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**Congratulations on birthday of Imam Hassan Askari (AS)**



## Saudi Arabia treading on dangerous ground as secret meeting revealed



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### Advisor says Iran to continue defending Syria

TEHRAN – Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker, has said Tehran will continue to defend Syria and its security with all its power.

“We also support the United Nations’ constructive efforts in helping Syria and judging the issues surrounding Syria independently,” Amir Abdollahian said on Monday, according to Mehr.

He made the remarks in his meeting

with the UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen.

During the meeting, the advisor said Iran welcomes UN’s efforts intended to preserve Syria’s territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

“Unfortunately, certain dangerous terrorist groups are trying to get removed from the United Nations blacklist of terrorists by changing their names,

*Continued on page 2*

### Non-oil trade exceeds \$44b in 8 months

TEHRAN – The value of Iran’s non-oil trade during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20) reached \$44.6 billion, according to Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mirashrafi.

In the mentioned eight months, Iran imported \$23.1 billion worth of goods, while the exports stood at \$21.5 billion, IRIB reported.

The total volume of traded goods was estimated at about 97.7 million tons, of which over 75 million tons were related to exports and about 21.8 million tons were imported goods.

According to Mirashrafi, the imports in the said period declined one percent and 18 percent in terms of weight and value, respectively.

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### Memoirs of Koniko Yamamura rendered into five languages

TEHRAN – “Immigrant from the Land of the Sun”, the latest book by Iranian writer Hamid Hesam containing memoirs of the mother of martyr Mohammad Babai Koniko Yamamura, has been published in several languages.

The book has been translated into Arabic, Turkish, Russian, Urdu and Pashtu, and will be distributed in the destination countries. The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideol-

ogy Dissemination Organization is the publisher of the book.

Yamamura is the only Japanese mother whose son was martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, and the book covers the memories of the mother of the martyr.

Yamamura chose the name Saba after she married an Iranian Muslim in Japan and moved to Iran afterwards,

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### Aquaculture development to materialize surge in production, boost non-oil export

**BY MAHNAZ ABDI**

Paying attention to strengthening the infrastructure of non-oil exports is one of the ways to achieve the goals of a resistance economy, and the field of aquaculture and fisheries has an effective role in this due, through promoting entrepreneurship and employment, as well as bringing foreign currency.

Aquaculture is one of the most important branches of agriculture and its share should be properly strengthened in the strategies of Iran’s resistance economy.

Therefore, development of this sector is being pursued to materialize “Surge in Production”, which is the motto of the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20), and also the objective of boosting non-oil exports, which is one of the major strategies of Iran to nullify the U.S. sanctions.

Fishery production has increased noticeably in the country in recent years.

Iran’s annual fishery output stood at 1.28 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), while the planned figure was 1.25 million tons. This amount of output was achieved despite the sanctions and related difficulties in the previous year.

The output is anticipated to reach 1.5 million tons this year.

The country’s fishery export stood at 146,000 tons worth \$538.9 million in the past year, while the import was 29,000 tons valued at \$98.9 million, so Iran’s fishery trade balance was \$440 million in the previous year.

The export is anticipated to reach 150,000 tons valued at \$600 million in the current year.

Enjoying high quality, Iran’s fishery products were sold easily in the export markets, and also some new export destinations welcomed these products in the past year.

New markets including China, South Korea, and the Eurasian Union nations opened up for Iranian fishery products in the previous year.

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### The world looks as Pompeo mocks international law

**BY M.A. SAKI**

TEHRAN — On November 19, Mike Pompeo toured the occupied West Bank a year after he shockingly said the settlements did not contradict international law.

It was the first such visit by a top U.S. official. Media outlets said Pompeo’s visit broke with decades of U.S. policy toward settlements in the West Bank.

After visiting the occupied West Bank, Pompeo took a helicopter to the Golan Heights, again celebrating the Trump administration’s foreign policy, which recognized Israeli sovereignty in the territory taken from Syria in 1967.

At a winery in the occupied West Bank, Pompeo also said the U.S. would label settlement products as “made in Israel”.

Again he made another surprising remarks, saying the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against Israel, commonly known as

BDS, will be regarded as “anti-Semitic”.

Moreover, he described the BDS movement, which tries to pressure Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territories, as a “cancer”.

Contrary to what Pompeo claims, his approach in general is cancerous and his support for unlawful settlements lead to anti-Semitism and extremism.

What Pompeo is doing or saying is rejected by many Jews in Israel and outside. He is basically an ideologically-driven person who supports Zionism and not Jews.

Moreover, he mocked UN Security Council resolutions that clearly state that Israel must withdraw from the lands it has occupied by force.

That he called settlements “part of Israel” and “a recognition of the reality” was an insult to the reason of the world in the world.

*Continued on page 2*

### U.S. protests: Trump supporters, counter-protesters rally at Georgia Capitol after recount

Trump’s supporters called for a recount of the election over the weekend outside the Georgia Capitol building — where they were met by scores of counterprotesters.

Hundreds of pro-Trump demonstrators gathered Saturday at the capitol building in Atlanta for a “Stop the Steal” rally in response to Georgia officials certifying President-elect Joe Biden’s win in the state, news station 11Alive reported.

“Stop the session!” crowds could be heard chanting in video posted to Twitter.

The demonstration was held across from anti-Trump protesters who had shown up for a “Refuse Fascism” march, the outlet reported.

The two dueling rallies were kept apart by a heavy police presence and barricades, Fox News reported.

No arrests had been reported as of Saturday afternoon, 11Alive reported.

Biden was determined to have won by a mar-

gin of 12,670 votes Friday after a hand recount in the state.

Meanwhile, Trump’s legal team has filed paperwork to appeal a federal judge’s ruling that struck down the campaign’s attempt to stop votes being certified in Pennsylvania.

Attorneys for the Trump campaign filed a notice of appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit on Sunday — a day before Pennsylvania’s 67 counties were set to certify their results and send them to state officials.

Judge Matthew Brann dismissed the campaign’s lawsuit Saturday.

The suit had sought to throw out millions of votes in the Keystone State, claiming election officials in heavily Democratic counties violated the equal protections clause under the Constitution by allowing voters to fix mail-in ballots that had problems — while mostly-Republican counties had not alerted voters about faulty ballots.

### COVID-19: economic pressure plundering nature

**BY FARANAK BAKHTIARI**

TEHRAN – Rising economic pressures and declining public revenues since the onset of the coronavirus outbreak have caused profiteers and poachers to once again attack natural resources and plunder the environment to make up for their income shortcomings.

Four carcasses of mouflon which were found in Golestan province in late November from 6 poachers shows that the isolation of nature due to the pandemic is not

a benefit for wildlife and cannot prevent greedy poachers from laying their hands on natural resources.

Mahmoud Shakiba, head of the provincial department of environment (DOE), said that despite the presence of DOE forces around the clock in the habitats of the province, poachers still take up illegal hunting.

Statistics of recent discoveries and arrests of poachers show that the link between the increase in poaching and the prevalence of coronavirus

needs further investigation, he highlighted.

Using people’s participation to help preserve wildlife is one way to protect nature from profiteers and poachers, he noted.

The restrictions that reduced the people’s entry into natural areas, gave unique tranquility to the animal and plant species, the result of which can increase the species’ reproduction and even save some endangered animals from extinction, he stated.

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### River flood swamps Sassanid-era dam in southwest Iran

TEHRAN – The rain-swollen river of Karun has submerged a significant ancient dam in southwest Iran. The Sassanid era (224–651) monument is one of the satellite sites situated adjacent to the UNESCO-registered Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System in Khuzestan province.

Water rose to the maximum height of Mizan (Valerian) Dam as Karun River overflowed its banks caused due to heavy rains, a phenomenon that the director of the World Heritage site calls as “natural.”

“No abnormalities have occurred in Mizan [Dam],” Mohammadreza Bahadori said on Monday.

“Due to the location and nature of Mizan Dam, it is quite natural for this dam to be submerged.”

“The nature of the Mizan dam is to divide and regulate water for Gargar River (a tributary stream branched from Karun) and this way, Mizan is considered a regulatory dam,” the official explained.

“It could occur several times a year after the [heavy] rains.....and for the time being we are waiting to have calm weather to start a dredging operation immediately after the conditions return to normal.”

The UNESCO-tagged Historical Hydraulic System involves the creation of two main diversion canals on the river Karun one of which, Gargar canal, is still in use providing water to the city of Shushtar via a series of tunnels that supply water to mills.

The ensemble, as a whole, demonstrates outstanding universal value as in its present form, it dates from the 3rd century CE, probably on older bases from the 5th century BC.

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### Traffic restriction aims to curb COVID-19

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control has issued a directive, banning private vehicles from 9:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. in cities which are on high alert in a bid to control the spread of coronavirus.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki has warned that the new restrictions are “the last chance for the (health) system to stand against” the virus.



## Advisor says Iran to continue defending Syria

**1 →** so adopting an impartial approach and not witnessing double standards is of great importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran," the career diplomat remarked.

"We believe that in the work of the Constitutional Committee, all parties are responsible and should be held accountable," Amir-Abdollahian pointed out.



UN Special Envoy for Syria Pedersen (L) talking to Amir-Abdollahian

He added that blaming the Syrian government is in conflict with the policy of neutrality.

The Islamic Republic was the first country to rush to Syria's assistance after the Arab nation came under the scourge of the Takfiri terrorist group of Daesh in 2014.

Iran has warned that it will deliver a "crushing response" to any party seeking to trouble the Islamic Republic's presence in the Arab country.

"Anyone, who could try to obstruct Iran's advisory presence in Syria will be served with a crushing response," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Sunday. The Israeli regime, he said, "knows this that the era of hitting and running is far over. It [therefore] treads carefully."

However, Tel Aviv's aggressive attitude is "irremediable" and can only be confronted with comprehensive resistance on every front where it seeks to create disturbances, Khatibzadeh added.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said earlier that all the "cruel and unfair" sanctions against Syria's government and nation must be lifted, not least at the time of the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

All unjust and illegal sanctions against the Syrian government and people must be lifted, particularly under the current conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Zarif said in a separate meeting with Pedersen in Tehran on Saturday.

He also criticized certain countries for obstructing the political resolution of the crisis in the Arab country.

"In recent years, good opportunities have arisen to end the crisis" in Syria, but they were squandered by certain states, Iran's top diplomat added.

## Judiciary chief asks UN to issue human rights resolution against Canada

**TEHRAN (FNA)** – Iran's Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi blasted Ottawa for sponsoring a human rights resolution against his country, saying that Canada is itself one of the main violators of human rights and a safe haven for criminals.

"Countries have understood that human rights has been seriously politically-tainted and has turned into an instrument to pressure the independent countries," Raisi said, addressing the judiciary officials in Tehran on Monday.



He added that most countries opposed the UN so-called human rights resolution against Iran, sponsored by Canada and supported by the US and Israel, and said, "Canada, itself, is a violator of human rights and a safe haven for the corrupters and criminals and a resolution should be issued against it."

Elsewhere, Raisi referred to Iran's efforts and sacrifices to block the transit of illicit drugs to Europe and the US, voicing surprise at the UN and the western states' move to issue resolution against Tehran instead of appreciating the country.

An anti-Iran resolution was passed with 79 'yes' votes at the third committee of the UN General Assembly on Wednesday, even though 32 countries had voted against it and 64 others abstained from voting.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh blasted Canada for sponsoring the anti-Iran human rights resolution, calling on Ottawa to stop compliance with the US in sanctions and pressures if it really cares for the Iranian people.

Khatibzadeh deplored the UN resolution, drafted and proposed by Canada, as a reshuffle of "groundless" claims about the Islamic Republic's human rights situation, saying it instead proves the "hypocrisy" of the "notorious" group of countries that voted for it.

He described the resolution as "unacceptable", saying it "lacks any legal grounds and effect".

Khatibzadeh noted that the move made by the Ottawa government and other sympathizers of the resolution is a clear example of "abusing lofty human rights concepts and values in order to achieve short-sighted political objectives."

He expressed regret that the Canadian government is using human rights and its international mechanisms as a means for achieving its goals and political ambitions.

"Such unconstructive actions will not only fail to help promote the status of human rights and respect for human rights at the international level, but will only trigger moves to form negative clichés against, and attach political stigmas to independent countries," the spokesman added.

# Iran has the most transparent nuclear program in the world, says envoy

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** – Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, says Iran has the most transparent nuclear program in the world.

"Iran is the most transparent country in terms of its nuclear activities. We have had more than a fifth of the world's total inspections by the [International Atomic Energy] Agency (IAEA)," Gharibabadi said in an interview with Khabar Online published on Sunday.

"It's because of this level of cooperation and transparency that we do not consider the remarks of some countries as sincere," he added.

He said Iran's latest nuclear move was the injection of uranium hexafluoride, or UF6, into the IR-2m centrifuges, which was dealt with at a quarterly meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors.

However, the envoy continued, after that the European troika (France, Britain and Germany) issued another statement against Iran and accused it of violating the nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Iranian ambassador criticized European parties to the deal for paying lip service to the illegal U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, while continuing to express concern about Iran for reducing its commitments in a tit-for-tat measure.

The JCPOA was reached in Vienna on



14 July 2015 between Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, and also the European Union. Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA was deplored by all other parties to the deal.

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after Trump's withdrawal, Iran began to gradually reduce its nuclear commitments according to the JCPOA, citing the other parties' failure to secure its interests under the deal. However, Tehran has repeatedly said that it will return to its commitments if the other parties can protect its inter-

ests against the United States' "toughest ever" sanctions.

In a joint statement on Thursday, the three European signatories to the JCPOA reiterated their commitment to the preservation and full implementation of the JCPOA.

"We E3 have worked hard to preserve the agreement. We have been consistently clear that we regret the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and re-imposition of U.S. sanctions," the three countries' statement read.

They accused Iran of making "numerous, serious violations of its nuclear commitments" for a year and a half now and

## Zarif to attend 2020 Afghanistan Conference

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will attend the virtual 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

The Geneva conferences for Afghanistan are held once in every four years with a focus on the commitment of world countries to establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan and its development, Khatibzadeh said, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

66 countries and 32 international organizations are expected to attend this year's conference, which will be held virtually because of the COVID-19 restrictions.

The conference is scheduled to take place on November 23 and 24.

The conference plenary will take place on November 24, with side events on November 23. The conference is expected to involve civil society representatives as well. It was last held in 2016 in Brussels and in Tokyo in 2012.

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the quadrennial pledging conference is an im-

portant opportunity for Afghanistan and the international community to commit to common objectives for promoting sustainable development, prosperity and peace in the country.

A central aim of the conference is to determine shared development objectives and commitments for the period 2021–24 for the Afghan government and the international community.

The shared development objectives will guide development cooperation and provide financial support for Afghanistan. In addition to the pledges of financial support, a new development framework, a joint political declaration and a new aid architecture supporting Afghanistan's development needs and priorities are the anticipated outcomes of the conference.

Iran has strongly supported talks between the government and the Taliban without foreign interference. Zarif has also appointed an envoy for the purpose.

Chairman of Afghan peace council Abdullah Abdullah made a three-day visit to Iran last month to hold talks with top Iranian officials.

In his meeting with Zarif at the Foreign Ministry, Iran's



chief diplomat reaffirmed Tehran's support for the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the peace process under the leadership and management of Afghans, and the agreements among the participants in the intra-Afghan talks.

Zarif also admired Abdullah for his participation in the political process and assuming responsibility to run Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation.

## Iranian envoy, Yemeni FM discuss Saudi war on Yemen

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** – Iranian Ambassador to Yemen Hassan Irlou says he has discussed Iran's stance with regard to the Saudi-led aggression against Yemen during a meeting with Yemeni Foreign Minister Hisham Sharaf.

"In the meeting with Mr. Hisham Sharaf, the foreign minister of Yemen, Iran's stance with regard to support for all international efforts aiming to terminate the aggression in Yemen, which is the worst humanitarian disaster, was discussed," Irlou wrote in a tweet on Sunday.

He also said that the two sides discussed Tehran's willingness to grant more scholarship to Yemeni students to study in Iranian universities.

On Saturday, Irlou highlighted the Islamic Republic's full support for the Yemeni people,



Ambassador Irlou holding talks with Yemeni FM Sharaf (R)

saying Iran is determined to develop its ties with the Arab country.

Iran will spare no effort to support the Yemeni people and transfer experiences in all fields, he said in a meeting with Speaker of the House of Representatives of Yemen

Yahya Ali al-Raei.

He pointed to granting of more scholarship to Yemeni students in all fields and promised to develop bilateral relations in various fields.

Yahya Ali al-Raei, for his part, appreciated Iran's role in supporting the Yemeni people and standing by the country against the aggressors, stressing that his nation will never forget Iran's honorable position.

In a tweet on Thursday, Irlou had strongly deplored the Saudi regime for 6 years of aggression against the Yemeni people and destruction of the infrastructures of the country, emphasizing that the country's people will stand steadfastly against the aggressive and criminal Saudi regime till gaining victory.

Irlou has recently been appointed as Iran's ambassador to Yemen. On November 4, he submitted his credentials to Mahdi al-Mashat,

## Riyadh thinks Iran will gain power if JCPOA survives: analyst

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** – A senior political analyst has said Saudi Arabia believes that a U.S. return to the 2015 nuclear deal will strengthen Iran and will boost Tehran's influence in the region.

The Persian Gulf's Arab states led by Saudi Arabia regarded the nuclear deal as an agreement that could reduce Iran's tensions with the West and that's why they attempted to destroy the deal, Davoud Hermidas Bavand said in an interview with IRNA published on Monday.

"Although Biden's intention is not to return to the same nuclear deal which was signed in 2015, but countries such as Saudi Arabia, the (United Arab) Emirates and Israel disagree with any agreement," Bavand added.

Since Trump assumed office in January 2017, Israel, Saudi



Arabia and certain other Arab countries have pushed for a harsher U.S. foreign policy against Iran. They supported Trump's

withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal – which was clinched under Barack Obama – and cheered the U.S. president for his subsequent sanctions on Tehran that caused more than two hundred billions of dollars in losses.

The nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015 between Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, and also the European Union. Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA was deplored by all other parties to the deal.

In the meantime, hopes to revitalize the nuclear deal were raised after Biden was elected president. Biden has promised to "change course" and rejoin the accord "as a starting point for follow-on negotiations" if Iran returns to compliance with it.

## The world looks as Pompeo mocks international law

**1 →** According to CNN, in the Golan Heights, Pompeo visited Mount Bental and said, "This is a part of Israel and a central part of Israel."

One wonders how unashamedly he is manipulating the facts by calling the stolen lands as part of Israel.

His maddening remarks that settlements are a recognition of reality is nothing except pursuing a new Machiavellianism in the 21st century. This is like killing a person with prior planning and then try to say it is a reality and the murderer should go unpunished.

In his tour of the West Bank, the chief diplomat who will be remembered as the promoter of motivator of illegal

acts, said, "Today the United States Department of State stands strongly to the recognition that settlements can be done in a way that are lawful and appropriate and proper."

According to Pompeo's ideology, now any country can capture and annex another country's land and then describe it as legal and justifiable. According to this ideology, violation of international law is permissible and justifiable.

This man that Trump picked as his chief diplomat adopted such an annoying approach toward Iran's nuclear accord backed by the UN Security Council. He and his master Trump, who was a disaster for the world, demonized Iran's legal nuclear work and adopted a Machiavellian ideology toward

Iran within their "maximum pressure" policy.

The inaction by the international community in four years of Trump's presidency encouraged his administration to replace international law with violation of international law. Trump and his secretary of state's records have also done a great blow to the Republicans.

It was essential that the world react strongly to Pompeo's visits to the stolen Palestinian and Syrian lands. The countries across the world should feel assured that acting passively in the face of such acts, which are a flagrant violation of international law, will make them look impotent and shameful in the eyes of the next generations.



SPORTS

Iran names 12 players for FIBA Asia Cup Qualifiers

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Mehran Shahintab has named his 12-man team for Window 2 of FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers.

Iran are scheduled to meet Saudi Arabia and Syria on Nov. 27 and 30, respectively in Doha, Qatar.

**Iran squad:**

*Mohammad Torabi, Mohammad Jamshidi, Mohammad Hassanzadeh, Hamed Hosseinzadeh, Mike Rostampour, Arman Zanganeh, Aaron Geramipoor, Sajad Mashayekhi, Meysam Mirzaei, Behnam Yakhchali, Saeid Davarpanah and Sina Vahedi*

Sichuan Blue Whales center Hamed Haddadi failed to join Iran due to China's travel restrictions. Samad Nikkhah Bahrami also missed the matches because he has recently recovered from Covid-19.

The team will travel to Doha Monday night.

Iran are going to play a friendly match with Qatari club Al Rayyan in Doha as part of preparation for the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers.

There are 24 teams competing in the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers. Once the three windows of the Qualifiers conclude, the top two teams in each group will qualify directly to Asia Cup 2021. The six last-placed teams in each group are eliminated.

Meanwhile, the six third-placed teams in each group will then play in a separate qualifying tournament. Teams will be placed into two different groups of three teams. The top two teams of those respective groups will then lock in their spots at Asia Cup 2021, completing the 16-team roster who will also compete in the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023 Asian Qualifiers.

War of statements in IPL

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Just two weeks after start of **d e s k** Iran Professional League (IPL), the teams have started to release statements against each other.

In the first match of the week, Persepolis protested the referee due to Kamal Kamyabinia's sending off.

Esteghlal also released a statement and protested the Refereeing Committee of Iran Football Federation for choosing Mohammadhossein Zahedifar as referee for their match against Foolad.

Esteghlal suffered a late 2-1 loss against Foolad and their head coach Mahmoud Fekri used bad language in front of a TV camera and the video footage quickly went viral on social media.

Shortly after, Foolad club released a statement and asked the federation's Disciplinary Committee to ban the coach for insulting their coach and players.

Esteghlal also answered the Foolad club by releasing a statement. Zob Ahan on Monday threatened the football federation to pull out of this season's Iran Professional League in a dispute over refereeing's mistakes.

Shahr Khodro coach Mehdi Rahmati slammed Paykan for time wasting and the Tehran based club in response to the claims released a statement and accuse him of spreading immorality in football.

Last year, the Iran Football Federation had said it would use VAR for the 2020/21 season but it has failed to launch the technology and the teams are protesting the decisions.

It may have been the most unsatisfying reason and the federation has to solve the problem as soon as possible.

Alekno pens contract with Iran volleyball federation

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Vladimir Alekno penned a contract **d e s k** with the Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) on Monday.

Alekno, who led Russia to a bronze and gold medal in the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games respectively, was chosen by IRIVF technical committee as new Iran coach last week.

The 53-year old tactician Alekno, who replaced Montenegrin Igor Kolakovic, will start his work on Nov. 21. He will be assisted by Tomaso Totolo, the Iran Volleyball Federation announced on Tuesday. Alekno will lead the reigning Asian champions at the 2021 FIVB Volleyball Nations League and at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Iran are grouped with hosts Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A. The other pool comprises of Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France and Tunisia.

IPL Matchday 2 talking points

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — There are plenty of talking points **d e s k** to catch up on as the Iran Professional League (IPL) returned this week after the international break.

It was the second week of the league and it would be extremely rash to judge about what will happen in the future. It was a week full of controversies after leaked video which went viral showing Esteghlal coach Mahmoud Fekri who insulted his opponents at the end of the match.

Here are some talking points of the IPL weekend.

**Controversial Matchday 2**

Esteghlal lost 2-1 to their host Foolad Khuzestan in Ahvaz on Friday. Javad Nekounam, head coach of Foolad, was successful against his former club and gained the first win of the season in an important game. In the controversial match, Esteghlal striker Cheick Diabate argued with Fekri when he was supposed to go to the field as a substitute. Mohammad Daneshger, the Blues' defender, was sidelined for a few minutes due to injury, but no one on the Esteghlal's bench noticed his absence! And finally, the release of the video of Fekri was enough to spark a war of statements between the two clubs!

**Angry coach**

Persepolis, champions of the four past editions and the finalists of the 2020 AFC Champions League, won their first match of the season with a narrow victory (1-0) over visiting team Sanat Naft.

The talking point of the match was what Persepolis coach Yahya Golmohammadi did at the end of the match. The Reds' head coach, who is well-known for his calmness, was nervous during the game. He was shown a red card after kicking the ball with anger and protesting the referee's decision. He will be absent in the next match against Naft Masjed Soleyman.

**The Nigerian effect**

Godwin Mensha scored a brace in a 2-0 away win for Gol Gohar to secure the top of the table for Sirjan based team. The Nigerian striker's performance made him the top scorer of the league with three goals. Amir Ghalenoei's side is the only team with 100 per cent of the points at the end of the second week. The low quality of Shohada Stadium's artificial turf in Rafsanjan was the match's negative point, which provoked protests from Gol Gohar officials.

Saudi Arabia treading on dangerous ground as secret meeting revealed

**P O L I T I C A L** **TEHRAN** — In a highly **d e s k** controversial move, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman held on Sunday a secret meeting with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Saudi city of Neom.

Hebrew media said that the Israeli prime minister did not use an official plane. Instead, he used a private plane belonging to businessman Udi Angel, which he has used for past diplomatic trips. The plane left Israel at 5 p.m. on Sunday and returned after midnight, according to The Jerusalem Post. The Israeli newspaper also said that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Israel's Mossad chief Yossi Cohen also met with Netanyahu and bin Salman.

But Saudi Arabia denied that such a meeting took place on Sunday.

"I have seen press reports about a purported meeting between HRH the Crown Prince and Israeli officials during the recent visit by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. No such meeting occurred. The only officials present were American and Saudi," Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan said in a tweet on Monday noon.

But the Saudi denial did not reduce the damage to Saudi Arabia's reputation. Social media users in the Arab world, especially in Palestine, strongly criticized Riyadh for embracing Netanyahu, after the Hebrew media broke out the news that the Israeli prime minister has secretly traveled to Saudi Arabia and met with the country's crown prince. Some Twitter users even took the Saudi denial with a pinch of salt, saying Netanyahu could be called American because he has been an American citizen twice, and has twice renounced his citizenship, according to his former aide, Michael Oren.

The Saudi foreign minister rebuffed press reports about the Netanyahu-bin Salman meeting even though many leading news organizations have confirmed the meeting through their Saudi sources. For example, The Wall Street Journal confirmed the meeting. "Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Saudi Arabia's crown prince in the kingdom on Sunday, according to two Saudi government advisers, in their first known meeting and amid a U.S. push to normalize ties between the longtime foes,"



the WSJ said, adding that Pompeo and Cohen attended the meeting.

Israeli officials also confirmed the meeting, according to Israeli news website Ynetnews, which reported that Israeli Education Minister Yoav Galant on Monday called the talks an "amazing achievement".

"The very fact the meeting happened, and was announced publicly, even if semi-officially for now, is a matter of great importance," Galant said.

In addition, Netanyahu himself refused to confirm or deny the meeting.

The alleged meeting came a day after the Saudi foreign minister announced that his country supports a conditional peace with Israel. In remarks during a virtual interview on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders Summit hosted by the kingdom, bin Farhan pointed out that Riyadh supports full normalization with Israel, but first, a permanent and complete peace agreement should be approved that guarantees the Palestinians their state with dignity.

Saudi Arabia is being urged by Pompeo to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel just like what two of its close allies – Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates – did earlier this year.



In an October meeting with his Saudi counterpart, Pompeo called on Saudi Arabia to normalize relations with Israel. "We hope Saudi Arabia will consider normalizing its relationships as well, and we want to thank them for the assistance they've had in the success of the Abraham Accords so far," the U.S. secretary of state said at the time.

Following the Neom meeting, Pompeo said he held "constructive" talks with bin Salman, but he did not say whether these talks included normalization with Israel.

"Constructive visit with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in NEOM today. The United States and Saudi Arabia have come a long way since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz Al Saud first laid the foundation for our ties 75 years ago," Pompeo said in a tweet on Monday.

Pompeo has played a crucial role in brokering normalization deals between Israel and Bahrain and the UAE.

The UAE and Bahrain signed normalization deals with Israel in mid-September in a move that sent a diplomatic shockwave across the region and brought them into disrepute. Many Muslim countries around the world strongly condemned the recognition

of Israel by the two Arab countries, which have never fought wars with Israel and do not share borders with it. These deals were signed with the behind-the-scenes support of Saudi Arabia, which itself is widely expected to normalize relations with Israel.

Last week, Mossad's chief said in closed talks that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was awaiting the U.S. presidential elections in order to present a "gift" to the elected president, according to Aljazeera.

"There is a very great effort in the Saudi arena, great pressure. We hope that something will bear fruit. It seems that the Saudis are waiting for the American elections to present a gift to the elected president," Cohen said.

But the Saudi leadership seems to be fearing the backlash of its own people as well as public opinion in the Arab world, which overwhelmingly support boycotting Israel. In early October, Saudi news network Alarabiya aired a three-part interview with the influential former Saudi national security advisor Bandar bin Soltan in which he castigated the Palestinian leadership for failing to take advantage of the Saudi efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This interview was widely seen as an attempt to delegitimize the Palestinian cause in the eye of Saudi youth and pave the way for a Saudi-Israeli normalization, which the Americans and Israelis see as a great prize.

But even if the public opinion in Saudi Arabia came to terms with the normalization, bin Salman will get into trouble because millions of ordinary people in the Arab world will view him as a ruler who handed over the control of Muslim sanctities to the Zionists. In addition, bin Salman himself said that his life will be in danger if he cuts a peace deal with Israel. The Saudi crown prince told Israeli-American billionaire Haim Saban he would fear for his life if he struck a normalization deal with Israel, Haaretz reported. Bin Salman said following in the steps of the UAE and Bahrain would get him killed by his own people and others. Therefore, bin Salam knows for sure that any normalization deal between Riyadh and Tel Aviv would amount to playing with fire and political suicide.

Biden will not lift Iran sanctions, MP predicts

**P O L I T I C A L** **TEHRAN** — Hossein Mirzayee, an **d e s k** Iranian lawmaker, has predicted that a Biden administration would not lift sanctions on Iran.

"Sanctions are not an issue that will be lifted when Biden takes office, because containing Iran is central to American policy," Mirzayee told the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA) on Sunday.

He added, "The Americans' policy has always been based on containing the Islamic Republic of Iran in various fields such as regional influence and missile capabilities."

However, the lawmaker pointed to the difference between Democrats and Republicans in terms of their ways to counter Iran. According to Mirzayee, Democrats and Republicans both seek to undermine the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

The lawmaker also pointed to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal – formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – as an experience that will remain vivid in the memory of the Iranian people, reminding them of the American "lies and deceit".

Mirzayee called on the U.S. to lift sanctions on Iran. "If White House officials intend to negotiate genuinely, they should lift the sanctions in the first place and then compensate the JCPOA [failure]," the lawmaker remarked.

Earlier on Saturday, a member of the Iranian Parliament's presiding board, Alireza Salimi, also called on the U.S. to make up for the losses Iran incurred following Donald Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal. Salimi said Washington and its European



allies should pay Iran \$200 billion in compensation for the JCPOA failure.

"The withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the non-fulfillment of JCPOA commitments by the Europeans have caused damage of between 150 and 200 billion dollars to our country," Salimi told ICANA.

According to the legislator, the U.S. and Europe have created a kind of division of labor not to implement the nuclear deal. "And now, if the U.S. wants to rejoin the JCPOA, it should compensate Iran," he said.

Iran has called on the U.S. to unconditionally return to its commitments under the JCPOA.

"The U.S. is definitely in no position to set out condi-

tions for us. As a UN member and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the U.S. is duty-bound to implement Resolution 2231. If the resolution is implemented, the sanctions will be removed. Iran has announced that in that case, it will resume honoring its commitments under the JCPOA," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said. "Thus, first, if the U.S. meets its commitments under Resolution 2231, we will fulfill ours under the JCPOA. Second, if the U.S. seeks to join the JCPOA again, we are ready to negotiate the terms and conditions of Washington's membership in the deal."

The foreign minister made the remarks in an interview with the Iran newspaper that was published last week.

Speculations about a possible thaw in Iran-U.S. relations have gained momentum after U.S. leading news organizations projected Biden to win the U.S. November presidential election. Biden himself had said that he would rejoin the JCPOA if he won the election.

"I will offer Tehran a credible path back to diplomacy. If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States would rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations. With our allies, we will work to strengthen and extend the nuclear deal's provisions, while also addressing other issues of concern," Biden said in a September op-ed for CNN.

But Biden did not make any remarks about his Iran policy since the election. He did not say how he would rejoin the JCPOA.

Iranian, Syrian foreign ministers hold phone talks

**P O L I T I C A L** **TEHRAN** — Foreign **d e s k** Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke by phone on Sunday with his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad to congratulate him on his appointment as the foreign minister of Syria.

"During the phone call, the top Iranian diplomat congratulated Mekdad on being appointed as the foreign minister of the Syrian Arab Republic. He once again offered condolences on the demise of Walid al-Muallem, the former foreign minister of Syria, and underlined the continuation of strategic cooperation between Tehran and Damascus," the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

Mekdad was appointed on Sunday as Syria's foreign minister following the death of the country's top diplomat Walid al-Muallem. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued presidential decrees appointing Mekdad as foreign minister, Bashar al-Jaafari as deputy foreign minister, and Bassam al-Sabbagh as Syria's permanent representative to the United Nations.

Iran has expressed sympathy with the people and government of Syria over the passing of al-Muallem. In a message addressed to Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Syrian Arab Republic Hossein Arnous, Zarif expressed condolences on the passing of Foreign Minister Muallem, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday morning.

"I received the news of the passing of the late Walid al-Muallem, Syria's Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and with great regret and sadness," Zarif said in the message, offering his condolences to Arnous, the family of the late foreign minister, and his colleagues in the Syrian Foreign Ministry.

Zarif praised al-Muallem's role in serving his country, saying that the late foreign minister "played important role in serving and defending the national interests and security of Syria."

Several other Iranian officials, including Ali Akbar Velayati, an advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on international affairs, issued a statement



offering condolences on the passing of al-Muallem.

On Sunday, the chief Iranian diplomat also met with United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen to discuss the latest developments related to the Syria crisis.

In a statement on Sunday, the Foreign Ministry said in the meeting Iran's chief diplomat touched upon attempts by certain countries to undermine the trend of the political settlement of Syria issues.

"Good opportunities emerged in recent years to end the Syria crisis, but each time we saw some countries try to

neutralize the attempts made and to ruin those chances," the statement quoted Zarif as saying.

The Iranian foreign minister also highlighted the necessity of lifting cruel and unfair sanctions against the Syrians, particularly amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Pedersen, in turn, presented a report on the latest status of the Syrian Constitutional Committee as well as his efforts for the committee to hold its next meeting.

Pederson also met with Ali Asghar Khaji, an assistant to the Iranian foreign minister for special political affairs.

During the meeting, Khaji criticized Western countries which did not participate in the International Conference on Return of Syrian Refugees, which took place recently in Damascus, according to Syria's state news agency SANA.

"The Western countries, which claim to support humanitarian issues, have made political goals and they tried to hinder the convening of the International Conference on Return of Syrian Refugees."



## Aquaculture development to materialize surge in production, boost non-oil export

**1→** The latest report released by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) shows that the country's fishery export has risen 10 percent in terms of value, and four percent in terms of weight, during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21), compared to the same period of time in the past year.



Some 12 aquatic species are already bred in Iran and the figure is planned to reach 17 by the end of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (March 2021).

Among the plans and programs that the country is implementing in the present year to develop the aquaculture industry, it could be referred to the continuous monitoring of fishery exports, evaluating and monitoring of the performance of provinces, holding specialized desks in TPO to release related reports and discuss the competitive advantages of the products to be exported, and recognizing new export markets.

## Chabahar Free Zone laying ground to attract investors

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The managing director of Chabahar Free Zone Organization said that through implementation of development programs, this organization is preparing the ground for the attraction of investors.

Abdul-Rahim Kordi said these programs are creating trust for the investors in the zone.

"Through implementing railway, gas-supplying, and port development projects in Chabahar, we will soon witness great development of the zone", the official noted.

Lying on the coast of the Gulf of Oman in Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Chabahar is the country'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, so the government has some major projects to create multi-dimensional transportation facilities in this port.

The port has two significant docks, namely Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari, which are mostly referred to as ports, i.e. Shahid Beheshti Port and Shahid Kalantari Port.

Development of Shahid Beheshti Port, construction of Chabahar International Airport, and building Chabahar-Zahedan (center of Sistan-Baluchestan Province) railway are three of the major projects to make Chabahar a complete logistics platform.



In addition, Chabahar Free Zone has been suggested as a transit and logistic gateway for Iran's domestic market which, while reducing the cost and time of transportation it has also provided profitable economic opportunities in the development of logistics facilities.

Chabahar Free Zone is a multi-purpose zone with educational, industrial, tourism and transportation sectors.

Chabahar Free Zone Organization has a plan for the development of specialized industrial parks with the participation of the private sector in the fields of industry, logistics, education, healthcare, tourism, etc., which the establishment of logistics industrial park is followed in the framework of upstream programs and documents.

At present Chabahar Free Zone is considered as a transit gateway in eastern Iran and based on national plans and also the interest shown by international parties, it is noteworthy as a center for providing logistics support, transportation and transit services.

Chabahar Free Zone with the aim of facilitating trade and minimizing transportation costs and focusing on services has allocated 150 hectares of land to create a logistics industrial park. This industrial park will be assigned to the international investors and or Iran-foreign joint venture.

Considering the geographical location, this industrial park can be connected to the Chabahar railway and will be established to have full support services. Centers such as public warehouses, cold storages, special warehouses for storing liquid and bulk goods, container warehouses, required laboratories, as well as personnel service facilities have been predicted.

Chabahar-Zahedan railway is going to go operational in the next Iranian calendar year (begins in March 2021).

Considering the important role that the free zones play in promoting the country's export and employment, Iran is seriously pursuing development of its existing free zones and establishment of new zones as well.

More development measures in this field have been taking since the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions on the Iranian economy in November 2018, as Iran is reducing its dependence on the oil income while elevating its domestic production and non-oil exports.

Although the sanctions have disrupted Iran's economic activities, they could not impede the development of Iranian free zones; in fact, the development of these zones has been even accelerated.

Many strides made for increasing activities in the free zones have played a significant part in boosting the country's non-oil exports and brought prosperity in the other economic sectors.

The secretary of Free Zones High Council also said, "We have started the creation of some infrastructure for the production activities since the past year which will increase production and investment making in these zones."

Development of the existing free zones and establishment of new zones is currently one of the major economic approaches of Iran and in a bid to attract more investments to these zones Iranian government offers various incentives to the investors.

Tax exemption is one of those incentives which has been offered for more than a decade to the investors in the free zones.

Such incentives have encouraged investment making in these zones.

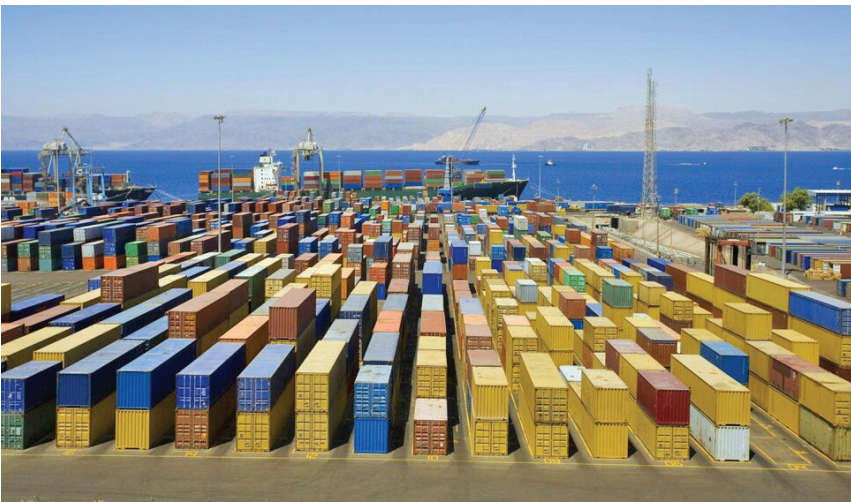
# Non-oil trade exceeds \$44b in 8 months

**1→** The exports also experienced fall of 14 percent and 19 percent in terms of weight and value, respectively.

Noting the downward trend of the country's foreign trade is ending and the trade is getting back to normal, the official said: "As we announced in previous months, fortunately, the downward trend of our country's exports is approaching normal conditions month by month, and we hope to have better conditions in terms of exports by the end of the year."

Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were Iraq with over \$5.3 billion worth of exports, China with the same amount, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$2.7 billion, and Turkey with \$1.6 billion as well as Afghanistan with \$1.5 billion.

According to the IRICA head, the top



five sources of imports during this period were China with \$6 billion, the UAE with \$5.4 billion, Turkey with \$2.6 billion, India with \$1.4 billion, and Germany with \$1.1 billion worth of imports.

Most of the imported goods into the country in the mentioned time span were basic goods or raw materials, Mirashrafi stressed.

Also in the said period, 4,471,000 tons of goods were transited through Iran to the neighboring countries, showing a decrease of 15 percent compared to the same period last year.

Like all other countries around the world, Iran's trade with its foreign partners has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, however, the situation is getting back to normal and the country's trade borders are opening one by one.

## Annual automobile exports hit \$5.7m

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 1,300 automobiles valued at \$5,722,007 in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

The destinations for the mentioned products were nine countries namely Hong Kong, Taiwan, Syria, UAE, Spain, China, Iraq, and Turkey, according to Ruhollah Latifi.

He pointed out that Iraq with \$3,122,900, Azerbaijan with \$1,159,400, Syria with \$981,825 of imports were the top three destinations for Iranian cars.

Hong Kong with \$116,862, Spain with \$96,362, Taiwan with \$79,521, China with \$36,600, Turkey with \$7,000, and

the UAE with \$4,662 were other buyers of the mentioned products from Iran, Latifi added.

Car manufacturing in Iran rose 23.4 percent during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21), compared to the same period of time in the past year, the data released by the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade showed.

During this period, 425,925 passenger cars were produced in the country, registering a growth of 21.9 percent compared to the first six months of the previous year.

The production of trucks reached 39,519 units in the said time span, which has increased by 40.4 percent compared to the last year's same period.



## Iran's 9-month trade with China stands at \$11.19b

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran's trade with its top trading partner China stood at \$11.19 billion in the first nine months of 2020, registering a 38.5 percent decline compared to the same period in 2019.

Iran-China trade in the January-September period of 2019 exceeded \$18.17 billion, data released by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China showed.

According to the data, both China's exports to and imports from Iran have decreased in the first nine months of 2020, but the decline in Chinese imports from Iran has been much greater than China's exports to Iran.

Iran and China have had a long history of cultural, political, and economic exchanges along the Silk Road since at least 200 BC, and possibly earlier. To this day, China and Iran have developed a friendly economic and strategic partnership.

However, in the current year, the trade between the two countries experienced a significant decline mainly due to the negative impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and also the U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil industry.

Approximately 80 percent of China's total imports from Iran are oil and the rest



are mineral and chemical products.

China Customs had previously announced that the trade between Iran and China reached \$5.26 billion in the first four months of 2020, 40 percent less than the same period last year.

As reported, the two countries' trade turnover stood at \$8.76 billion in the last year's four-month period.

Iranian imports from the Asian country reached \$2.92 billion in the January-April period, indicating a three percent rise compared to the same time span in 2019.

The commercial exchange between the two countries stood at \$3.94 billion during the first three months of 2020 to register a 30.4 percent decline compared with the corresponding period of 2019.

Iran's exports to China totaled \$1.81 billion in Q1 2020, indicating a 52.7 percent year-on-year decrease.

## Exports to CIS countries amount to \$692m in H1

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran exported \$692 million worth of commodities to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) during the first six months of the current Iranian year (March 20-September 21), the portal of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

According to Behrouz Olfat, director of Europe and America Department at TPO, among the 12 CIS countries, Iran's exports to Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Moldova in the mentioned period increased compared to the same period last year, while the exports to Georgia, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan experienced a decline.

"The outbreak of coronavirus and consequently health restrictions and border closures in some countries in addition to the border disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region as well as the U.S. sanctions have been effective in reducing our country's exports to the Commonwealth of Independent States," Olfat explained.

Iran's imports from the mentioned region in the first six months of this year were estimated at \$811 million, down two percent from the same period last

year, although imports from Russia and Ukraine increased slightly due to imports of basic agricultural items, according to the official.

Iran exported a total of \$13.566 billion to its trade partners in the mentioned period.

The country exported a total of 4.79 million tons of goods worth more than \$1.75 billion to the Commonwealth of Independent States during the last Iranian year (March 2019-March 2020) to register a 133 percent rise in value compared with the year before, according to the spokesperson of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

"Our main export destinations in the CIS region were Russia with more than \$457 million, Azerbaijan with \$429 million and Armenia with \$231 million," Rouhollah Latifi said in September.

The official noted that around 1.17 million tons of commodities worth \$1.56 billion were imported from the CIS states last year, registering a 10 percent year-on-year decline.

Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Moldova are permanent members and Turkmenistan has observer status in CIS.

## NIDC digs 82 oil, gas wells in 8 months

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 82 oil and gas wells during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), according to an official with the company.

Saeed Akbari, the acting director of NIDC's digging operation department, said the drilled wells consisted of 23 development/appraisal wells, 57 workover wells, and two exploratory wells.

He said 45,460 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells.

After the U.S. reimposition of sanctions against Iran, indigenizing the know-how for the manufacturing of the parts and equipment applied in different industrial sectors is one of the major strategies that the Islamic Republic has been strongly following up to reach self-reliance and nullify the sanctions.

Oil, gas, and petrochemical industries have outstanding performances in this due, with indigenizing the knowledge for manufacturing many parts and equipment that were previously imported.

Among different sectors of the mentioned industries, drilling could be mentioned as a prominent example in this regard.

National Iranian Drilling Company managed to indi-



genize the knowledge for manufacturing 6,000 drilling equipment in collaboration with domestic manufacturers and engineers in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

Before this success, the technology for manufacturing the mentioned equipment was in the possession of a handful of foreign companies.

The equipment indigenized by NIDC includes drilling mud pumps, blowout preventers, traction motors, draw-

works, drilling fluid recycling systems, mission centrifugal pumps, top drives, and drilling rig slow circulation rate pressure systems.

The company has also managed to indigenize the know-how for manufacturing 242 parts highly-applied in the drilling industry during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21).

In order to indigenize the technology to manufacture these parts, NIDC inked six research deals with domestic universities and knowledge-based companies.

At the beginning of the current Iranian year, NIDC Managing Director Abdollah Mousavi had said that his company's performance will be more outstanding in this year, which is named the year of surge in production.

The official's saying has already come true, as his company managed to indigenize the know-how for manufacturing some significant parts, and also in completing the digging operations sooner than the schedule.

Holding 70 onshore and offshore drilling rigs as well as equipment and facilities for offering integrated technical and engineering services, the National Iranian Drilling Company accounts for a major part of drilling exploration as well as appraisal/development wells in Iran.

As previously announced, the company has dug over 240 oil and gas wells across the country in the past two years.

## TEDPIX rises 16,000 points on Monday

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 16,682 points, or one percent, to 1.375 million on Monday.

Over 11.816 billion securities worth 117.411 trillion rials (about \$2.795 billion) were traded in the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index rose 17,734 points,

and the second market's index gained 12,844 points.

TEDPIX gained 124,000 points, or 10 percent, to 1.345 million points during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on November 20).

Since the week ended on August 14, the TSE, which is Iran's major stock exchange,

witnessed drop of its main index every week, except for the week ended on September 18, the week ended on November 6, and the previous week.

TEDPIX had hit the record high of two million points on August 2, and while it had been experiencing an unprecedented trend of rising for some months, the index



has witnessed several weekly drops since mid-August.



# Syria: The complicated scene

By Abir Bassam

It is a dirty war that has been going on in Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Almost nine and a half tragic years have passed. The three countries were subjected to all kinds of terror and brutally destroyed. Actually, what has been going on is a world war! All weapons were used and tested and many countries were involved. It was a real dirty war, in which the West and the Americans and their allies in the region have used the worst kind of men: a group of collaborators and barbaric terrorists.

The worst kinds of mercenaries from all over the world were sent to Syria. They practiced the ugliest inhumane deeds: they decapitated heads, literally ate hearts, and burned people alive to death.

These groups were directly led by generals from the U.S., France, and Turkey. This information was supported by different informed resources that reported capturing French, British, and Turkish officers since 2015, in particular, during the invasion of Idlib. The district was invaded by a tenth of thousands of terrorists from Nusra, especially its group Fateh al-Sham which is directly supported and trained by Turkey, and Ahrar al-Sham which was directly supported by the Americans. The invasion was directly led by the Turkish tank battalions and the NATO alliances.

By December 2015, the northeast of Syria was also invaded by another terrorist group, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS]. ISIS was created with the utmost attention of Hillary Clinton, during Barack Obama's administration. This was revealed by Donald Trump during his election campaign in 2016. ISIS swept over the al-Jazeera region and extended to Palmira through the Syrian Desert and occupied Homos, the biggest Syrian district. It was directly protected by the American extending military bases in northern Syria and the eastern base in al-Tanf. ISIS attacked both the Syrian government forces and the opposition factions.

The plan was to allow ISIS invasion of northern-eastern Syria territories and western-northern Iraqi territories in order to terminate the opposition factions in the region. It was carefully planned by Obama's administration and in particular his vice president Joe Biden, the new president of the United States of America.

Under the pretense of fighting terrorism, the Americans were back in Iraq and restored bases in Iraq, built new ones in Syria and reestablished new militia groups in the area of the northeast, mainly Kurdish groups. They were trained and equipped by the Americans. For the U.S., it was a necessary step to launch a Kurdish federalism on the Syrian territories.

Nonetheless, the U.S. had set the return plan before withdrawing from Iraq in 2010. Upon its departure, the American administration empowered the al-Qaeda group in Iraq, and supported its existence, as Trump declared and accused Hillary Clinton of being the mastermind behind it. ISIS was basically the American approach to siege Syria, and eventually, apply the plan of division in the region and establish a Kurdish state.

Saying that may seem to be naive and simple. However, executing the plan required initiating "revolutions" in other Arab countries, recruiting media specialists, recruiting special personnel to initiate eruptions by social media, and consuming billions of dollars in the process, of which the Saudi kingdom and Qatar were the main contributors.

In 1992, I was on a visit to al-Hassaka and al-Qamishli. I was just a young beginner in journalism. I was conducting an investigation report about the Yazidis. At that stage, a large number of Yazidis and Kurds were immigrating to Syria. They escaped the biased and brutal treatment of Saddam Hussein and the fanatic Turks. These Kurds were building a wide network in Europe. They bought sympathy and support to establish a federation in Iraq in 1996. The process was facilitated by the Americans after the second Persian Gulf War in 1991 as Saddam's power was fading.

The idea of having a similar kind of federation in Syria became appealing to both the Americans and Israelis. The size of Israeli foreign intelligence service Mossad's presence in the Iraqi Kurdistan is not a secret anymore. It is an established fact. The Americans also facilitated the Israeli presence in northeast Syria, especially those who came with American nationality to work in the oil fields.

The Turkish president Erdogan was one of the supporters of the American plan to dismantle Syria. Erdogan was able to recruit Qatar to the best interest of Turkey. Both countries were discontent



with the Syrian government's refusal to allow building the Qatari gas pipeline to Turkey through its territories. Syria saw that a move that would discomfort its allies in Russia and Iran. However, Erdogan had bigger plans in Syria. In the northwest region, Erdogan mainly saw the Idlib and Aleppo districts as the extent of Turkey, and a head start to initiate the Ottoman dream.

This dream vanished to thin air when Syria started liberating the area occupied by ISIS in West Euphrates, and al-Gab plain after cleaning the Damascus area, Homos and the center of Syria from terrorism with unlimited support from Russia. The second shock Erdogan received when the Americans started supporting the establishment of the Kurdish federation in al-Hassaka.

The Kurdish militia was founded in October 2015 under the name Syrian Democratic Forces [SDF]. SDF in its formation includes Kurds from Syria and others who came mainly from Turkey and other countries, most of them do not speak Arabic, unlike the Syrian Kurds. 60% of the militia includes Arab Syrians, according to the Pentagon. There are other nationalities included among the formation of SDF, who are Turkmen, Armenians, Circassians, and Chechens, who came from all over Asia.

In 2016, SDF updated its constitution from a separate federal state into an Autonomous Administration of Northern and East Syria [NES] and declared SDF as its official defense force, which complicated the Syrian political scene, furthermore. Now NES or SDF are cooperating with the official American forces in east-north of Syria and serve as "the Southern Lebanese Army, [SLA]" in South Lebanon during the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. As SLA has tried to establish an independent state in South Lebanon, SDF or NES is trying to acquire the same course.

Since 2018 the Syrian army, with the help of allies - Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah- has been able to liberate most of the occupied lands. However, the liberation coincided with the rise of economic pressure on Syria. The price of the Syrian lira if compared to the American dollar dropped and its purchasing value decreased. It was due to the economic sanctions that were imposed on Syria, and lately "Caesar Law" which was activated in the mid of June 2020.

In 2018, the American troops withdrew from the north of Syria and were redeployed in the al-Hassaka district around the Syrian richest oil fields. The American companies, in particular ARAMCO, are now draining the Syria oil to the interest of NES and financing the American troops stationed in the northern-eastern area of the Euphrates in Syria. Actually, Syria is facing an internal problem with the lack of petroleum resources. The hard winter is coming and the lines for buying the diesel needed for heating the houses will be crowded as much as the lines for gasoline.

After burning and stealing the wheat plains in the al-Jazeera district by the Americans and the Turks, the bread prices went 25% higher. Shortage in bread supplies was triggered by the government's decision to set the bread rations. The Americans were literally applying Kissinger's policy which states that nations are ruled by bread, not by arms. The shortage of bread and petroleum products is new to the Syrian population; therefore, the successive Syrian governments are facing major challenges since the beginning of 2019.

Caesar Law added additional pressure on the countries that may establish economic and commercial deals with Syria. The law was imposed at a time

in which the world is suffering from Covid-19 epidemic, which spread in Syria as well. In addition, Syria needs to deal with the issue of the Syrian refugees. It is a dilemma that needs to be dealt with appropriately. The refugees' dilemma is used as a political card to force the Syrians to submit to the American political demands, which are set on two levels: national and international.

On the national level, the international community wants to pressure the Syrian government into implementing a new constitution based on the sectarian division of power, just like Lebanon, which would diminish the presidential authority and redistribute it, as it happened in Tunisia and Sudan, which would divide the power of the head of the state. The second issue is related to the question of the forcibly disappeared people, who were kidnapped or killed by the rebel groups, and treating the killers and kidnappers as political opponents without subjecting them to trials. This issue will be a matter of conflict, and will not be accepted by those whose families and friends were kidnapped or killed. This fact was revealed a few days ago by the new Syrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Feisal Muqdad.

On the international level, the requirements of the international community, i.e. the U.S., have become common knowledge. Since 2003, after the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. secretary of state, Colin Powell, came to Syria and laid down the U.S. demands: dismantling Hezbollah arms, ending Syrian support to the resistance groups in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq, and ending cooperation with Iran in the region. The end means, as usually explained, is ensuring the security of Israel.

Naturally, the Syrians refused American demands. Therefore, we should make no mistake and assume that what had happened in the Arab region under the pretense of "Arab Spring" was meant for the destruction of Syria in order to dismantle it into minor sectarian states that can be easily controlled to the best interest of "Israel" and America.

Hence, Syria requires two essential needs to start its reconstruction process: the first is lifting the sanctions imposed on it; and the second is to end the American occupation in the northeast area. However, the West insists on linking lifting the sanctions to the political process. But when it comes to the achievement of the liberation from the Americans this process cannot be realized unless the national resistance would be highly activated in the northeast of Syria. It is America that we all know. It did not end its occupation of Vietnam, Korea, and eventually Iraq in 2010 until the number of casualties becomes unbearable in the American community.

Syria's essential needs were clearly stated by its president Bashar Al-Assad in two occasions, the first was during a video call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the 10th of November. The second time was in his speech at the opening of the International Conference on the Return of the Refugee in Damascus [ICRRD] on the 11th of November.

During his visit on the 5th of November to the exhibition "Producers 2020" in "Tekia Sulaymaniyah" in the capital, Damascus. It was attended by producers from the Aleppo governorate whose facilities, workshops, and shops were damaged during the war. President al-Assad talked about the economic impact of the issue of shortage of oil supplies and burning the wheat fields in northeastern regions.

He also explained that the economic problem was clearly becoming worse when the banks in Lebanon blocked the Syrian deposits. President al-Assad said that there is vagueness about the Syrian

deposit's estimations. Its assessment ranges from 20 billion dollars to 42 billion dollars. The blockade has been going on for years. He added the crisis began years before the Caesar Law and began years after the siege. It coincided with the money disappearance in the Lebanese banks. Furthermore, al-Assad declared that we do not know what the real number is, and this figure for an economy like the Syrian one is a frightening number.

Al-Assad's declaration became one week before ICRRD to which Lebanon was invited. Was this a message to Lebanon? It could be, although many observers have denied it. The denial is basically based on Syria's previous special treatment of Lebanon. Lebanon in the Syrian considerations are two contradictory facts: the first, Lebanon is an opening to the western world with bipolar swings. The first swing expressed in the historical Arab and regional ideology. And the second swing is expressed in the lining towards a Western ideology, with the tendency to sign normalization agreements with "Israel". The second group was of great concern to the Syrians since the creation of Lebanon. It is known as the right-wing groups, who allied with the Americans and the Israelis.

The second fact, Lebanon as a state is based on providing services and tourism. It is considered to be the lung that Syria needs to breathe with. However, this lung health became worse since 2011, when the United States accused the Lebanese Canadian Bank of laundering terrorism money. And then again in 2016, since many banks faced the same accusations and were prohibited to deal with customers that the U.S. listed them as Hezbollah members.

Accordingly, the Lebanese banks froze several balances for many customers and in particular the Syrian customers that were importing goods to Syria through Lebanon after imposing an embargo on Syria. It is clear for the Syrians, regardless of the unique relationship with Hezbollah, it is about time that Lebanon should release these balances, and pay its debts to Syria, especially the debts that have been accumulating since 1990, which are the revenues from selling electricity.

Syria, as President al-Assad explained, will need its money in the process of rebuilding the country's main infrastructure and vital installations, which were destroyed during the liberation war against the terrorist groups. It is a call for Lebanon to join forces with Syria to demand lifting the embargo and to be excluded from Cesar Law consequences because Lebanon needs to open up to Syria for commercial trades towards the east, in particular, to Arab countries, or Lebanon will be demanded to pay back its debts.

The Americans were pushing Syria and the region since 1973 towards peace and normalization treaties with "Israel". However, Syria has proven that such an agreement would be difficult to execute unless it was a "peace for land" agreement, which would ensure the right of return of the Palestinian people. An equation, nor the Israeli, neither the Americans are willing to sign for. In addition, Syria's main condition, during the negotiations held in Oslo in 1992, was the return of all occupied Arab territories. However, the series of recognitions Trump has approved throughout his reign made the return to the negotiation table almost impossible. It also pushed into more complications with the relation between Syria and Lebanon since the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005. The need to separate the Syrian-Lebanese course in the peace process is becoming a must for the Americans. A need until today could not be achieved.

Syria now is subjected to American pressure that requires its approval to initiate peace and normalization agreements with Israel. This goal so far was difficult to achieve, especially after Trump's recognition of the Golan Heights as part of Israel. Even Syria's allies, in particular Russia, cannot force the Syrians to give up part of their land. Syria's war on terror has spared all its allies the tragedy of dragging this war into their own territories.

Hence, Syria prepaid in blood for the security of its "friends" now. History will, sooner or later, reveal this fact. Syria's insistence on the unity of its land, and its refusal to have any divided authority is now a fact. The Syrians cannot compromise it, and the allies cannot go against it. The course of negotiations the allies led in Astana and Sochi has affirmed it. However, this fact has complicated the Syrian scene furthermore. It might even force the Americans to lead directly the war in the region, whether in arms or diplomacy, since the proxies have proven their disabilities.

## Yemeni missile targets Saudi Aramco facility in Jeddah

Yemeni forces have launched a missile attack on a distribution station operated by the Saudi Aramco oil company in the city of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

The spokesman for Yemen's Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said in a statement on Monday that the distribution station was targeted by the Quds-2 winged missile with high precision.

He noted that ambulances and fire engines have rushed to the scene after the attack.

According to Saree, the Quds-2, a new generation of locally-made winged missiles, recently entered service after successful tests in the depths of Saudi Arabia which have not been disclosed yet.

The spokesman stressed that the attack came in response to the ongoing Saudi military aggression and siege.

He also urged Saudi citizens and foreign companies working in the kingdom to exercise caution and "stay away from vital installations" as "operations will continue".

A video circulating on social media accounts appears to show a column of smoke rising from burning fumes at the facility, while sirens of emergency vehicles can be heard in the background.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched their devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in order to bring former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, back to power and crush the Houthi Ansarullah movement, Press TV reported.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past five years.

Riyadh and its allies have widely been criticized for the high civilian death toll as a result of their bombing campaign in Yemen.

The UN says more than 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger. The world body also refers to the situation in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

## UN urges civilian protection after Ethiopia's 72-hr deadline for Tigrayan forces

The United Nations urged Ethiopia on Monday to ensure the protection of civilians, a day after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed gave Tigrayan forces 72 hours to surrender before a military offensive on the regional capital of Mekelle.

Hundreds, possibly thousands, have been killed in fighting that erupted on Nov. 4 between Ethiopian federal forces and Tigray's regional army, sending more than 30,000 refugees into neighbouring Sudan < Reuters reported.

Catherine Sozi, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Ethiopia, told Reuters that she hoped for the guarantee of safety and security of aid workers and the "protection of more than 525,000 civilian (non-combatants) who live in Mekelle".

## U.S. to target 89 Chinese firms with military ties

The Trump administration is close to declaring that 89 Chinese aerospace and other companies have military ties, restricting them from buying a range of goods and technology made in the United States, according to a draft copy of the list seen by Reuters.

The list, if published, could further escalate trade tensions with Beijing and hurt U.S. companies that sell civil aviation parts and components to China, among other industries.

A spokesman for the U.S. Department of Commerce, which produced the list, declined to comment. The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request by Reuters for comment.

Commercial Aircraft Corp of China Ltd (COMAC), which is spearheading Chinese efforts to compete with Boeing and Airbus, is on the list, as is Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) and 10 of its related entities.

The list is included in a draft rule that identifies Chinese and Russian companies the U.S. considers "military end users," a designation that means U.S. suppliers must seek licenses to sell a broad swath of commercially available items to them.

According to the rule, applications for such licenses are more likely to be denied than granted.

## Resistance News

## Hamas calls Netanyahu's Saudi trip 'dangerous,' demands explanation

**INTERNATIONAL** **TEHRAN** — Sami Abu Zuhri, a spokesman **d e s k** for Hamas, responded to a reported meeting on Sunday by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday, calling it "dangerous" and calling on Saudi Arabia to "clarify what happened because this represents an insult to the nation and the squandering of Palestinian rights."

Israeli media are reporting that prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a secret visit to Saudi Arabia Sunday.

Israel's Kan public radio and Army Radio said on Monday that Netanyahu made the clandestine visit to the Saudi Arabian city of Neom, where bin Salman and Pompeo had a scheduled meeting.

Netanyahu was reportedly accompanied by director of the Israeli spy agency Mossad Yossi Cohen during the visit.

Avi Scharf of Israel's Haaretz newspaper published aviation tracking data showing that a business jet had made a brief trip from Tel Aviv to Neom.

Israeli education minister Yoav Gallant confirmed the media reports on Monday, saying, "The very fact the meeting happened, and was outed publicly, even if half-officially right now, is a matter of great importance."

Pompeo has tried to coax Riyadh into following the lead of other Arab countries of the Persian Gulf to normalize relations with Israel.

Mossad's chief said last month he believed that Saudi Arabia would normalize relations with Israel, but would do so after the US election, to capitalize fully on such a move with the next president.



## River flood swamps Sassanid-era dam in southwest Iran

➔ It forms a spectacular cliff from which water cascades into a downstream basin. It then enters the plain situated south of the city where it has enabled the planting of orchards and farming over an area of 40,000 ha. known as Mianab (Paradise).



The property has an ensemble of remarkable sites including the Salasel Castel, the operation center of the entire hydraulic system, the tower where the water level is measured, dams, bridges, basins, and mills. It bears witness to the know-how of the Elamites and Mesopotamians as well as more recent Nabatean expertise and Roman building influence.

The Shushtar system, according to UNESCO, is as rich in its diversity of civil engineering structures and its constructions as in the diversity of its uses (urban water supply, mills, irrigation, river transport, and defensive system). It also testifies to the heritage and the synthesis of earlier Elamite and Mesopotamian knowhow; it was probably influenced by the Petra dam and tunnel and by Roman civil engineering.

## Tehran webinar to discuss intangible cultural heritage, traditional medicine

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Iranian intangible cultural heritage and traditional medicine will come up for discussion during a three-day webinar in Tehran. Participants will also exchange their views on traditional medicine and knowledge and their roles in society as well as their relation with cultural diversity, biodiversity, and climate diversity.

Organized by Tehran Intangible Cultural Heritage Center, the webinar will be held from March 7 to 9.

Photography competition and some workshops will be held on the sidelines of the webinar as well, according to organizers.

■ **Iranian traditional medicine**



According to the analytical report of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology, Iran ranked fifth among all participating countries for publication of articles in the field of indigenous pharmacology, traditional medicine, and medicinal plants in 2011-2018.

So far, about 30,000 plant species are identified in the world, with Iran's share of about 8,000 species that its plant diversity is more than the whole of Europe.

Currently, about 2,300 species of medicinal plants have been identified in the country; while medicinal plants account for one-third of the medicines used in human societies, the share of world trade in these products is about \$124 billion and Iran's share is \$570 million, which is only 0.5 percent of the total.

The per capita consumption of medicinal plants in Iran is about one kilogram of dried plants, in other words, 83,000 tons of medicinal plants worth 1.2 trillion rials (around \$29 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are consumed in the country, while in Europe this amount is 900 grams and in the United States is 2.5 kilograms.

## Five historical relics donated to Kerman cultural heritage department

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — Residents of Kerman province have recently donated five objects with historical values to the cultural heritage and tourism department of the southwestern Iranian province.

Some of the citizens of Jiroft and Kahnuj (two historical towns in Kerman province) donated five relics to Kerman cultural heritage department, IRNA reported on Monday.



The objects include earthen potteries and clay vessels, which have been submitted to cultural heritage experts for being assessed, the report said.

Kerman is bounded by the provinces of Fars on the west, Yazd on the north, South Khorasan on the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan on the east, and Hormozgan on the south. It also includes the southern part of the central Iranian desert, the Dasht-e Lut.

# Tehran 'oldest' clock to start ticking again

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — An old clock, which is said to be the oldest in Tehran, is being restored to its glory days, an official with Tehran Municipality has announced.

The 120-year-old clock, which is installed at the Qajar-era (1789–1925) Moshir al-Saltaneh Mosque in downtown Tehran, is considered as Tehran's oldest clock .... and it has been broken for almost 70 years and hasn't been working, IRNA quoted Nasrollah Abadian as saying on Monday.

The restoration/repairing project, which is being done by the most experi-

enced Iranian horologists, is scheduled to come to an end by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the official added.

He added some rehabilitation works are being commenced on the exterior walls of the mosque as well.

Also known as Clock Mosque, Moshir al-Saltaneh mosque and school was built in 1903 by Mirza Ahmad Khan Monshi-bashi- Moshir al-Saltaneh, who was one of the ministers during the reign of two Qajar kings, Mozaffar ad-Din Shah and Mohammad Ali Shah.



## UNESCO sites shut down amid third wave of COVID-19 in Iran

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Most of Iran's UNESCO World Heritage sites, cultural heritage museums, and historical sites across the country have gone on lockdown for at least two weeks in cities defined as the high-risk "red" zones due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Iranian authorities have imposed a two-week lockdown in the capital and some 150 Iranian cities from November 12 as the country is battling a third wave of the virus.

According to the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, the sites' staff must be present at work during this period, but the sites and museums are closed to the public to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, on Sunday said Farhad Azizi who presides over the World Heritage Affairs Office at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The cultural heritage museums and historical sites have so far been closed and reopened for times from the pandemic's early days onward in a preventive measure to curb the disease.

Due to a sharp rise in the number of coronavirus infections and deaths, all historical sites as well as all art and cultural centers, universities, schools, seminars, English schools, libraries, movie theaters, mosques, beauty salons, and several other entities have been shut down once again.

However, the tourism ministry has arranged online visits and virtual tours on the country's 24 World Heritage sites as well as other historical sites and museums, while people have to stay home during the quarantine time.

■ **Corona may cause critical situation**

In October, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handi-



crafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism will be in a critical situation if the crises caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus continue.

Iran's tourism has suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, he said in August.

"The tourism industry of the country was growing and progressing well but unfortunately, it has faced the coronavirus outbreak, which brought the industry into a standstill."

"Many tourism projects have been completed, or are being implemented, showing that a very good capacity has been created in the field of tourism in the country

and [this trend] should not be stopped," he explained.

Referring to the investment of 1,370 trillion rials (around \$32 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in the tourism sector he added that this volume of investment indicates that investors recognize the growing tourism sector as a new economy in the country and have high hopes for it.

The minister said the coronavirus pandemic should not bring traveling to a complete standstill. "Corona is a fact, but can the virus stop tourism? Certainly not. For us, the coronavirus is a new experience in dealing with crises that teaches tourism experts around the world how to deal with such a disaster, and thankfully governments are turning this into an opportunity for better planning."

Optimistic forecasts, however, expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

Iran ranks 10th in the world in terms of the number of historical monuments and sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Amongst the UNESCO-designated sites in Iran are "Arg-e Bam" (Bam Citadel) that represents an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement, "Bisotun" in western Kermanshah province, which is notable for its Achaemenid-era inscription carved on a limestone cliff, lavish "Golestan Palace" in downtown Tehran which is a masterpiece of the Qajar era (1789 to 1925), and millennium-old "Gonbad-e Qabus" which is a mudbrick tomb tower for Qabus ibn Wushmagir.

## Coronavirus: Iranian Zoroastrians observe Azargan online

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — With the coronavirus capsizing Azargan, Iran's Zoroastrians on Monday observed the ancient ritual online, IRNA reported.

Azargan is a festivity that is observed every year on the 9th of the Zoroastrian month of "Azar" or "Atar" which falls on November 23, Manouchehr Arghavani, the head of Yazd Zoroastrians association, told the news agency that

He said that the Zoroastrians celebrate this day by joyful ceremonies, as well as



praying upon God and cooking special foods.

In ancient Iran, Azargan was practicing along with other major national festivities of Noruz and Mehregan, Arghavani, he noted.

"Cleanliness, including combing hair and cutting fingernails, was good on this day, and they believe that on this day, counseling and consultation on different matters and difficulties would lead to the desired outcome," IRNA quoted the religious figure as saying.

Yazd province has an interesting mix of people as well, some 10 percent of whom follow the ancient religion of Zoroastri-

anism. The oasis city is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains. Its historical structure enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

With its winding lanes, a forest of bad-girs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, being referred to as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region.

## Italian diplomat visits National Museum of Iran, discusses ways to expand ties

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — Yaroslava Romanova, the cultural attaché of the Italian Embassy in Tehran, paid a visit to the National Museum of Iran on Monday.

She also met with the museum's deputy director Fereidoun Biglari, discussing ways to expand cooperation in museum studies.

They exchanged views on the past and current state of relations between the Iran National Museum and Italian museums and universities by the means of bilateral exhibitions and archaeological studies.

Romanova referred to the long history of cultural relations between the two nations, which have a history of several thousand years.

She further expressed hope that these close relations would be expanding in particular collaboration between the National Museum and Italian museums.

She stressed that previous collaborations between Italian museums and the National Museum of Iran have been very fruitful and gave both nations a better under-



standing of each other.

Referring to the close connection between the National Museum of Iran and Italian museums and universities, Biglari said that over the past two decades, the National Museum has participated individually or in museum groups in six exhibitions in Italy, the last of which was

"Lions and Bulls from ancient Persia in Aquileia" that was held in 2016.

He further referred to the recent exhibition of "Iran and Italy: 60 Years of Collaboration on Cultural Heritage", which was held in 2016 at the National Museum and was supported by the Embassy of Italy in Tehran, ISMEO, Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism of Iran.

The Iranian official expressed hope that in the future, by holding exhibitions on common cultural relations between the two ancient civilizations in the museums of both countries; another step can be taken to deepen these relations.

In the end, Romanova expressed her hope that after the closure of the museum due to the pandemic, she will be able to visit the Museum and get acquainted with the ancient cultures of Iran. At the end of the meeting, the cultural deputy of the museum presented several publications of the National Museum to the Italian diplomat to get more acquainted with the Iran National museum and its previous exhibitions, especially those held in Italy.

## Webinar to address threats to migratory birds, actions for conservation

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Threats to migratory birds, scientific Know-hows, and proper actions for their conservation will be discussed in a webinar organized by the tourism department of Iran's Mazandaran province, which its many wetlands long been hosting seasonal birds.

An educational webinar on migratory birds will be held on Azar 6 (November 26) on the occasion of World Birdwatching Day, deputy provincial tourism chief Mehran Hasani announced on Saturday.

Dr. Jamshid Mansouri, the author of 'Iranian

Birds Reference Book', is scheduled to attend the event to address Mazandaran migratory birds, proper ways to treat them as well as actions for their conservation, he noted.

Mazandaran has long been a traditional haven for birdwatching as it is one of the provinces receiving many migratory birds each year, the official added.

The south Caspian Sea retreats are amongst the most famed spaces for birdwatching, usually being dominated by its northerly guests until about mid-May when the migration

season comes to an end. In a wider scene, the mid-winter population of the migratory birds is estimated to exceed over a million in the whole southern sandy shorelines of the Caspian Sea that spans some 700km.

The northern provinces of Mazandaran, Gilan, and Golestan embrace a variety of freshwater lakes, wetlands, and lagoons, which are the main destinations for traveling pelicans, flamingos, ducks, swans, coots, and some other species.

Bird-watching, the observation of live birds in their natural habitat, is a popular



pastime and scientific sport that developed almost entirely in the 20th century.







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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Keep yourself far from envy; because it eats up  
and takes away good actions, like a fire eats up  
and burn woods.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

## Memoirs of Koniko Yamamura rendered into five languages

→1 where her life was totally changed after her 19-year old son Mohammad was martyred.

What makes her life distinguished are the events that changed her life.

"I never thought my life story would turn into a book, because if I were living in Japan with my parents, I would have had a typical life, but marrying an Iranian Muslim changed my life totally," she has said.

"After the martyrdom of my son, several writers proposed to write my biography but I did not agree, but in a journey to Hiroshima I met Hesam and I trusted him, and the interviews began for the book," she added.

Hesam has also said that he met Yamamura in 2014 during a visit to Hiroshima along with a number of Iranian cineastes, authors and war veterans who attended the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony.

The ceremony is held annually to commemorate the anniversary of the tragedy of the U.S. nuclear attack on the Japanese city.

"I met Yamaumura at the airport where she was introduced to us as the translator of the team. I noticed that she was reciting verses of the Holy Quran while onboard or when she sometimes told me short memories of her life," Hesam said.

"Later, I noticed that she patiently listened to the survivors of the Hiroshima atomic bombardment and those Iranian veterans injured in Iraqi chemical attacks as she was in tears. It was in those years that I began talks through interviews, and gradually I was successful in writing her untold stories," Hesam said.

Hamid Hesam was honored at the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year in 2018.

## Istanbul exhibit hangs works by Iranian artists

TEHRAN — Works by Iranian artists in various media, including painting and photography, are on view in an exhibition underway at the Luna Art Gallery in the Turkish city of Istanbul.

The gallery is organizing the showcase named "Bright Fountain" with the contributions of the Nily Art Gallery in Tehran.

Among the Iranian artists are Mehdi Nasiri, Nazanin Sheikvand, Abolfazl Karimi, Hiva Rezaizu, Rozha Rashedi and Zahra Ghamangiz.

The weeklong exhibit also showcasing works by artists from Turkey, Syria, Spain and Russia opened on Saturday.



Art enthusiasts visit the exhibition "Bright Fountain" at the Luna Art Gallery in Istanbul on November 21, 2020. (Luna Art Gallery)

# Rafsanjan to host street performances of Divine Commander Theater Festival

TEHRAN — The organizers of the 2nd Divine Commander Theater Festival have announced that the street theater performances will take place in various places in the southern Iranian city Rafsanjan near Kerman, Commander Qassem Soleimani's hometown, from December 21 to 26.

The festival was established to commemorate the IRGC Quds Force chief who was assassinated during a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

"The performances will take place across the city while social distancing and health protocols will be observed, and the stage performances will be held in the city of Sirjan or the cities of participating troupes considering the COVID-19 condition," the director of the Kerman Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mohammadreza Alizadeh, said on Monday.

In the stage section, the troupes have been invited to give five performances in their cities. In addition, troupes will travel to stage performances in nearby villages.

Twelve stage plays as well as over 70 street theater plays will be performed



A poster for the Divine Commander Theater Festival.

during the festival.

Over 70 plays will also be competing for the award for best script.

The stage plays are coming from 22 provinces and the street performances from 24 provinces.

## "Driving Lessons" runner-up at Hebden Bridge Film Festival



"Driving Lessons" by Iranian filmmaker Marzieh Riahi.

TEHRAN — Iranian short "Driving Lessons" by Marzieh Riahi has won the

Fox and Goose jury 2nd prize at the Hebden Bridge Film Festival in England.

The film is about Bahareh who, according to Iranian law, must have her traditional, chauvinistic husband accompany her driving lessons so she and her instructor will not be alone.

"Driving Lessons" has been screened in numerous international festivals, some of which have honored the short with awards.

It won the audience award at the 25th Aichi International Women's Film Festival in Japan in September.

The film also received the award for best short narrative at the 21st Through Women's Eyes International Film Festival (TWE) in Sarasota, Florida, the U.S. in March.

The Hebden Bridge Film Festival, which is annually organized in the market town of the Upper Calder Valley in West Yorkshire, was first scheduled to be held in March, however, it was postponed to September 25 to 27 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Abu Dhabi Art showcases works by Iranian artists

TEHRAN — Works by three Iranian artists are on display at the 12th edition of the Abu Dhabi Art underway in the United Arab Emirates.

Works by Iranian artists selected by the Tehran-based gallery Khak and the Leila Heller Gallery in the UAE are on view at the art show, which opened on November 19 and will run for eight days.

Marcos Grigorian, Reza Derakhshani and Aref Motazeri are among the artists whose works are on display at the art fair, which is being organized virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Established in 2002, Khak Gallery is



"Flutista" by Marcos Grigorian whose works are on display at the Abu Dhabi Art underway in the United Arab Emirates.

one of Tehran's distinguished art centers, with a background in organizing showcases of contemporary art.

The gallery organizes monthly exhibitions throughout the year, ranging from photography and painting to installation and performance.

Leila Heller Gallery founded in 1982 has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting creative dialogue and exchange between Western and Asian artists.

In 2010, the gallery moved from the Upper East Side to its flagship space in Chelsea where it has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers

of artists, leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture.

Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and West Asian artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and West Asian secondary art markets.

Simon Njami, Sung Woo Kim, Nada Raza, Ashwin Thadani, Maya El-Khalil, and Rose Lejeune are the curators of the 12th edition of the Abu Dhabi Art.

Iran's Institute for Promotion of Contemporary Visual Art displayed works by four Iranian artists, Parvaneh Razzaqi, Amir-Hossein Kulivand, Hossein Akrami and Alireza Bandgolestani, at the Abu Dhabi Art in November 2018.

## Over 1000 movies from 85 countries to compete at Tehran animation festival

TEHRAN — Over 1,000 movies from 85 countries will be screened in the international competition of the 12th Tehran International Animation Festival.

The animations are coming from Japan, China, France, Austria, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Brazil and dozens of other countries.

About 460 Iranian animations will also be competing in the national section of the festival, which will be running from February 28 to March 4.

The Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) is the organizer of the festival. "This Magnificent Cake!", a joint production of Belgium, France and the Netherlands, was named best film at the previous edition of the festival in 2019.

Co-directed by Marc James Roels and Emma De Swaef, the story of the film is set in colonial Africa in the late 19th century. The anthology film tells the stories of five different characters, including a troubled king, a middle-aged Pygmy working in a luxury hotel, a failed businessman on an expedition, a lost porter and a young army deserter.

"Am I a Wolf?" by Iranian animator Amir-Hushang Moein won the second award, and the award for third best movie went to "Peripheria" by David Coquard-Dassault from France.



A poster for the 12th Tehran International Animation Festival.

"Patchwork Pals" by German director Angela Steffen won the award for best children's film, while "A Little Goat" by Tomoki Misato from Japan received the award for the best student animation.

The award for the best TV production went to "One Thousand Myths" co-directed by Asghar Saffar and Abbas Jalali Yekta from Iran, and "9 Ways to Draw a Person"

by Sasha Svirsky from Russia won the award for the best experimental animation.

The acclaimed Iranian animation "The Last Fiction" by Ashkan Rahgozar won the award for best feature-length movie, while "Wicked Girl", a co-production between France and Turkey by Turkish director Ayce Kartal, received the special jury prize.

"The Blissful Accidental Death" by Sergiu Negulici from Romania received the award for best artistic and technical achievement, and the CIFEJ Prize was presented to "Trunky" by Ekaterina Filippova from Russia.

In the national section, "Fox" by Sadeq Javadi was picked as best animation.

The film is about a young fox on the verge of experiencing the first love. Meanwhile, it gets trapped by a hunter. Thus begins the fox's effort to survive and love, and seek revenge. "Am I a Wolf?" was selected as second best film and "Maned and Macho" by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi won the award for best third movie.

The special jury award was presented to "Eaten" by Mohsen Rezapur.

Veteran Iranian film scholar Akbar Alemi also was honored for his lifetime achievements during the ceremony.

Akbar Alemi died of COVID-19 last month. He was 75.

## Carl Zimmer's "A Planet of Viruses" comes into Iranian bookstores

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Persian translation of Carl Zimmer's "A Planet of Viruses" has recently been published by Now Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Kaveh Feizollahi.

This fascinating book explores the hidden world of viruses, the world that all humans inhabit. Zimmer, popular science writer and author of Discover magazine's award-winning blog "The Loom", presents the latest research on how viruses hold sway over lives and the biosphere, how viruses helped give rise to the first life-forms, how viruses are producing new diseases, how people can harness viruses for their own ends, and how viruses will continue to control people's fate for years to come.

In this eye-opening tour of the frontiers of biology, where scientists are expanding the understanding of life as known, readers learn that some treatments for the common cold do more harm than good; that the world's oceans are home to an astonishing number of viruses; and that the evolution of HIV is now in overdrive, spawning more mutated strains than man cares to imagine.

"Viruses are the smallest living things known to science, yet they hold the entire planet in their sway. We are most familiar with the viruses that give us colds or the flu, but viruses also cause a vast range of other diseases, including one disorder that makes people sprout branch-like growths as if they were trees. Viruses have been a part of our lives for so long, in fact, that we are actually part virus: the human genome

contains more DNA from viruses than our own genes. Meanwhile, scientists are discovering viruses everywhere they look: in the soil, in the ocean, even in caves miles underground," the book says.

Zimmer is a lecturer at Yale University, where he teaches writing about science and the environment. He is the author of numerous books, including "Microcosm", "Parasite Rex", "Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea", "At the Water's Edge" and "Soul Made Flesh".

His numerous essays and articles on the life sciences have appeared in the pages of the New York Times, Scientific American, Discover, Time, Science, Popular Science and National Geographic. His work has been anthologized in both "The Best American Science Writing" and "The Best American Science and Nature Writing" series.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Carl Zimmer's "A Planet of Viruses".