Artworks from the various periods of the artist's career are on view at the showcase, which will run until August 10, the gallery announced.

In February, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts selected the 81-year-old calligrapher as a Living Human Treasure.

The exhibition entitled "Nastaliq, National Heritage" has been organized to observe the selection.

Amirkhani, who is the director of the Iran Calligraphers Association, was decorated also with the Knight of the Order

of Arts and Letters in March 2017.

He learned the nastaliq style of Persian calligraphy from Seyyed Hossein Mirkhani and his brother Seyyed Hassan, two unparalleled masters of Persian calligraphy.

Amirkhani is one of the few Persian calligraphers who has shown great skill in this style. Numerous calligraphers consider him as the best living calligrapher of this style.



A poster for the exhibition "Nastaliq, National Heritage" displaying works by celebrated calligrapher Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani.

## Toronto Intl. Film Festival picks two films from Iran

**A R T TEHRAN**  
d e s k "Bandar Band" by Iranian filmmaker Manijeh Hekmat and "180 Degree Rule" by Farnush Samadi will be competing in the Toronto International Film Festival this year, the organizers have announced.

A lineup of 50 new features will be presented through virtual and physical screenings during the Canadian event that will take place from September 10 to 19.

In "180 Degree Rule", a teacher from Tehran makes a choice that changes her family's structure and puts her on a painful path to atonement.

Samadi is the director of "Gaze", a short film that has

been acclaimed at numerous international film events.

Hekmat is director of the controversial 2002 drama "Women's Prison" and 2018 "Old Road".

Her "Bandar Band" is about some Iranian women singers who are going to enter an unofficial competition in a coffee shop in Tehran.

Pregnant Mahla along with the other members of Bandar Band, her husband and one of their closest friends, starts her journey to Tehran from a southern province just when they have lost all they had in the flood.

They still keep their hopes alive, however, every road they take leads to a dead-end in a flood-stricken land. They

intend to go to Tehran, but they wonder if it is just another turn around a vicious circle.

Spike Lee's "David Byrne's American Utopia" will open the festival this year.

Chloe Zhao's "Nomadland", Francis Lee's "Ammonite", Vinterberg's "Another Round", Ricky Staub's "Concrete Cowboy" and Mexican-Canadian director Nicolas Pereda's "Fauna" are among the films selected to screen in the festival.

Reinaldo Marcus Green's "Good Joe Bell," Suzanne Lindon's "Spring Blossom" and Naomi Kawase's "True Mothers" are also included.