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Zarif: E3 share blame with U.S. for 'irreparable harm' to Iranian people

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the E3, namely Britain, France and Germany, share the blame with the United States for irreparable harm to the Iranian people. Zarif made the remarks in a tweet on Monday night, in which he enumerated seven points that he emphasized during a ministerial meeting of the remaining participants to the

Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). "At Ministerial Meeting of remaining JCPOA participants, I emphasized: 1. Last chance for E3/EU to save the JCPOA; 2. Iran-EU 2014-2019 trade data proves E3/EU have gravely breached their JCPOA obligations," Zarif wrote. *Continued on page 2*

Energy projects worth over \$131m inaugurated in 2 provinces

TEHRAN — Some 28 energy projects worth over 5.53 trillion rials (about \$131.6 million) were inaugurated in two provinces in the 33rd week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program. In a ceremony attended by the Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, the mentioned projects including three scattered power plants, five small-scale power plants, 16 power supply projects, and several network modification and optimization projects were put into operation in Tehran and

Gilan provinces. Of the mentioned projects, 25 were inaugurated in Tehran province and three others were in Gilan province. As reported, the mentioned projects have been put into operation with the aim of increasing the reliability of the electricity network, reducing unwanted blackouts, supplying electricity to the Mehr housing projects, and increasing the country's electricity generation capacity. *Continued on page 4*

Martyr Soleimani plan aims to contain COVID-19

TEHRAN — A national plan named after martyr Qassem Soleimani has so far resulted in cutting the transmission chain of the coronavirus and increasing the interdisciplinary coordination. Some 22,530 monitoring teams have been formed within the frame-

work of the plan since December 15 with 103,000 members, of which more than 270,000 are in contact to identify COVID-19 patients, said Jafar Sadeq-Tabrizi, head of the Network Management Center of the Ministry of Health. *Continued on page 7*

Washington won't leave West Asia: Russian expert

BY REZA MOSHFEGH
Russian expert rules out the U.S. withdrawal from West Asia after its possible return to the JCPOA, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal. Noting that the new American administration will not attempt a change of course towards its allies in the region, Stanislav Mitrakhovich from the National Energy Security Fund and the Financial University in Russia tells the Tehran Times that "America will not go out of the Middle East (West Asia), even (if) the U.S. under the Biden presidency decides to return to the JCPOA temporarily."

The nuclear deal was signed on July 14, 2015, in Vienna between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the United States, China, Russia, France, and Britain) Germany and the European Union. But on May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump officially announced his country's unilateral withdrawal from the agreement, which he called "disastrous" and reimposed the worst sanctions in history on Iran.

This step brought a state of destabilization and more tension in West Asia where the U.S. sent additional troops and warships to the region.

However, some observers expect Washington to pull out of the region after its possible return to the nuclear deal and Iran confirms its full commitment to the deal.

Asked about if a Biden administration could reach a deal with Iran, Mitrakhovich says "the Biden administration will try to show its difference from Trump's period. They will try to show that they are going to follow new approaches, based on a different attitude," the Russian expert notes.

"So, a deal with Iran could be possible as Biden may even try to show Iran as an alternative to other exporters of energy that the EU or Asian consumers can count on."

Regarding Biden's policy towards Saudi Arabia and Israel, Mitrakhovich believes that Biden will not change tact towards Israel.

Israel developed a close relationship with the U.S. under Trump's presidency. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described Trump as "the best friend of Israel" after he congratulated President-elect Biden.

He thanked the outgoing Trump for raising relations between Israel and the United States to its climax. *Continued on page 5*

Artists criticize Iran's multinational sharing of UNESCO Persian painting file

BY SEYYED MOSTAFA MOUSAVI SABBET
TEHRAN — Several Iranian artists have criticized the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts (MCHTH) for agreeing to share the file on Persian painting with several other countries on a UNESCO list. During its meeting last week, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage inscribed the art of miniature as a common item between Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Uzbekistan on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Mohammad-Baqer Aqamiri, a prominent Iranian artist who has been working on Persian painting over the past 40 years, has called the word "miniature" a Latin import and said that using the word for Persian painting is incorrect. "During the National Biennial of Per-

sian Painting in 1994, I proposed the word 'negargari' for Persian painting instead of 'miniature' as the art has been recognized as Persian painting around the world over the years," Aqamiri told the Persian service of ILNA on Tuesday. "Whether the art is registered at UNESCO or not, it is recognized as Persian painting around the world. Meanwhile, the art has been shared at UNESCO with some countries having no background in the field," lamented the expert who is teaching the art at several Iranian academic centers. "For example, Turkey has centered on the art over the past 30 or 40 years, and their artworks in this field are really amateurish, and Azerbaijan has no artist who has his own style or anything of significance to say in Persian painting," he noted. *Continued on page 8*

Over dozen Shia scholars kept in detention centers in Saudi Arabia

More than a dozen Shia Muslim clerics are reportedly being kept behind bars at detention facilities in Saudi Arabia, as the Riyadh regime presses ahead with its brutal clampdown against members of the religious community in the kingdom. Lebanon-based and Arabic-language al-Nour radio station reported on Monday that Saudi authorities recently arrested Sheikh Hussein al-Nimr, who is the son of executed Sheikh Nimr Baqr al-Nimr, in the country's oil-rich and Shia-populated Eastern Province. The report added that Saudi officials confessed to imprisoning the Shia cleric two days after his abduction, noting that his arrest brings to 16 the number of clergymen from Qatif and al-Ahsa regions who are currently being kept in prison. Nour radio station then named Sayyed Hashim al-Shaks, Hussein al-Radhi, Mohammad

al-Habib, Sayyed Ja'far al-Alawi, Mohammad al-Ebad, Abdullatif al-Nasser, Badr Al Talib, Mohammad Zainuddin, Habib al-Khabbaz, Hassan Al Zayed, Samir al-Hilal, Abdul-Jalil Al-Athiyan, Abbas al-Mazani, Sayyed Khidr al-Awami and Abbas al-Saeed as other Saudi Shia clerics whose imprisonment has been confirmed by the Riyadh regime. Saudi Arabia has stepped up politically-motivated arrests, prosecution and conviction of peaceful dissident writers and human rights campaigners, in particular in Eastern Province. The province has been the scene of peaceful demonstrations since February 2011. Protesters have been demanding reforms, freedom of expression, the release of political prisoners, and an end to economic and religious discrimination against the oil-rich region. *Continued on page 5*

German archaeologist Wolfram Kleiss, famed for intensive Iranian studies, dies at 90

TEHRAN — German archaeologist Wolfram Kleiss, who directed plenty of accomplished archaeological explorations in Iran during the 1970s and 1980s, has recently died aged 90. Born 1930 in Berlin, Kleiss traveled for the first time to Iran in 1959, after he received a research grant from the German Archaeological Institute. Kleiss was an Urartu specialist who also researched and studied various types of buildings and architectural works of different prehistoric and historical periods of Iran. Kleiss studied and documented everything

from Iron Age Urartian fortresses to Qajar bridges and mosques. From 1967 to 79, Kleiss conducted archaeological surveys in northwestern Iran and published the results in a series of articles, according to the National Museum of Iran. Jebrael Nokandeh, director of the museum, on Tuesday, expressed his condolences on the death of this prolific German researcher and added that his name and memory are undoubtedly alive in the cultural heritage and archaeology community. Nokandeh also voiced hope that the Tehran

branch of the German Archaeological Institute would be able to make Kleiss unpublished documents and notes available to researchers. Between 1969 and 1978, Kleiss excavated the Urartian fortress at Bastam in co-operation with a team of archaeologists from Iran, Germany, Italy, Canada, and the United States. Besides, from 1967 onwards, he conducted many surveys in Northwestern Iran, covering not only Urartian remains, but all periods from the Neolithic onwards. *Continued on page 6*

Yemen experiencing worst health catastrophe: Yemeni diplomat

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI
TEHRAN — A Yemeni diplomat says that his country is facing the "worst health catastrophe" as a result of the Saudi-Emirate siege. "Yemen is experiencing the worst health catastrophe at the regional level since more than a hundred years ago," Moataz al-Qurashi, a health consultant in the Yemeni embassy in Syria, tells the Tehran Times. Al-Qurashi says, "Epidemics and diseases such as Malaria and others have become rampant." After the start of a full-scale war on Yemen in 2015 by the Saudi-UAE coalition, thousands of civilians have been killed or injured, and at least 3.6 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to a conflict that involves several regional and international countries. In 2017, the UN humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien called Yemen the largest humanitarian crisis since the end of World War II. In a context where civilians have been deliberately attacked by the Saudi-led coalition, COVID-19 has added a new layer to the unspeakable suffering for millions of civilians in Yemen. Al-Qurashi says, "During the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, the level of humanitarian aid to Yemen has been almost negligible." The following is the text of the interview: **What messages do the Yemeni missiles send to Saudi Arabia? Do you confirm that Yemeni forces received missiles from a country in the region?** *Continued on page 5*



Hejazi Special Award held in Tehran

The ceremony of the second edition of late Nasser Hejazi Special Award, the famous goalkeeper of Esteghlal and Iran national team and former football coach, as well as the commemoration of the late Mansour Pourheidari and Jafar Kashani in recognition of morality and humanity, was held on Monday evening at the Afshar House in Tehran.

'Iran bent on avenging Soleimani assassination to prevent further U.S. terror acts'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), says Iran is determined to take "tough revenge" against the U.S. for the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani in order to prevent the continuation of their terrorist acts.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to take tough revenge on the perpetrators of this historic crime, prevent the continuation of America's terrorist, destabilizing acts, and force them to leave the region," Shamkhani said on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

He made the remarks in a meeting with National Security Adviser of Afghanistan Hamdullah Mohib, who arrived in Tehran earlier in the day.

Shamkhani said the U.S. exit from the region will pave the way for sustainable peace and security.

He said the U.S. intensified its destabilizing moves in Western Asia, which reached its peak with assassination of General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes in terrorist attack at Baghdad airport.



On January 3, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered drone strikes that martyred Soleimani, chief of the IRGC Quds Force, and al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

In the early hours of January 8, the IRGC attacked Ain al-Assad airbase in western Iraq, where U.S. forces were stationed, as part of its promised "tough revenge" for the U.S. terror attack.

Iran has also vowed to retaliate against the perpetrators of the attack at the right time.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Shamkhani explained Iran's principle and policy of establishing good neighborly ties and strategic relations with all of its neighbors.

He said Afghanistan has a special place due to its numerous affinities with Iran.

The top security official voiced happiness over the inauguration of Khaf-Herat railroad and hoped that the project will be effective to augment trade ties between Tehran and Kabul and the welfare of the Afghan people.

He said that creating infrastructures in every field is inevitable for economic development.

Referring to the common interests and threats especially terrorism, Shamkhani stressed Iran's decisive support for Afghanistan and enhancement of interactions between Tehran and Kabul in political, economic, and security aspects.

Warning against the expansion of Daesh terrorist activities in Afghanistan and its threats against the country and the region, he called for alertness and synergy in eliminating this cancerous gland.

Mohib, for his part, thanked Iran for hosting millions of Afghan refugees over the past 40 years.

He said Iran is a second home to Afghans and that his government and people are ready to expand cooperation with the government and people of Iran.

He further said that the Afghan government is grateful to Iran for its efforts to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan, adding that the agreement between Taliban and the U.S. has not decreased the group's destructive moves, but rather, their terrorist activities have been on the rise.

Tehran urges Europe to honor JCPOA duties instead of voicing concerns

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei has said that Iran cannot be the only party that fulfills its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), urging the European parties to the deal to return to their commitments instead of expressing concerns about it.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Rabiei stated that Iran is entitled to complain about the breach of obligations by the United States and Europe.

The JCPOA will be kept only if all parties remain committed, he highlighted, according to Iran Press.

"Iran's remedies have been based on its legitimate law (Paragraph 36), and if parties return to their commitment, Iran will halt its scale-backs too," the spokesman added.

Exactly one year after the U.S. quit the deal and imposed sanctions on Iran, the Islamic Republic started to gradually reduce its commitments based on Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA.

(Paragraph 36 provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.)

Iran took this decision after the Europeans failed to compensate Iran for the sanctions.

In order to save the JCPOA, Rabiei went on to say, France and other European parties must fulfill their commitments and do their best to lift the sanctions.

"Europeans should point their finger at the guilty party rather than the oppressed one (Iran)," he concluded.

Under the Donald Trump administration, the United States imposed the "harsh and severe sanctions" against Iran in order to force Iran to negotiate a new nuclear agreement, after Trump withdrew the U.S. from an already working nuclear deal that was signed in 2015 under his predecessor Barack Obama.

The Trump administration has also escalated tensions with Tehran by imposing sanctions on Iran's top officials, including Zarif, and top state bodies, including the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and the office of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" policy against the Islamic Republic reached its peak with the assassination of Iran's top anti-terror commander, Qasem Soleimani, on January 3 of this year — a move that prompted Iran to attack the United States Ain al-Assad airbase in Iraq, where the assassination had taken place.

Iran has also occasionally criticized the three European parties to the deal for their inaction in the face of the U.S. government's sanctions.

Taliban is part of future solution in Afghanistan, says Zarif

FM says Iran has neither "forgiven" nor "forgotten" the murder of Iranian diplomats by Taliban

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the Taliban is part of a future solution in Afghanistan, but not the whole solution, and there is a big difference between the two.

In an interview with TOLONews aired on Monday, Zarif said "the Taliban has committed many terrorist acts," and "we have not removed the Taliban [from our list of] terrorist groups in our laws."

"We follow exactly what is decided by the UN Security Council," Zarif reiterated, "but we do believe that the Taliban is a reality in the future."

He also said the U.S. should be a facilitator of the peace process in Afghanistan but should not simply make deals with the Taliban.

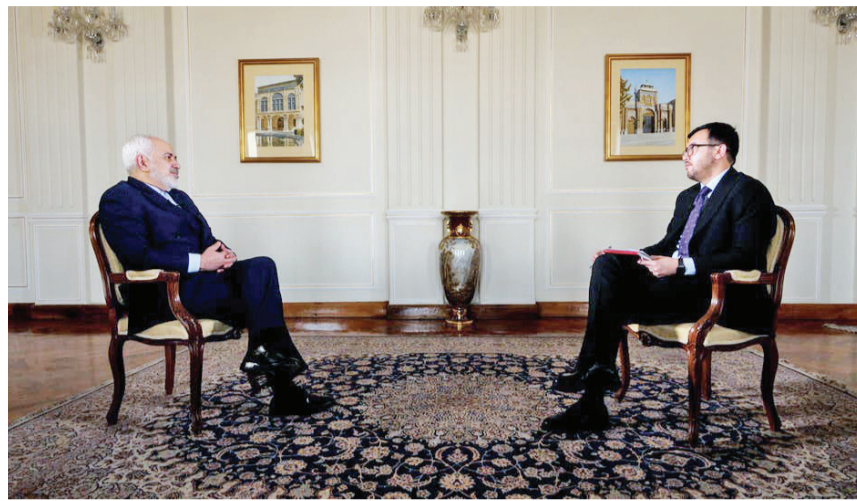
"We want a lawful and calculated withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan that should be based on the demands of the Afghan people and it should be a responsible security transition to the Afghan forces. We do not want it in the current form, where the Americans go and negotiate with the Taliban," Zarif said.

"We see Afghanistan as an independent country that has made many achievements in the areas of democracy, human rights, women's rights, and the rights of minorities over the past 19 years, since the Bonn conference in 2001."

The foreign minister said Iran sees the U.S. presence, whether it is in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in any other country in the region, as a force that disrupts the peace and security in the region, but he added that Iran is not making decisions on behalf of the governments of these countries.

He said Iran did not contribute to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan in 2001 but instead contributed to establishing an independent and democratic government in Afghanistan.

Zarif reiterated that Iran's policy toward



Afghanistan has never changed and it has always been to support the Afghan government and the Afghan people.

In response to a question about whether the U.S. presence helped Iran's national security, Zarif said he does not think so.

"The foreign [military] presence sparks some internal [national] feelings in every country that the radicals and extremists exploit to serve their terroristic purposes," Zarif mentioned.

He mentioned the Bonn Conference, Tokyo Conference, and the recent inauguration of the Khaf-Herat railway line as examples of Iran's cooperation with Afghanistan.

Zarif said that Iran has its own stance regarding the Afghan peace process.

"We do not exactly know what the U.S. position about Afghanistan is. If it is what is reflected in their talks with the Taliban and in their agreement with the Taliban, we certainly oppose it. We see that as a dangerous act. It is not in the interest of the Afghan people. It is just an internal decision [of internal value] to justify the U.S. withdrawal," Zarif said.

Zarif says U.S. has 'shifted sides' in Afghanistan

The Iranian foreign minister said the U.S. has "shifted sides," referring to the U.S.-Taliban agreement that sidelined the Afghan government but said Iran has never sat down with the group to decide the future of Afghanistan.

"We will surely work with the Taliban. But we will not sit with them to decide about the future of Afghanistan and sign an agreement," Zarif said.

Regarding the death of Iranian diplomats by the Taliban, Zarif said: "We have neither forgiven nor have we forgotten."

He also refuted claims that Iran supplies arms to the Taliban and treat the wounded Taliban. However, Zarif said, Iran has "serious talks" with the group.

"I personally met Mullah Baradar in Tehran, just as officials from other countries met the Taliban delegation either in Doha or in their respective capitals," he said.

He said Iran has taken the Afghan government on board when it had exchanges with

the Taliban, saying: "We shared demands raised by the Afghan government with the Taliban."

He said that Iran is not a mediator in the Afghan talks but it is a neighbor, and Afghanistan's future is significant for Iran.

"Afghanistan's future is important, and we want its future to be as I explained to you," he said.

Asked about whether the Taliban leaders have houses in Iran—in Mashhad and Zahedan—Zarif said he does not know. "Some people, who have relations with the Taliban, might move back and forth to Iran. But they certainly do not run any headquarters or bases in Iran," he added.

He said that in their statement on the start of the peace negotiations in Doha they supported the process but protested U.S. management. "I said, we do not accept the U.S. policy in this regard."

'Trump sacrificed Afghanistan for the sake of his election campaign'

He said the attendance of Mike Pompeo at the opening ceremony of the Afghan peace talks in Doha turned the event into an election campaign for President Trump and that "Trump sacrificed Afghanistan for the sake of his election campaign, and we will realize the very great harm he inflicted on Afghanistan in the future."

Regarding the Taliban's stance on Ja-fari jurisprudence, Zarif said the issue is concerning, but added that "Afghanistan's constitution recognizes all Islamic jurisprudences as official. If the Taliban treats Afghanistan's Shias as a minority group, like Christians or followers of Buddhism, it is in contradiction to Islamic values, based on the beliefs of all believers who believe in an Islamic government."

On resuming nuclear talks, Zarif said, "Iran does not need negotiations. You fulfill your commitments, we fulfill ours. We have clearly explained our stance."

Tehran strongly refutes Pompeo's anti-Iran accusations

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran has strongly rejected any attack on diplomatic mission, saying U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo aims to create tension through his irresponsible anti-Iran accusations.

"We strongly refute @SecPompeo's irresponsible anti-Iran accusations, which blatantly aim to create tension," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a Twitter post on Monday night.

According to the Iraqi military, eight rockets were fired on Sunday at Baghdad's diplomatic Green Zone, a heavily fortified area, with at least one Iraqi soldier injured when a rocket landed near an Iraqi security checkpoint.

The military said most of the rockets hit the Qadisiya residential neighborhood near the U.S. embassy, damaging several buildings and cars.

A spokesman for the Presidency of the Republic of Iraq issued a written statement describing the attack as a terrorist act that endangers the security and lives of innocent citizens and their property.

"It represents a targeting of the country's sovereignty and national efforts to preserve the state's prestige," the statement said. "Targeting diplomatic missions undermines Iraq's international reputation and its foreign relations."



Pompeo was quick to point the finger at Iran, accusing what he described as "Iran-backed militias" of attacking the embassy.

"Iran-backed militias once again flagrantly and recklessly attacked in Baghdad, wounding Iraqi civilians. The people of Iraq deserve to have these attackers prosecuted. These violent and corrupt criminals must cease their destabilizing actions," Pompeo said in a tweet.

Khatibzadeh said, however, that Iran rejects any attack

on diplomatic missions.

"The U.S. military presence is the source of instability in our region. No amount of spin can divert blame for its evils," he added.

Speaking at a press conference earlier on Monday, Khatibzadeh said, "Unfortunately, Iran's diplomatic places in Iraq had also been attacked. We had pursued a steady policy that targeting diplomatic missions and residential areas is unacceptable."

He added, "But the kind and timing of this attack, as well as the statement issued by the U.S. secretary of state, show that [the attack] is very dubious. Its timing is dubious. And more importantly, it seems that as if they had already prepared a statement to publish. And I strongly condemn the remarks of the U.S. regime's secretary of state, who is known for his lies and cheating, whether in his current capacity or in his previous capacity as the CIA director."

Khatibzadeh was making a reference to Pompeo's remarks during a lecture at Texas A&M University in April 2019, in which he said when he was the CIA director, "we lied, we cheated, we stole. It was like we had entire training courses...it reminds you of the glory of the American experiment."

Inclusive political solution best guarantee for lasting peace in Afghanistan: Zarif

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has reiterated that a comprehensive political solution is key to lasting peace in Afghanistan, underlying the need for a complete withdrawal of American forces from the war-ravaged country, Press TV reported.

Speaking at a meeting with the Afghan president's national security advisor, Hamdullah Mohib, in Tehran on Tuesday, Zarif said extending support to neighboring Af-



ghanistan is a fundamental policy of the Islamic Republic.

"We regard an inclusive political solution with the participation of all Afghan groups as the best guarantee for sustainable peace in the country," the top Iranian diplomat said.

For his part, Mohib commended Iran's support for the Afghan government and nation and called for the expansion of political, economic, cultural and security

cooperation with Tehran.

Pointing to the inauguration of the Khaf-Herat railroad, the Afghan official expressed hope that such connecting routes would strengthen regional cooperation.

Zarif and Mohib also discussed ways to enhance political, economic and security cooperation, including a meeting of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Commission and implementing joint projects especially in the field of water resources.

Zarif: E3 share blame with U.S. for 'irreparable harm' to Iranian people

1 → "3. E3 share the blame with US for irreparable harm to Iranians; 4. JCPOA timetable is inseparable from the accord. Renegotiation is out of question; 5. Our region's crises & arms are mainly imported from US/E3. But we collectively decided to exclude these issues."

He said, "6. 'Democracies' cannot ask Iran to violate parliamentary legislation; And last but not least: 7. ALL must return to effective JCPOA compliance. Iran will rapidly reverse remedial measures in response to US unlawful withdrawal—and blatant E3 breaches—when US/E3 perform their duties."

Zarif also stressed that the Iranian people must feel the effects of the lifting of sanctions.

Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, together with the European Union reached the JCPOA in 2015, under which Iran agreed to put certain restrictions on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of sanctions.

However, despite Iran's strict compliance with the deal, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the deal and imposed harsh economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic to force it to negotiate a new deal.

The three European parties to the deal devised a mechanism aimed at facilitating legitimate trade with Iran called INSTEX in order to circumvent the U.S. sanctions.

Iran, however, says INSTEX has proved ineffective

over the past two years.

"The system must prove its efficiency after two years," Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, said recently in reference to INSTEX.

Meanwhile, after Europe failed to protect Iran's interests under the JCPOA, Iran began to reduce its nuclear commitments on May 8, 2019 — exactly a year after President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the nuclear deal and imposed harsh sanctions on Iran.

Takht-Ravanchi said Iran's reduction of its nuclear commitments was a result of the other parties' violation of the deal and was within Iran's rights under the JCPOA.

Rouhani, Ghalibaf meet to weigh budget bill

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A joint meeting was held on Tuesday between President Hassan Rouhani and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf about the next year's budget bill.

"Mr. Ghalibaf proposed to Mr. Rouhani that they hold a joint meeting about the

budget bill," said Rahim Zare, a member of the special parliamentary committee tasked to study the budget, according to ISNA.

Meanwhile, President Rouhani said on Tuesday that his administration will take into consideration the Parliament's proposals in the national budget bill by keeping the

integrity of it.

"In the budget of 1400, according to the facts ahead, both the necessary resources for construction investments have been seen and the necessary credit has been considered to support the low-income classes," Rouhani said.



It's Iran, not the U.S. that should set preconditions

POLITICAL TEHRAN — During the recent high-level meeting of the parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it was underlined that the United States should not set any preconditions for its return to the 2015 nuclear deal. But some participants missed the point and forgot that the U.S. is not in a position to put forward preconditions for its return.

In an effort to discuss the latest developments surrounding the Iran nuclear deal, the foreign ministers of Iran, China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom, as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, held a virtual meeting on Monday during which they exchanged views on a range of issues related to the JCPOA such as preserving and fully implementing the deal, reiterating the need to continue the cooperation between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog, and more importantly the prospect of a U.S. return to the nuclear deal.

"Ministers agreed to continue dialogue to ensure full JCPOA implementation by all sides. Ministers acknowledged the prospect of a return of the US to the JCPOA and underlined their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort," the foreign ministers said in a joint statement after the meeting.

The meeting could not be held at a more sensitive time. On one hand, the Iranian Parliament has recently passed a law that, if implemented, would effectively set the stage for Iran to completely withdraw from the JCPOA. On the other hand, Europeans have dangerously failed to keep up their end of the bargain. However, they started to call for a new deal with Iran after Joe Biden won the U.S. presidential election in November.

These issues all were discussed in the Monday meeting which was reportedly tense and long. And after the meeting, each of the participants made remarks that were reflective of the atmosphere of the meeting. German Foreign Minister Mass said that Iran should avoid taking any tactical steps that would make it hard for Biden to reverse President Donald Trump's decision to quit the deal, according to Reuters.

"To make possible a rapprochement with the U.S. under Biden, there should be no further tactical manoeuvres of the kind we've seen too many of in the recent past," he told reporters. "This chance, this last window of opportunity, must not be wasted."

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab also echoed the same warning while putting



more emphasis on preventing Iran from implementing its nuclear law.

"Today I met with the JCPOA participants, where I made it absolutely clear Iran must not implement the recently announced expansions to its nuclear program. To do so would undermine the opportunities for progress we hope to see in 2021," Raab said in a tweet shortly after the JCPOA ministerial meeting.

Since November, the European signatories to the JCPOA — France, Germany and the UK (E3) — have been putting forward preconditions for the revival of the nuclear deal. While other parties to the deal — namely Russia and China as well as Iran — said that the U.S. should not set preconditions for its return to the deal, the Europeans hinted that expanding the JCPOA would be a precondition to the U.S. return to the JCPOA.

Mass has made it clear that a return to the previous deal would no longer be enough and that there is a need to reach what Mass called "nuclear agreement plus," which would include Iran's defensive missiles and its regional influence.

"A return to the previous agreement will not suffice anyway. There will have to be a kind of 'nuclear agreement plus,' which is also in our interest. We have clear expectations of Iran: no nuclear weapons, but also no ballistic missile program that threatens the entire region. Iran also needs to play a different role in the region," the chief German diplomat said in a recent interview with the German magazine, Der Spiegel. He added, "We need this agreement precisely because we distrust Iran. I have

already coordinated with my French and British counterparts on this."

However, the Europeans apparently agreed to drop their preconditions during the Monday meeting, according to the Guardian.

The British newspaper reported that the EU foreign ministers have agreed not to set fresh preconditions on a revival of the Iran nuclear deal, believing Tehran and Washington should be able to come back into full compliance with the agreement without at this stage needing to accept to extend or strengthen it.

"In what may prove the most significant development, it is understood that the three European powers are content for any discussions on extending and strengthening the deal to wait," the Guardian reported.

It also quoted one senior EU diplomat as saying that "everyone around the table agreed on the need to preserve the deal and to convince the U.S. that it is much better to go back to the deal the way it is and without preconditions and without saying yes we want to add something more."

The Europeans try to imply that the U.S. needs to be convinced into dropping its preconditions on the JCPOA, a move that is based on the presupposition that the U.S. is in a position to set preconditions in the first place. But this is not true. Because if one JCPOA party is to set preconditions, it is Iran — not the U.S.

The U.S. can no longer set preconditions for its return to the JCPOA after it illegally re-imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Iran and acted in bad faith by

falsely triggering the snapback mechanism of the JCPOA.

In fact, Iran has every right to set the lifting of all sanctions imposed by Trump as a precondition for the U.S. return to the JCPOA. Because if the U.S. returns to the JCPOA without lifting sanctions, this will only make things worse for Iran as the U.S. will once again enjoy the right to trigger the snapback process while keeping the sanctions pressure in place. If this happens, the U.S. remaining outside the JCPOA would be far less harmful to Iran.

The Europeans may be working to exactly make this happen. They might have well dropped their unlawful preconditions to imply that Iran also should not set preconditions for the U.S.'s return to the JCPOA. The three European signatories have not abandoned their call for addressing Iran's missile and its regional activity, according to Laurence Norman, a foreign policy correspondent for the Wall Street Journal.

Norman said in a Twitter thread that the sunset issue and the need to discuss further issues in the future were raised during the ministerial meeting. "But addressing broader issues is not a pre-condition to return to deal," the correspondent wrote.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who "was aggressive" and "overdid it a bit" during the Monday meeting according to Norman, reminded the Europeans of their failure to honor their obligations under the JCPOA.

In a Twitter thread after the meeting, Zarif implied that Iran will not fall into the trap of without-preconditions-return to the JCPOA. He said the "E3 share the blame with U.S. for irreparable harm to Iranians," because "Iran-EU 2014-2019 trade data proves E3/EU have gravely breached their JCPOA obligations."

In what appeared to be a precondition for the U.S. return, Zarif said Iran will reverse its nuclear measures only after the U.S. and the E3 perform their duties.

"ALL must return to effective JCPOA compliance. Iran will rapidly reverse remedial measures in response to US unlawful withdrawal—and blatant E3 breaches—when US/E3 perform their duties. The Iranian people MUST feel the effects of sanctions lifting," the Iranian foreign minister wrote.

Over the past few years, the E3 have refrained from implementing their obligations under the JCPOA under the pretext of the U.S. sanctions but now that the Biden administration is willing to change course on Iran, they started to make things more difficult by raising issues that are not part of the JCPOA.

U.S. should return to JCPOA without preconditions: Russia

S P O R T S TEHRAN — The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Monday that the United States should avoid setting preconditions for its return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"We believe that the U.S. return to the JCPOA should be without any preconditions. Our partners and we are ready for meaningful work in this area, and we are ready to help the Americans to step on the path of correction. This is in our shared interest," the ministry said in a statement, the Russian news agency TASS reported.

The statement came hours after the parties to the Iran nuclear deal — officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — held an informal virtual meeting on Monday at the level of foreign ministers to discuss the latest developments surrounding the 2015 nuclear deal.

The foreign ministers of Iran, China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom, as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, attended the December 21 meeting, which was agreed on last week during the meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission.

During the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov underlined that Moscow had taken note of Tehran's statements, which articulate that Iran is ready to return to full adherence to the JCPOA as soon as the U.S. does the same.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said, "We hope that not only the current members of the JCPOA but Washington as well, take note of this signal. Strict adherence to the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 by the American side is not a matter of choice, it is an obligation of any state stipulated in Article 25 of the UN Charter."



According to the Russian statement, all JCPOA parties have expressed their commitment to the obligations undertaken and the need to maintain them.

"The Russian side stressed that the recipe for the normalization of the JCPOA is within the plan itself: it's the path of steady adherence to the agreements by all states that developed and signed them," the statement added.

Russia also expressed readiness to do further work to ensure steady compliance with the Iran nuclear deal.

"The Russian side remains committed to further intensive work on steady adherence to the JCPOA in all its aspects based on the vetted balance of interests and the principle of reciprocity," the statement concluded.

The JCPOA was reached during the Obama administration in 2015 but President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from it on May 8, 2018, and imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Iran. Although the nuclear deal is still alive, it faces an uncertain future. Because President-elect Joe

Biden and his European allies hinted that the deal should be expanded to include other thorny issues.

The Monday ministerial meeting came at a time when new circumstances have arisen. Joe Biden won the presidential election in the U.S. in November and the Iranian parliament passed a nuclear law that, if implemented, would amount to Iran's withdrawal from the JCPOA.

During the meeting, the foreign ministers and the chief EU diplomat discussed a variety of issues related to the JCPOA such as preserving and fully implementing the deal, reiterating the need to continue the cooperation between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog, and more importantly the prospect of a U.S. return to the nuclear deal, according to a joint statement issued after the meeting.

"JCPOA participants re-emphasized their commitment to preserve the agreement and stressed their respective efforts in this regard. They discussed that full and effective implementation of the JCPOA by all remains crucial and discussed the need to address ongoing implementation challenges, including on nuclear non-proliferation and sanctions lifting commitments," the statement said.

The statement also said, "Ministers acknowledged the prospect of a return of the US to the JCPOA and underlined their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort."

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who attended the ministerial meeting, also called for U.S. unconditional return to the JCPOA. During the meeting, he made a 4-point proposal, according to Hua Chunying, spokeswoman for China's Foreign Ministry.

Chunying also said that the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA is the root cause of the tensions surrounding the Iran nuclear deal.

China makes new proposal to save JCPOA at high-level meeting

Wang offers a 4-point proposal to revive the nuclear deal and promote dialogue in the region

POLITICAL TEHRAN — China has made a new proposal to revive the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers while underlining that the United States' withdrawal from the nuclear deal is the root cause of problems.

The proposal was made on Monday during a ministerial meeting of the parties to the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Monday virtual meeting was attended by Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Hua Chunying, spokeswoman for China's Foreign Ministry, gave more details about the Chinese proposal while saying that the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA is the root cause of the tensions surrounding Iran.

"The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and its maximum pressure on Iran are the

root causes of the Iran nuclear issue deviating from the right direction. The US returning to the deal and resuming compliance is the right way for defusing the tensions," the spokeswoman said in a tweet on Tuesday.

In a Twitter thread, she said Wang made a 4-point proposal during the JCPOA ministerial meeting that include steps to revive the nuclear deal and promote dialogue in the region.

"Wang Yi made a 4-point proposal: 1. Make relentless efforts to uphold the JCPOA and firmly against the maximum pressure. 2. Push for an early and unconditional U.S. return to the JCPOA. The U.S. should lift sanctions on Iran and on third-party entities and individuals. 3. Resolve the compliance issues fairly and impartially. 4. Properly handle regional security issues. China has proposed to establish a multilateral dia-

logue platform in the [Persian] Gulf region to start an inclusive dialogue process to build consensus on regional security issues through equal consultation and incremental progress," the spokeswoman said.

The Chinese proposal to establish a regional forum was presented during a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to China in October. Following the visit, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement that "China proposes to build a regional multilateral dialogue platform with equal participation of all stakeholders."

The platform would "enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and explore political and diplomatic solutions to security issues in the Middle East [West Asia]," the statement added.

Wang said at the time that support for the Iranian nuclear deal would be a precondition

of entry to the regional forum. It seems that the chief Chinese diplomat has once again presented the October proposal during the Monday meeting.

The foreign ministers of Iran, China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy attended the December 21 meeting during which Russia and China called for U.S. return to the JCPOA without setting preconditions.

"We believe that the U.S. return to the JCPOA should be without any preconditions. Our partners and we are ready for meaningful work in this area, and we are ready to help the Americans to step on the path of correction. This is in our shared interest," Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement following the ministerial meeting.

SPORTS

Iranian spiker Sharifi joins Haliliye Belediyespor

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran international outside spiker Morteza Sharifi has joined Turkish volleyball club Haliliye Belediyespor.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency (AA), Haliliye Belediyespor president, Mehmet Tatli, said that Yosvany Hernandez has left the team and they have hired Sharifi as the Cuban's replacement.



Sharifi played in Bursa Büyükşehir Belediyespor last season but returned to his homeland to join Shahrdir Urmia.

"Morteza Sharifi is a young and quality player. He has previously played in Italy for two seasons and also is a member of Iran national team. We believe that he will contribute to our team," Tatli added.

Sepahan come from behind to beat Mes: IPL

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Sepahan football team came from one goal down to beat Mes Rafsanjan 2-1 in Matchday 8 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Tuesday.

Mohammad Ghazi gave the hosts a lead in the 7th minute in Rafsanjan's Shohada Stadium but Sajad Shabbazzadeh equalized the match before the break.

Mohammad Reza Hosseini scored the winner in the 76th minute.

"I think we played well in the second half. Honestly, I have to say Mes are a strong team however they have won promotion to the Iran Professional League," Sepahan coach Navidkia said in the post-match news conference.

On Wednesday, Paykan will host Saipa in Tehran and Shahr Khodro play Aluminum Arak in Mashhad.

On Thursday, Machine Sazi will host Naft Masjed Soleyman in Tabriz, Zob Ahan face IPL leaders Gol Gohar in Isfahan and Sanat Naft play Tractor in Abadan.

Gol Gohar sit top with 13 points, thanks to goal difference over Sepahan.

Poor infrastructure an obstacle to development in Iran football

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran football suffers from lack of infrastructure and it's a key obstacle to its development.

Persepolis lost to Ulsan Hyundai 2-1 in the final match of the AFC Champions League final after their players awarded two penalties to the Korean team. They made the blunders in front of the Video Referee System (VAR), since they have never experienced the technology.

Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran is among the five AFC Member Associations bidding to host the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

It has submitted its bid book on Dec. 18 but it remains to be seen whether AFC will choose the country for the prestigious event because Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also vying to host the event.

The Iranian football federation is heading by acting president for a year and, frankly, the country's football officials must work harder to make the situation better.

First of all, the federation needs to know its president as soon as possible and start to strengthen infrastructure. Iranian footballers playing in the domestic league are unaware of the international standards since they have never experienced them.

Iran football federation is in a race against time to overcome the shortcomings.

Bashar Resan voted ACL Player of the Week

Bashar Resan has been voted by the fans as the 2020 AFC Champions League Player of the Week after the Persepolis midfielder shone for the Tehran giant despite its 2-1 AFC Champions League final defeat to Ulsan Hyundai.

The ever-dependable Iraq international, who registered an impressive 92 percent passing accuracy from his 59 passes, had two shots on goal and created one chance, gained 43 percent of the fans' votes while he was rated number five by Stats Perform — the AFC's official data provider — with a score of 6.2.

Rated top by Stats Perform, was Resan's teammate in midfield, Milad Sarlak, with a 94 percent passing accuracy and eight of his 10 duels won among his most noteworthy numbers.

Sarlak, who head coach Yahya Golmohammadi selected ahead of fellow holding midfielder Kamal Kamyabini, also created one chance and earned a score of 7.3.

Next in the Stats Perform rankings was another Persepolis player Mehdi Abdi, who opened the scoring late in the first half with a low effort into the bottom right corner.

Abdi's goal was his third of the campaign after he also scored in the semi-final and the group stage. The striker had two attempts on goal across the 90 minutes and his performance was rated at 6.9.

(Source: the-afc)

Energy projects worth over \$131m inaugurated in 2 provinces

→ 1 A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), during which the minister made 31 trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).



Since the beginning of the second phase of the scheme in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), every week several energy projects have gone operational across the country.

Earlier this month during the 31st week of the A-B-Program, Ardakanian said: "In the second phase of the program 250 projects are going to be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021) of which so far 154 have gone operational."

The official noted that a total of 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) of investment will be made in the mentioned 250 projects.

Inflation rate rises 1.5%: SCI

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced that the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on December 20, which marks the end of the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar, stood at 30.5 percent, rising 1.5 percent from the figure for the twelve-month period ended on the last day of the eighth month.



Central Bank of Iran (CBI) in a statement in April announced that the annual inflation rate for the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021) is set to be 22 percent.

The statement published on the website of the CBI read, "Given the adopted policies and taken measures and also taking the country's macro-economic factors into account, the CBI believes that based on the realistic scenarios, the inflation rate in the current year will continue its downward trend."

Last year, CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati had said, "Our goal is curbing inflation rate and no estimation shows an inflation rate of over 20 percent for the next year".

TEDPIX gains 8,400 points on Tuesday

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 8,496 points to 1.444 million on Tuesday.

Over 11,289 billion securities worth 123,096 trillion rials (about \$2.93 billion) were traded at the TSE on Tuesday.



The first market's index gained 10,887 points, and the second market's index increased 702 points.

TEDPIX had stood at 1.413 million points at the end of the previous Iranian calendar week (Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Iran Khodro Group, Social Security Investment Company, Saipa Company, Tejarat Bank, Esfahan Oil Refining Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry Company were the most widely followed indices.

TEDPIX, which had been experiencing a surprisingly rising trend since the last days of the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), hit the record high of two million points on August 2, but then it began to drop, coming down to 1.2 million points.

After a period of correction, the index has been recently climbing.

Earlier this month, Ahmad Eshtiaqi, a market analyst, told IRNA that the index will continue its upward trend until the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021) and is expected to reach 1.8 million points by the end of the year.

Rail projects worth nearly \$66m put into operation

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami inaugurated 89 rail industry projects worth 2.77 trillion rials (about \$65.9 million) on Monday on the occasion of the Transport Week, IRNA reported.

Inaugurated in a virtual ceremony, the projects include 12 projects in the field of technology and infrastructure worth 2.21 trillion rials (about \$52.6 million), and 77 projects in the field of building and station services worth 565 billion rials (about \$13 million).

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by the Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) Saeed Rasouli.

Back in November, Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi said some 3956 kilometers of roads and railways worth 240 trillion rials (about \$5.7 billion) were going to be inaugurated throughout the country by the end of the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2022).

According to Khademi, over 3400 km of



Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami (L) and RAI Head Saeed Rasouli attend the inauguration ceremony of rail projects in Tehran on Monday.

new railways are under construction across the country, of which eight projects with a length of 1560 km are the Transport Ministry's priority.

The development of the railway sector is one of the macro policies of the Iranian government as it has been emphasized by the general policies of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021).

Advantages such as consuming less fuel and creating less pollution as well as high safety attaches priority to the railway when compared to some other transportation systems, and makes its development economically viable.

In this regard, in addition to infrastructure projects, RAI has also been implementing new programs for replacing old wagons and locomotives with new ones to reduce the age of the country's fleet.

As reported, some 521 units of various types of wagons and locomotives worth 13.5 trillion rials (about \$322.8 million) have been produced in the country and joined the national railway fleet since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19).

1,170 idle industrial units revived in Iran in 9 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) announced that 1,170 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20).

Asghar Mosaheb said that reviving the mentioned units has created jobs for 19,446 persons.

According to the official, there are over 46,000 small and medium-sized industrial units in Iran's industrial parks and zones, of them about 9,200 units are inactive.

Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry was initially planning to revive 1,500 idle units in the current year, but then it revised its programs to revive 2,000 units.

Bringing the mentioned 1,170 units back to the production cycle, the plan for reviving such units in the present year has been completed by 78 percent.

Iran's industrial parks play a significant role in making the country independent through boosting production, which is a major strategy of Iran to combat the U.S. sanctions.

In fact, strengthening domestic production to achieve self-reliance is the most important program that Iran is following up in its industry sector in a bid to nullify the effects of the U.S. sanctions on its economy.

In this due, the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20) has been named the year of "Surge in Production", and all governmental bodies, as well as the private sector, are moving in line with the materialization of this motto.

Regarding its significant role in the realization of the mentioned goal, the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry has already defined its main programs for supporting domestic production in the current year.

The ministry's seven main axes of the surge in production are being pursued under 40 major programs.

In this regard, the development of industrial parks and supporting the units located in these areas is one of the major programs underway by the ministry.

According to Mosaheb, preventing the inactive status of the industrial units is a major plan of ISIPO, while lack



of liquidity, problems in terms of supplying raw materials and machinery, and absence of market are the main reasons making the units inactive.

Iran welcomes Russian investment in oil sector: Zanganeh

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said his country welcomes the Russian companies' investment making in its oil sector, Shana reported.

The minister made the remarks after his meeting with the Russia Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak and Energy Minister Nikolai Shulginov in Moscow at Monday night.

Saying that the expansion of bilateral relations has been one of the major subject discussed during his meeting with the



Russian side, the minister reiterated, "We have a good cooperation with the Russian companies, and this cooperation is going to be increased in the fields of oil and gas and related equipment."

"We recognize Russia as a strategic partner, and this partnership is not something that can be changed in a warm or cold atmosphere in the international arena," Zanganeh said, adding, "If the Russian companies want to work in Iran, they must become partner with Iranian companies and make the most use of Ira-

nian capacities through negotiation with their Iranian counterparts to achieve the desired results."

The Iranian oil minister continued: "Iran's ambassador to Russia and his colleagues at the embassy were supposed to follow the agreements. If it were not for the coronavirus pandemic, they could have done it very simply, but in the current situation, we can establish communication by observing the health protocols."

"We welcome investment making in the required sections", he mentioned.

Over 3.7m tons of steel ingot exported in 8 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran has exported 3.787 million tons of steel ingot during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), according to the data released by the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

The released data show that the country's steel ingot export has fallen 13 percent in the eight-month period of this year, from that of the same period of time in the past year, which was 4.377 million tons.

While the export of this product has dropped in the mentioned time span, its production has increased eight percent.

Over 19 million tons of steel ingot was produced during the eight-month period of the present year.

Production of steel ingot in Iran is expected to surpass 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Darioush Esmaili has announced.

Saying that Iran is currently the world's 10th biggest steel producer, the official underscored that the country is planning to rise to 8th place by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (starts in March 2025).



He said the Industry Ministry has it on the agenda to increase the country's steel ingot production to 55 million tons by 2025, for which 160 million tons of iron ore is required annually.

"Given the country's 2.8-billion-ton iron ore reserves, we

need new explorations in this field, because when the annual steel ingot production capacity reaches 55 million tons, the current production levels of iron ore can only supply the industry for 12 to 13 years," the official stated.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value-added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since late September 2019.

Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry believes that the duty is going to encourage the production of more processed minerals such as pellets and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

Some 10 years ago Iran exported more than 20 million tons of unprocessed iron ore and the figure fell to a maximum of six million tons last year.

As the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has announced, Iran's annual steel ingot production is planned to increase 3.2 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

Agricultural exports from Kordestan Province increase 29%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The export of agricultural products from Kordestan Province, in west of Iran, has increased 29 percent in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a provincial official.

Shahriar Haniifi, the trade promotion director of the province's Agriculture Department, announced that 706,000 tons of agricultural products valued at \$258 million have been exported from the province in the eight-month period.

He said while the province's eight-month agricultural export has risen 1.9-fold in terms of weight, its value has increased 29 percent year on year.

The value of Iran's agricultural products export has risen 13 percent during the first eight months of the present year, compared

to the same period of time in the past year, according to an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi, the IRICA deputy head for technical and customs affairs, put the value of exported products at \$3.842 billion in the eight-month period of the present year.

The official said the weight of agricultural products exported in the mentioned period has risen 27 percent to stand at 5,450 million tons.

Orounaqi pointed out that pistachios, tomatoes, watermelons, tomato paste, pistachio kernels, and apples were the main export items in the mentioned period, noting that the total weight of these items was 1,518,000 tons worth \$1.312 billion.

According to the official, 1,417 million tons of the mentioned products worth one

billion had been exported during the first eight months of the previous year, that shows that this year's export has risen 30 percent in terms of value and seven percent in terms of weight.

Regarding the export of pistachio, the deputy minister said: "The export of this commodity this year was 109,000 tons worth \$675 million, which has increased by 82 percent in terms of value compared to last year."

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

According to the official, about 7.104 million tons of such products worth \$5.821 billion were exported to foreign destinations last year.



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

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

Yemen experiencing worst health catastrophe: Yemeni diplomat

“Yemen’s missiles are characterized by their accuracy and targeting vital strategic sites”

1 → A: Yemen, in line with the legitimate defense of itself, has developed its military options more and more until it reached the long-range ballistic missiles that destroyed sites in the heart of the Saudi capital Riyadh. Yemen confronts 6 years of the continuous Saudi-Emirati aggression which started under the title of what they call “Arab coalition”. Yemeni missiles carry several messages. Firstly, they are missiles that are characterized by their accuracy and targeting vital strategic sites.

There is also an ethical message in the style of targeting while the Saudi-led coalition targets all vital human facilities, specifically civilian infrastructure, Yemen is committed that the sites it targets must be military or vital sites that affect the capabilities of the Saudi army and do not affect civilians or their lives.

The Yemeni armed forces, including the army and the popular committees, could prove through missile strikes launched by drones, that there is no fortified location in Saudi Arabia or the Emirates or other allied countries, and therefore all targets are within the range of Yemeni missiles.

Of course, the Yemeni forces have always refuted all the allegations that these missiles were produced by other countries or were smuggled from one of the countries in the region. This foolish accusation comes to justify the failure of Saudi air defense to confront these missiles, which the Yemeni army and the popular committees have emphasized are Yemeni missiles and were developed in Yemen. This is clear in light of the blockade imposed on Yemen by air, land, and sea where Yemeni territorial waters are under their warships’ siege.

They have stopped shipment of oil derivatives and even chase the boats of simple fishermen, so it is not reasonable that smuggling takes place through the sea. On the other hand, the Yemeni airspace is closed. All airports are under siege, and even civil flights are forbidden. Also, inland, they control all land ports.

These allegations are not except for political goals to undermine the axis of resistance and the countries supporting the resistance.

They know with certainty that these missiles were developed in Yemen, and this is the result of the efforts of the Yemeni military experts.

■ What is the economic importance of Yemen and its ports for Saudi Arabia and the UAE?

A: As you know, Yemen enjoys an important economic and strategic position in the peninsula besides its access to the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Saudi Arabia sought not while ago to find a sea outlet in the Arabian Sea and to carve out part of the eastern regions in Yemen bordering the Sultanate of Oman, and today we see they are trying to apply their policies in one way or another. Also, they want to plunder the oil and gas wealth in the southern and western areas of Yemen, which have a very huge strategic stock, as well as controlling Yemeni ports.

As you know, Aden was one of the most important ports in the region before Dubai and before other ports because of its important strategic location, and therefore countries such



as the Emirates seek to control these ports and operate them under their administration and also by controlling the Yemeni islands and making them military and security bases for them in the Arabian Sea region.

Here I should point out Socotra, which is under the systematic occupation of the United Arab Emirates.

■ What is the Ansar Allah initiative to establish sustainable peace in Yemen?

A: Regarding the Ansar Allah peace initiative, the discussion about peace started at the beginning of the Saudi aggression. The peace that we talk about in Yemen is a peace based on respect for the will and decision of the Yemeni people, respect for the territories and sovereignty of the Republic of Yemen, and non-interference in its internal affairs in return for Yemen’s respect for its neighbors and the security of its neighbors.

No one can impose his political view on Yemen or eliminate the Palestinian cause from Yemenis’ minds and hearts, and Yemen cannot accept an end to the aggression in exchange for normalization of ties with Israel.

Yemen’s relationship with the axis of resistance and its adherence to the belief and principles of this axis is something that cannot be discussed because it is one of the Yemeni people’s principles and the only one who decides and says the last word is the Yemeni people.

The peace we call for is the “peace of the braves”, a peace based on respect for the will of the Yemeni people.

Regarding security and military issues, we

follow this basic principle. Undoubtedly, Yemen has no aggressive intentions against others, and all that Yemen has done and achieved has grown within the framework of legitimate self-defense operations and confronting this criminal aggression that targeted everything. Therefore, we emphasize peace in exchange for peace and security in exchange for security on the basis of mutual respect.

■ Do you think that Saudi Arabia will continue its aggression against Yemen after Donald Trump quits the White House?

A: Saudi Arabia will continue its aggression, and this matter is not related to the presidency of Trump or anyone else. We have not forgotten that the aggression was approved by Washington, while the administration there was under President Barack Obama, and the war continued during the era of Donald Trump.

I do not think that this course will change. And American policy is clear through its aggressive approaches in the region and it does not differ whether a Democratic or a Republican rules (the United States). There is a consensus among the American politicians that the aggression on Yemen serves America’s interest, and we know that this aggression is in fact an American plan, and what Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are doing is nothing but the implementation of the American policy in the region. The war will continue, and if the Americans wanted to stop the war, they would have stopped it from the first day.

■ How do you see the health and

economic conditions in Yemen in the light of the daily Saudi bombings?

A: With regard to the health, humanitarian and economic aspects, it must be pointed out that Yemen is experiencing the worst health catastrophe at the regional level for more than a hundred years ago, and epidemics and diseases such as Malaria and others have become rampant.

During the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, the level of humanitarian aid to Yemen has been almost negligible.

International and humanitarian organizations that work in this regard could not cover a quarter of the health needs of the Yemeni people, not to mention the impact of the airport blockade and the inability of the sick and the wounded to leave for treatment abroad in light of the shortage of facilities in hospitals.

Of course, this matter coincides with the crisis posed by the lack of oil derivatives and its impact on the health sector. The Saudi-led coalition deliberately detained ships and oil derivatives for more than two hundred days, and the quantity that is entering does not meet more than twenty percent of Yemen’s real need for petrol and diesel, and the number of vessels detained for oil derivatives has reached more than ten vessels so far, and this constitutes a very large economic burden in terms of the accumulated fines for the seizure of ships, as the lack of oil derivatives affects the industry, transport, and trade, and greatly and directly affects the health and humanitarian sector, as well as agriculture, and constitutes a crisis in the food sector. Consequently, the Saudi-led coalition uses economic and humanitarian weapons to bring Yemen to its knees and control its resources.

■ Do you see a role for Israel and America in supporting the Saudi-led coalition against Yemen?

A: Israel and America know that they have a fundamental role in this war. They have a basic plan against Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are nothing but tools to implement this plan. Israel has important goals in what is going on in the aggression against Yemen, since Yemen moves within the liberation line that it chose after the September 21 revolution, led by Mr. Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi.

Yemen, indeed, has changed radically and is going to be the main pillar in the axis of resistance. Yemen is today in its most important position, especially because it is surrounded by tyrannical regimes. The Arab states are tools of America to develop its hegemony over the region, therefore the battle of Yemen is a fateful battle for the axis of resistance, and the victory of Yemen is a victory for all this axis and a breakthrough towards major victories that will culminate in the liberation of Al-Quds and the end of the Zionist occupation.

That is why the Zionist regime feels a sense of danger from Yemen and its expansion to the rest of the (Persian) Gulf countries.

This is what they seek to thwart, but this revolution will continue with steadfastness, support, and sacrifices of the Yemeni nation until its goals are achieved and the aggression ended.

As you know, Aden was one of the most important ports in the region before Dubai and before other ports because of its important strategic location, and therefore countries such as the Emirates seek to control these ports and operate them under their administration and also by controlling the Yemeni islands and making them military and security bases for them in the Arabian Sea region.

The deep U.S. web of animosity towards Iran to continue?

By J. Michael Springmann

In my view, the Los Angeles Times article about whether or not the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action will be reinstated by the incoming Joe Biden Administration, shows the weasel-worded nature of the American news media, the American body politic, and the control that the apartheid entity of Israel has over the American government.

I am not optimistic at all about any changes in the present situation. I think Biden and the Democrats, who are beholden to Israel and the votes of Israel’s supporters in the United States, will not change their views, especially with all that Israeli money going to various Congressmen.

So, I believe not much will alter. The issue, of course, is sanctions, and whether or not the Americans will abolish them. The Los Angeles Times article seems to talk about a gradual, step by step operation. It will be a little bit of this versus a little bit of that, with the Iranians expected to do all the agreeing. The U.S. will emphasize controls on Iranian missiles, with Iran dropping its support for Hezbollah and other freedom fighters in Syria. The article went on about the deep web of animosity between the two countries.

Well, I am afraid that the deep web of animosity has been created by the United States of America with its overthrow of the duly elected government of Mohammad Mossadegh in

1953, and the subsequent installation of the repressive Shah.

And after the Shah was overthrown in 1979, the Americans decided to retaliate, and impose more sanctions and, as time went by, the sanctions increased. The Iranian government eventually agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which Donald Trump abolished, with the full support of the rest of the American government, particularly people like Charles Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, who always support Israel, no matter what.

So, I think that, in the future, there will be no modification of the present situation. There’s going to be plenty of talks. There’s going to be plenty of demands for the Iranians to take the first step, the second step, and the third step. But I don’t see the Americans dropping their sanctions against Iran or ending its inability to use the international banking system to buy medical equipment, medical treatment, and drugs and vaccines against this virus, which I believe came out of an American or Israeli laboratory or, maybe, both.

In my view, it’s going to be more of the same with a lot of huffing and puffing on the American part, insisting that Iran is not doing enough to justify going back to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as it was before Trump abolished it unilaterally. I don’t see any European countries bucking the United States and saying: “We don’t accept your sanctions, we’re going to trade with Iran, no matter what.”



Well, they permitted their companies to withdraw from Iran, and have not said a word about this and they keep talking about INSTEX and trading riyals for Euros and engaging in complicated banking transactions, an exchange of currencies. But that hasn’t happened, even though they’ve been talking about it for years.

In the end, unfortunately, things will not change and Israel will still control America’s policy towards Iran.

J. Michael Springmann is an American political commentator, author, and former U.S. diplomat in Saudi Arabia. He is based in Washington.

(Source: Press Tv)

Washington won’t leave West Asia: Russian expert

1 → But when it comes to Saudi Arabia, Mitrakhovich says “there could be problems, because the number of so-called ‘Saudi-sceptics’ in the State Department and the Pentagon may rise.”

Confirming that Iran is entitled to distrust the U.S. administration after Trump ditched the nuclear deal unilaterally, the Russian security and energy expert emphasizes that “Biden’s administration is

afraid to rival China directly — so it’s the question of might and capabilities, not really the question of trust.”

“The only way you can deal with a strong opponent — is to be strong,” according to Mitrakhovich.

Regarding the November 27 assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, he is of the opinion that “if Iran doesn’t respond in a sensitive way

(say, threaten Saudi tankers in the strait or threaten Israel with rockets) all other measures could be considered as just a rhetorical strike.”

Pointing to the U.S. record in waging war especially in West Asia, Mitrakhovich predicts that “America will not go out of the Middle East (West Asia), even the U.S. under the Biden presidency decides to return to the JCPOA temporarily.”

Over dozen Shia scholars kept in detention centers in Saudi Arabia

1 → The protests have been met with a heavy-handed crackdown, with regime forces increasing security measures across the province.

According to Press TV, over the past years, Riyadh has redefined its anti-terrorism laws to target activism.

In January 2016, Saudi authorities executed Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, who was an outspoken critic of the Riyadh regime. Nimr had been arrested in Qatif, Eastern Province, in 2012.

Russia summons ambassadors of Germany, Sweden and France over Navalny sanctions

Russia’s foreign ministry summoned the ambassadors of Germany, Sweden and France on Tuesday over European Union sanctions imposed on Moscow over the poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, the RIA news agency reported.

The European Union has imposed sanctions on top Russian officials close to President Vladimir Putin over Navalny’s poisoning.

Pakistan to UAE: Can’t recognise Israel until Palestine resolved

Pakistan says it has made it clear to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that Islamabad cannot recognize Israel until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved.

“I categorically presented Pakistan’s stance on Israel to the UAE’s foreign minister that we will not and cannot establish a relationship with Israel until a concrete and permanent solution to the Palestine issue is found,” Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told reporters in the central city of Multan.

Qureshi’s statement came days after his visit to the UAE, which was seen by many as crucial amid rumors that Islamabad had secretly sent a messenger to Israel.

According to al Jazeera, Islamabad denied the reports, which appeared mainly in the Israeli media.

Responding to questions regarding reports about alleged pressure from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Persian Gulf Arab states for recognition of Israel, Qureshi said he explained to his UAE counterpart the “depth of emotions and feelings Pakistanis have about Palestine and Kashmir”.

The UAE foreign minister, he contended, “fully understood our feelings” on the two issues.

Rebuffing reports about pressure on Islamabad to recognize Israel, he said, “Number one, there will be no pressure on us nor there is. Number two, we have to make decisions keeping Pakistan’s interests in view and not because of any pressure. We have a policy and we are still steadfast on it.”

He said Prime Minister Imran Khan had “time and again clarified there is no pressure on us in this regard”.

Khan made headlines last month when he revealed that Islamabad had been under pressure from some “friendly” nations to recognize Israel.

Pollution deaths in India rose to 1.67 million in 2019

Toxic air killed more people in India in 2019 than in 2017, The Lancet said in a report shared by the government on Tuesday, with 1.67 million deaths accounting for 18% of all fatalities.

India, whose cities top global pollution lists, faces a growing economic as well as human toll from bad air quality, which was linked to 1.24 million, or 12.5% of total deaths in the previous such study for 2017, Reuters reported.

The analysis found pollution led to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, respiratory infections, lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, neonatal disorders and cataracts.

WHO calls meeting on new virus variant

The World Health Organization (WHO) will convene a meeting of members to discuss strategies to counter a new, more infectious coronavirus strain that emerged in Britain, its European chief said on Tuesday.

He did not give a date for the meeting. “Limiting travel to contain spread is prudent until we have better info. Supply chains for essential goods & essential travel should remain possible,” WHO Regional Director Hans Kluge said on Twitter, urging increased preventive measures.

The Geneva-based body has cautioned against major alarm over the variant, saying it was a normal part of a pandemic’s evolution and praising Britain for detecting it.

In a statement on Tuesday, the WHO repeated that there was not yet enough information to determine whether the new variant could affect vaccine efficacy, saying researching was ongoing.

Resistance News

Palestinian teen killed following shooting operation in J’lem Old City

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — A Palestinian teenager on Monday evening was shot dead by Israeli police forces after he carried out a shooting operation near the Aqsa Mosque’s Asbat Gate in the Old City of Occupied Jerusalem.

Local sources identified the martyr as 17-year-old Mahmoud Omar Kamil from the West Bank town of Qabatya in Jenin.

Some Hebrew media claimed the young man was able to injure one police officer, but others said that the officer was lightly injured when he fell down during the chase.

According to news reports, the shooting in the Old City occurred at about 7 p.m. at a police guard post near the Aqsa Mosque.

The martyr approached a group of officers, took out a makeshift Carlo-style submachine gun and opened fire at them, but the firearm was not operating accurately and malfunctioned, forcing him to flee through the Old City streets.

Soon, many officers participated in an on-foot chase and some of them showered the teenager with volleys of bullets, killing him immediately. Consequently, the Israeli occupation police put their forces on high alert, closed the Old City’s entrances and gates and rounded up two young men from the Aqsa Mosque.

Eyewitnesses said that police officers savagely stormed the Aqsa Mosque following the shooting incident and kidnaped two young worshippers from the Dome of the Rock prayer hall after physically assaulting them.



German archaeologist Wolfram Kleiss, famed for intensive Iranian studies, dies at 90

➔1 Probably more than 1000 places of all periods were visited by him, surface finds were collected and plans were drawn. Most of these places were published in numerous articles in the "Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran".

His publications – more than three-hundred works – cover the vast topics of architecture and urbanism in Iran. Kleiss retired in 1995.



During 1971-1986, he was director of the institute's Tehran branch. He has directed plenty of accomplished archaeological explorations in Takht-e Soleyman, Masjid ("the mosque of") Soleyman, Bastam, and Bisotun.

In addition to numerous articles, Kleiss has published several books on Iranian architecture and the results of his excavations in the northwest and west of the country, including "History of the Architecture of Iran", "Bisotun, history, and history of research 1963-1967" and "Bastam/Rusa-i Uru.Tur".

Description of the Urartian and Islamic ruins. All of these books have been translated and published in Persian. Also, Kleiss co-authored "Caravanserais of Iran" with the late Dr. Mohammad Yousef Kiani. Kleiss has been one of the most prolific German archaeologists in recording sites and historical monuments of Iran.

The UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleyman ("Solomon's Throne"), an ancient sanctuary in northwest Iran, bears testimony to various eras of the nation's history. The site includes the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period (13th century) as well as a temple of the Sasanian period (6th and 7th centuries) dedicated to Anahita.

Bisotun is located along the ancient trade route linking the Iranian high plateau with Mesopotamia and features remains from the prehistoric times to the Median, Achaemenid, Sasanian, and Ilkhanid periods. UNESCO has it that Bisotun bears an outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing, reflecting ancient traditions in monumental bas-reliefs.

The historical town of Bastam embraces the holy shrine of Mohammad Ibn Jafar Sadegh (AS), Bayazid Bastami tomb, Bayazid Monastery, Bayazid Mosque, Eljaito Iwan, Ghazan Dome, Jame Mosque, Kashaneh Tower, and Shahrokhieh School, which were built in different eras from Seljuk era (1037-1194) to Qajar period (1789-1925).

Northern Iranian properties added to national heritage list

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Eleven aging structures and historical buildings in Mazandaran province have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced the inscription on Tuesday in a letter to the governor-general of the northern Iranian province.



Two villas, a mosque, two bridges, and a cultural center across the province are among the properties added to the prestigious list.

Babol's cotton factory, Gaduk railway tunnel, Sari's judicial building, and Elite village constitute other entrees to the list.

Stretched along the Caspian Sea and Alborz mountain range, Mazandaran is a popular destination for domestic holidaymakers, while it is home to more than 3500 villages and rural areas.

Having an opulent tourist circuit with 24 UNESCO World Heritage sites, of which the vast Hyrcanian Forest and Lut Desert are among the natural properties, Iran seeks to acquire a greater share of the global tourism industry by 2025.

Urmia University's campus to be turned into garden museum

HERITAGE TEHRAN – The Urmia University plans to turn its historical campus into a garden museum, president of the northwestern Iranian university has said.

"The university seeks to turn the six-ha campus and its natural landscape into a garden museum," CHTN quoted Rahim Hobbenaghi as saying on Tuesday.



"In the past, [the city of] Urmia was known as Baghshahr ("the city of gardens") due to its numerous gardens. One of the remaining gardens is the green space of Urmia University, which is located near the Shahr-Chai River," the official said.

Urmia, also spelled Orumiyeh, lies just west of Lake Urmia on a large fertile plain that yields grains, fruits, tobacco, and other crops. The population is mainly Azeri Turkish, with Kurdish, Assyrian Christian, and Armenian minorities. The remains of ancient settlements are scattered over the plain, as are traces of the ancient kingdom of Urartu.

Discover Iran's valley of the jinn!

TOURISM TEHRAN – Kal-e Jeni d e s k ("canyon of jinn") is still unexplored by many potential travelers and adventurers who may not even know such a wonderful attraction exists on Earth!

Most visitors slowly drive towards the canyon in Tabas, east-central Iran, and stop at all of the same viewpoints, taking some photos, but doing little else. With a landscape so vast, it seems like it would take a serious investment of time and effort to experience what it has to offer and get away from the crowds.

Located some 30 kilometers northward of Tabas, a bunch of palm trees and marches in a wide valley, mark the scenic start of the journey, however, romance mixes with horror as the trip continues.

Walking in the deep valley in around the middle of the way, you will see some holes in the walls. One may think that they are also the product of erosion in the first glance. But finding the courage to enter the bottom hole, which is some two meters above ground level, you will be amazed.

This is a vertical path to a group of chambers built by men some 8 meters above. The trace of ax can still be seen and felt. You have to climb these eight meters by placing your hands and feet on special steps devised on the wall to reach a hall. Here is another world; calm and relaxing. There are many rooms carved on both sides of



the hall.

Some historians say that the chambers go back to the Sassanid era and have been carved by the followers of Zoroastrianism to do religious seclusion, known as Cheleh.

Where the jinn comes from?

This name consists of two parts: Kal + Jinn. 'Kal' is referred to any valley which has been formed by a water stream in the long run. There are many reasons to attribute this 16-kilometer-long valley to jinns. First, there are many mysterious-looking arcs,

columns, and walls in the canyon which are made by erosion but local people could not find a better constructor than jinn for them.

The next reason is related to wind. When the wind sweeps through the valley, it makes strange sounds due to the structure of walls which can make you think that supernatural entities are living around. Also, pebbles will hit your face as you walk in the valley in windy weather; locals believed that jinns are throwing the pebbles to defend their territory.

Modest temperature amid barren desert

Setting aside the horrifying part, one can enjoy the fresh and modest air temperature in the middle of a desert. There is water flowing in the valley in most sections; the water originates from Azmighan rural district and joins the aquifers later in the path. The depth of water reaches some two meters in some areas and you find no way than swimming to continue your wonderful adventure.

The canyon takes the shape of V in some areas and U in others, and even sometimes just resembles ^ when you cannot even see the sky.

The site is also part of Tabas Geopark which is being studied to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Best time to visit

Although the region has its special beauties in every season, autumn is considered the best time for visiting Kal-e Jenni since the weather is mild and the sun will not burn your skin. There is normally little precipitation in the region but in springs, seasonal floods are waiting in ambush. It is better to fully review the weather forecast before starting the trip.

After all, it's better to start the journey in the morning and finish it before the sunset or have all the required camping equipment at your disposal.

Government pays \$270,000 in loans to support tourism businesses in Semnan

TOURISM TEHRAN – The Iranian government has paid 11.3 billion rials (about \$270,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in loans to the tourism businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic in the north-central Semnan province.

Paying such loans would prevent the closure of tourism-related units and handicrafts workshops, while it could create sustainable employment as well, deputy provincial tourism chief Mohammad Taherian said on Tuesday.

He also noted that the province's tourism industry, mostly its accommodation centers including hotels, apartment hotels, and eco-lodge units have taken a major hit from the virus outbreak.

Early December, provincial tourism chief Mehdi Jamal announced that the north-central province has suffered one trillion rials (about \$24 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in earnings from tourism over the past couple of months over the coronavirus outbreak.

In this situation, tourism businesses that are struggling with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic need more support, he said.

Currently, a government-provided supportive package, which includes low-interest loans, is being injected into the battered sector to assist tourism-jobs and businesses, the official added.

Government's care and support packages

In late October, deputy tourism chief Vali Teymouri announced that a new support package to pay loans to businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic has been approved.

Depending on the type and activity of the businesses, they could benefit from at least 160 million rials (\$3,800 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to nine billion rials

(\$214,000) of bank loans with a 12-percent interest rate, he said.

The loans will be allocated to tourist guides, travel agencies, tourism transport companies, tourism educational institutions, eco-lodges and traditional accommodations, hotels, apartment hotels, motels, and guesthouses as well as traditional accommodation centers, tourism complexes, and recreational centers, the official explained.

In September, Teymouri pointed to the 1.3 million tourism workers in the country, who are facing several issues due to the coronavirus crisis and said "This number, in addition to their households, includes a significant population that makes a living through tourism, who are needed to be considered in ministry's decisions."

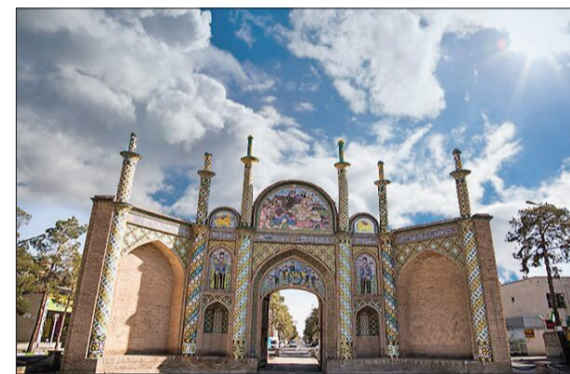
Back in August, Teymouri announced that the tourism ministry has approved a total budget of 4,920 billion rials (over \$117 million) to support corona-affected tourism businesses, covering as much as 36,000 people working in the tourism sector.

Tourism industry in critical situation

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan in October 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.

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

He also noted that 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."

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

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

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.

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

Iranian province seeks to export daggers, swords, filigrees to Oman

TOURISM TEHRAN – Zanjan province, which has long been a hectic hub of handicrafts in west-central Iran, seeks to export more handicrafts including daggers, swords, and filigrees to Oman.

Zanjan is planning to export handmade daggers, swords, and filigrees to Oman to escalate handicraft trade with the neighboring Sultanate, provincial tourism chief said on Tuesday.

Zanjan, which was designated as a "world city of filigree" in January, has excellent capacities in the production and export of handmade handicraft to neighboring countries, Amir Arjmand said.

To prepare the ground, handicrafts show-



rooms and workshops should be held in Oman to promote the handmade products as well as expand the cultural ties, the official added.

Back in April, the official announced that

handicrafts exports from Zanjan province reached some \$1.2 million during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20).

Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Azerbaijan, Oman, and some European countries were the main importers during the period, he explained.

"Zanjan's handicraft products are a source of income, employment, and development for the province, as well as a great opportunity to enter global markets," he added.

Knifemaking is one of the oldest handicrafts practiced for centuries in several Iranian cities, of which the northwestern city of Zanjan is the most famous.

Knives, swords, and daggers were produced and a lot of knife making workshops

were active in these cities. But due to their design, cut, diversity, and durability, Zanjan knives have been the most successful.

Filigree consists of curling, twisting, or plaiting fine, pliable metal threads and soldering them at their points of contact with each other with a metal groundwork.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

'Incredible' Hormozgan to develop tourism infrastructure

TOURISM TEHRAN – Hormozgan is set to develop its infrastructure for tourists and offer a variety of activities for them to undertake as the southern Iranian province seeks to become a major travel destination.

"Tourism infrastructures are planned to be created and boosted in three tourist areas across the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan," provincial tourism chief, Reza Borumand, said on Tuesday.

A budget of 8.3 billion rials (about \$198,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to the development of the tourism infrastructures in the tourist areas of Kuh-e Geno, Scattered Sultan Mohammad, and Bandzark, which are scattered across the province, Reza Borumand said on Tuesday.

The budget will be spent on constructing and improving welfare facilities for the tourists in these areas, the official explained.

Situated on the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf, Hormozgan is widely renowned for having incredible



culture and heritage, stunning sceneries, and above all, its warm and hospitable people.

It embraces arrays of islands among which Kish, Hormuz, Hengam, and Qeshm are the most popular ones and top tourist destinations in southernmost parts of the country.

Over the past couple of decades, the coral Kish Island has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop, and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever-growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks, and retail complexes.

Hormuz, which is mostly barren and hilly, is situated some eight kilometers off the coast on the Strait of Hormuz, which attracts many tourists by its colorful mountains, silver sand shores, and great local people.

Hengam Island has scenery rocky shores, serene sunset, and kind natives, which can attract travelers who enjoy a relaxing trip by spending time on this tranquil island.

Qeshm Island is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. The island also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves, and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a haven for nature-lovers.

Iran has entered a decade of earthquakes: expert

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran has entered a decade of earthquakes since the [Iranian calendar] year 1396 (March 2017- March 2018), as the Iranian plateau is shrinking by 30 millimeters per year, Mehdi Zare, professor of engineering seismology at the International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), said.

An earthquake of magnitude 6 or more is likely to occur in Iran next year, he stated. Zare went on to say that every year about 250 earthquakes of 4 to 4.9 magnitude, 25 earthquakes of 5 to 5.9 magnitude, two magnitudes 6 to 6.9 earthquakes happen in the country, adding, every 10 years two earthquakes of 7 to 7.9 magnitude occur.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes of the world occur in Iran but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world earthquakes during



the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes. This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Zare.

Tehran is also one of the most hazardous metropolises in the world in terms of the risk of different natural disasters, such as

earthquakes, floods, subsidence, drought, landslide, fire following an earthquake, etc. On the other hand, Tehran has an over 8,300,000-night time population with a mixture of old non-resistant structures as well as modern high-rise buildings that affect the vulnerability of this city.

The region has a history of major historical earthquakes, for instance, in 958 A.D. in Rey-Taleghan with an estimated earthquake magnitude (EEM) of 7.7; 15 June 1665 with EEM 6.5 that caused a landslide and created Taar lake in the vicinity of Damavand, actually a mountain promenade in Tehran province; 27 March 1830 EEM 7.1 in Shemiranat; 2 October 1930 EEM 5.0 in Ah-Mobarakabad; 20 January 1990 EEM 5.9 in Firuzkooh; and 9 May 2020 EEM 5.1 in Damavand, according to Zare.

Most recently, a 3.1 magnitude quake rocked Tehran province on September 19.

On May 27, an earthquake measuring 4.0 on the Richter scale occurred. On May 8, a 5.1 quake jolted the same area, killing two and injuring 33.

UK passengers entering Iran should be tested for COVID-19

SOCIETY TEHRAN — All passengers entering Iran from England should undergo diagnostic tests for the new COVID-19 strain, the head of the Ministry of Health's Public Relations and Information Center, has announced.

"Health Minister Saeed Namaki emphasized the careful examination of those who enter the country directly or indirectly from the UK, to perform testing, quarantine, care, and supervision at all points of entry, especially flights from European countries," Kianoush Jahanpour, wrote on his Twitter account on Tuesday.

Today, the minister of health in a letter to the minister of transport and urban development requested the suspension of flights from Iran to the European country.

Following the medicine sanctions and the IMF, protective equipment and coronavirus kits are targeting people's

thoughts today with the code of deception operation and the nickname of "buy vaccine", he also tweeted in another message criticizing the opposing media.

Given the new situation concerning the infections to the coronavirus in the UK, Iran announced a two-week suspension of the flights in order to prevent the transmission of the disease.

England on Saturday announced that a new set of coronavirus restrictions for London and parts of southeast England to combat an alarming surge in infections linked to a new strain.

The new variant "may be up to 70 percent more transmissible.

Many countries have temporarily banned flights from the UK after the new outbreak, including Ireland, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Turkey, and so on.



Microplastics revealed in the placentas of unborn babies

Microplastic particles have been revealed in the placentas of unborn babies for the first time, which the researchers said was "a matter of great concern".

The health impact of microplastics in the body is as yet unknown. But the scientists said they could carry chemicals that could cause long-term damage or upset the foetus's developing immune system. The particles are likely to have been consumed or breathed in by the mothers.

The particles were found in the placentas from four healthy women who had normal pregnancies and births. Microplastics were detected on both the foetal and maternal sides of the placenta and in the membrane within which the foetus develops.

A dozen plastic particles were found. Only about 4% of each placenta was analysed, however, suggesting the total number of microplastics was much higher. All the particles analysed were plastics that had been dyed blue, red, orange or pink and may have originally come from packaging, paints or cosmetics and personal care products.

The microplastics were mostly 10 microns in size (0.01mm), meaning they are



small enough to be carried in the bloodstream. The particles may have entered the babies' bodies, but the researchers were unable to assess this.

"It is like having a cyborg baby: no longer composed only of human cells, but a mixture of biological and inorganic entities," said Antonio Ragusa, director of obstetrics and gynaecology at the San Giovanni Calibita Fatebenefratelli hospital in Rome, and who led the study. "The mothers were shocked."

In the study, published in the journal Environment International, the researchers concluded: "Due to the crucial role of placenta in supporting the foetus's development and in acting as an interface with

the external environment, the presence of potentially harmful plastic particles is a matter of great concern. Further studies need to be performed to assess if the presence of microplastics may trigger immune responses or may lead to the release of toxic contaminants, resulting in harm."

The potential effects of microplastics on foetuses include reduced foetal growth, they said. The particles were not found in placentas from two other women in the study, which may be the result of different physiology, diet or lifestyle, the scientists said.

Microplastics pollution has reached every part of the planet, from the summit of Mount Everest to the deepest oceans. People are already known to consume the tiny particles via food and water, and to breathe them in.

Their effect in the body is unknown but scientists say there is an urgent need to assess the issue, particularly for infants.

In October, scientists revealed that babies fed formula milk in plastic bottles are swallowing millions of particles a day. In 2019, researchers reported the discovery of air

pollution particles on the foetal side of placentas, indicating that unborn babies are also exposed to the dirty air produced by motor traffic and fossil fuel burning.

The Italian researchers used a plastic-free protocol to deliver the babies in order to prevent any contamination of the placentas. Obstetricians and midwives used cotton gloves to assist the women in labour and only cotton towels were used in the delivery room.

Andrew Shennan, professor of obstetrics at King's College London, told the Daily Mail it was reassuring that the babies in the study had normal births but "it is obviously preferable not to have foreign bodies while the baby is developing".

Elizabeth Salter Green, at the chemicals charity Chem Trust, said: "Babies are being born pre-polluted. The study was very small but nevertheless flags a very worrying concern."

A separate recent study showed that nanoparticles of plastic inhaled by pregnant laboratory rats were detected in the liver, lungs, heart, kidney, and brain of their foetuses.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iranian-made HPV vaccine to be commercialized in months

Production of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (the virus that usually causes cervical cancer in women) is in the final stages of clinical trial and will be launched by the next few months, director of health technology development office of the Ministry of Health, has announced.

According to the plan, the product was expected to enter the domestic market by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), but sanctions caused problems in its manufacturing process, Hossein Vatanpour said, IRNA reported.

According to Ali Qanbari, head of cancer department at the Ministry of Health, every 3,000 to 4,000 women develop cervical cancer per 100,000, and as the Iranian population is aging, it is predicted that cervical cancer will grow among women over the next two decades.

Referring to HPV virus statistics, he said that 8 percent of adult women are infected with HPV and in the next 10 to 25 years the prevalence of the virus may be higher than expected.

واکسن ایرانی HPV به زودی وارد بازار می شود

تولید واکسن HPV (ویروسی که معمولاً موجب سرطان دهانه رحم در زنان می شود) در مراحل انتهایی کار آزمایشی بالینی (کلینیکال تریال) قرار دارد و اوایل سال آینده این محصول ایرانی وارد بازار می شود.

حسین وطن پور مدیرکل دفتر توسعه فناوری سلامت وزارت بهداشت در گفت و گو با ایرنا اظهار داشت: براساس برنامه ریزی انجام شده قرار بود این محصول تا پایان سال جاری، وارد بازار داخلی شود که تحریم مشکلاتی در روند کار تولید آن به وجود آورد.

به گفته علی قنبری رئیس اداره سرطان وزارت بهداشت، از هر ۱۰۰ هزار زن ۳ تا ۴ نفر به سرطان دهان رحم مبتلا می شوند و به دلیل اینکه جمعیت ایران رو به سالمندی می رود، پیش بینی می شود که در ۲ دهه آینده ابتلا به سرطان دهانه رحم در زنان ایرانی افزایش پیدا کند.

مطلق به آمار ابتلا به ویروس HPV اشاره کرد و گفت: بر اساس آمارها ۸ درصد خانم های بالغ به عفونت ناشی از ویروس HPV مبتلا هستند و در ۱۰ تا ۲۵ سال آینده ممکن است شیوع این ویروس بیش از پیش بینی ها افزایش پیدا کند.

Autumn precipitation at normal level in Iran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Precipitation in Iran amounted to 66 millimeters during autumn, 10 percent higher than the long-term average and 14 percent lower than the autumn last [Iranian calendar] year.

However, it can be said that the rainfall in the country met the normal average, because in general, if the precipitation is 10 percent lower or more than the long mean, the amount is on the normal range, ISNA quoted Ahad Vazifeh, head of the national center for drought and crisis management, as saying on Tuesday.



According to forecasts, precipitation in winter tends to be less than the normal average, he stated.

Referring to the share of rainfall in different provinces, he noted that 12 provinces faced low rainfall in autumn, of which rainfall in Hormozgan provinces, Sistan-Baluchestan, Golestan, and North Khorasan are reported to be severely below normal levels.

According to him, precipitation in the provinces of East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Khorasan Razavi, Zanjan, Semnan, Kermanshah, Gilan, and Mazandaran was less than normal during the fall.

Since the beginning of the current crop year (September 23), rainfall has increased in the provinces of Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-Ahmad, Khuzestan, Isfahan, and Qom by 63, 52, 42, and 79 percent, Vazifeh said pointing to the provinces with the highest rainfall.

Precipitation in Tehran province was 29 percent higher than normal during the autumn, he stated, noting, also, the temperature of the country was normal in the aforementioned period.

It is very likely that the amount of rainfall in the east, south-east, and southwest of the country will be less than normal and drought will prevail in these areas over the winter, he said.

All long-term meteorological forecasts are uncertain in different countries of the world. Hence, there may be a percentage difference between the predictions and the reality, he concluded.

Martyr Soleimani plan aims to contain COVID-19

Some 6,730 home care teams have been formed in the country with the participation of 18,000 forces, who have taken care of 41,000 people at home, and rapid result tests have been performed on 7,500 suspects, he explained.

Since December 15, with the participation of 61,000 people, more than 10,000 monitoring teams have been formed. About 782,000 visits and monitoring of various places and centers have been done to warn those who do not observe the health protocols, Tabrizi stated.

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Basij, and the Red Crescent Society; through which volunteer forces provide information, testing, diagnosis, referral of suspects to health centers, and offer services by visiting people's homes.

1.4m families in Tehran undergo screening

Started on November 21, over 1.4 million out of 3 million families in Tehran have undergone screening, Issa Malimir, executive secretary of martyr Soleimani plan in Tehran stated.

Stating that the Basij and medical forces screen the people daily in the framework of this plan, he said that in Tehran alone, 21,000 Basijis are offering services every day, which is an unprecedented record.

The plan is designed in three phases of care, support, and monitoring. In the support phase, in order to cut the transmission chain and reduce the contact of infected people, through which, 40 centers in Tehran receive COVID-19 patients who cannot quarantine at home, he explained.

The decrease in the number of coronas in the country indicates the success of the implementation of the plan. Of course, part of this decrease in statistics was related to the restrictions, he highlighted.

The plan also caused the coordination among top, middle, and operational managers to reach above 90 percent, which is so impressive, he concluded.

Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on January 3.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 89)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

indefinite	تکّره	author	مؤلف
writing	نگارش رسمی	Iranian female name	مهدیس
index	نمایه	Iranian female name	مهسا
mark, grade	نمره	engineer	مهندس
tape	نوار	Iranian male name	مهیار
turn	تَوَیْتُ / owt	square	میدان
ninty	نَوَدَه	desk; table	میز
nineteen	نَوزده [نَوَزده]	Iranian female name	مینو
beverage	نوشابه	minibus	مینی بوس
thousand	هزار	to write	نوشتن - نویس
	(جمع: هزاران [هزارون], هزارها)	writing	نوشتاریسم, رسمی
eight	هَشْت [هَشْت]	writing	نوشتاری رسمی
eighty	هَشْتاد	Armenian female student	نوشیک
eight hundred	هَشْتَصَد [هَشْتَصَد]	no	نه
seven	هَفت [هَفت]	nine	نه / ni
seventy	هفتاد	nine hundred	نهصد
seven hundred	هفتصد [هَفْتَصَد]	half	نیم
week	هفته		و
seventeen	هفده [هَبودَه]	and	و / va, ol
also, too	هم	unit	واحد
a city in Iran	همدان	counting unit	واحد شمارش
mobile	همراه [همراهه]	vocabulary	واژگان, جمع واژه
the sign	همزه	word	واژه (جمع, واژه ها, واژگان)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79

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



GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter paradise.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Cinéma Vérité unveils nominees

A R T TEHRAN — The 14th edition of Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major international festival for documentary films, announced the nominees in its various categories on Tuesday.

Due to the pandemic, the festival was organized entirely online while the international section of the festival is non-competitive this year.



This photo shows a poster for the 14th Cinéma Vérité festival.

Six films are competing in the best feature-length documentary section.

"Get Filled in the Blanks" by Atieh Zare' Aranadi is one of the films. It is about Melina, a girl who lives with her grandparents after her parents breakup because they have started new lives with new marriages and neither can get custody of her. However, Melina tries to make some arrangements to live with her mother.

Mehdi Ganji's "Tattooed Dreams" has also received a nomination. In this documentary, several teenage boys from across Iran are competing to attend a training course at a Spanish football club. Their parents expect the children to save their families with the money they will make through football, but the trip to Spain has its own challenges.

Another nominee in this section is "The Silhouettes", a co-production between Iran and the Philippines directed by Afsaneh Salari.

The documentary is about Taqi, a man who was born to an Afghan migrant family in Iran. He decides to move back to the country of his parents, but unexpected challenges await there for him.

"18,000 ft" is about Ahmad, a Syrian man who tries to deliver a cargo of humanitarian relief supplies to his family and people in Al-Fu'ah, a town in northern Syria which is under siege from the ISIS terrorists.

"Ayaqchi" by Mohammad-Hassan Damazan is another nominee. The film is about a rural family that is faced with obstacles in trying to purchase a home in the city so that their child can study in a city school.

"Their Dawn" co-directed by Mohsen Jahani and Hashem Masudi is also among the nominees. The film is about Jahani, a nurse in a hospital for burn patients, who volunteers to work in an ICU for people with COVID-19 after the outbreak of the disease.

The nominees for the best mid-length sections are "Kal Fatemeh" by Mehdi Zamanpur Kiasari, "On Soil" by Mohsen Khanjehani, "Fe-Alef" by Farshad Ektesabi, "Return" by Farhad Varahram and "Houbara" by Fathollah Amiri and Nima Askari.

"Beranaza" by Ali Asadi and Rasul Davari, "Forever Night, Forever Day" by Yasser Kheir, "About Father, About Death" by Farhad Behbahani, "Vayo" Panahbarkhoda Rezai, "Parizad" by Mehdi Imani Shahmiri, "Grandmother" by Babak Taheri have been nominated in the short documentary competition.

The festival will announce winners during a special online ceremony this evening.

Twenty-five films on COVID-19 were also screened in a special category at the Cinéma Vérité festival.

Among the films are "It's Not Permanent" by Majid Faraji, "Jihad Narrative" by Milad Amini-Movahhed, "Mask Symphony" by Masud Babai and "Night Shift" by Mohammad-Hossein Hemmatinejad and Mohsen Fazili.

The lineup also includes "Mobile Doctor" by Mehdi Zaghian, "Special Operation" by Hojjatollah Edalatpanah, "Quarantine" by Payam Mirtabrizian, "Section 19" by Masud Dehnavi, "The First Wave" by Zahra Moslemipur and "When Kindness Becomes a Pandemic" by Alireza Baghsheni.

Artists criticize Iran's multinational sharing of UNESCO Persian painting file

➔ Following the registration of Persian painting on the UNESCO list, Afghanistan has officially complained to the organization about not having a share in the file.

"It should not be forgotten that Iran's borders in the past went beyond what we see today. In the past, even Herat was one of Iran's cities that was located in the Great Khorasan region, but now, Afghanistan arrogates the art to itself," Aqamiri said.

Mohammad-Ali Rajabi, a member of the Iranian Academy of Arts who also teaches art at several academic centers, has said that Iran has agreed to share the art file with other countries under pressure from some countries such as the United States.

"By their monopolistic policies, countries such as the U.S. intend to stop Iran's progress, taking all that Iran possesses, and attribute it to other countries," he said.

"Although the MCHTH officials sought to register Persian painting for Iran at UNESCO, the pressure caused the item to be inscribed as a multinational file," he lamented.

"A large number of Persian painters and artists in other fields were taken captive by the Ottomans during Sultan Selim's raid on



An artwork from the 10th National Biennial of Persian Painting held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in January 2017.

Iran, and Persian painting flourished in the Ottoman Empire at that time with the help of these Iranian artists," he said.

"A present, Turkey has no art that can be named negargari so it is fundamentally nonsense to share the UNESCO status on

the art of negargari with Turkey and these other countries," Rajabi noted.

A Persian painting is a two-dimensional artwork that involves the design and creation of small paintings on a book illustration or a separate work of art intended to be kept in an album of such works called a muraqqa.

The techniques are broadly comparable to the Western and Byzantine traditions of miniatures in illuminated manuscripts.

Although there is an equally well-established Persian tradition of wall-painting, the survival rate and state of preservation of miniatures is better, and miniatures are a much better known form of Persian painting in the West. Many of the most important examples of this art form are in Western, or Turkish museums.

Persian painting became a significant Iranian genre during the 13th century, receiving Chinese influence after the Mongol conquests, and the highest point in the tradition was reached in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Persian painting was the dominant influence on other Islamic miniature traditions, principally the Ottoman miniature in Turkey, and the Mughal miniature in the Indian subcontinent.

Art Bureau launches song campaign in honor of Commander Qassem Soleimani

The music center of the bureau, Milad Erfanpur has said. "The main goal of the campaign is to promote the album 'My Hero' and also help the singing style of ballads find its way among the citizens, and thereby discover talented youths," he added.

Soleimani, the chief of IRGC Quds Force, was assassinated during a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3. After his martyrdom, Soleimani has become the subject of several films, theatrical productions and festival programs.

In February, only one month after his martyrdom, the courtyard of Tehran's City Theater Complex hosted some open-air performances named "The Soldier" on the military life of the commander.

The play, which was performed in three acts, was written by Amir-Hossein Shafiei and directed by Pejman Shahverdi.

The first act of the play was dedicated to Soleimani's leadership of Iranian forces during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

His role in the victory of the Lebanese in the Israeli 33-Day War of 2006 was spotlighted in the second stage.

The last act of the drama focused on the key role he played in the defeat of the ISIS terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

"The Soldier" was a joint production of Iran's General Office for Dramatic Arts and the Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense Theater Association.

Recently, young filmmaker Behnam Bahadori announced that he has made a short documentary named "Green Zone" about the good conduct of Commander Qassem Soleimani toward children.

The Children's Department of the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization is the producer of the film.

The 38th Fajr Film Festival announced it would honor films on resistance and jihad with an award named after Soleimani.

In addition, the 16th Resistance International Film Festival, which will be held during December, will review films on Commander Qassem Soleimani's role in awakening people in the region and around the world in a special section named "Prominent Resistance Martyr Section".

The Art and Cultural Organization of the Tehran Municipality will also be releasing "The Soldier", a symphonic poem composed in memory of the Commander on his first martyrdom anniversary.

Arman Mehran is the composer of the symphony, which is in its post-production stage.



A poster of Commander Qassem Soleimani.

A R T TEHRAN — The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization has launched a campaign named "My Hero" to remember Commander Qassem Soleimani, a few days before the first anniversary of his assassination.

The campaign takes its name from an album the bureau released last week featuring nine ballads composed by Alireza Qazveh, Reza Yazdani, Ali-Mohammad Moaddab, Mohammad-Hossein Nemati, Faezeh Zarafshan, Milad Habibi, Mohammadreza Shafiei and Omid Mahdinejad.

"Interested applicants are asked to choose, recite and record the ballads and submit them to the bureau. They can also produce short music videos or even perform and record the ballads in open areas," the director of

Paintings by Afshin Pirhashemi to make Dubai gallery's first 2021 showcase

A R T TEHRAN — The Ayyam Gallery in Dubai will begin 2021 with an online exhibition of paintings by Iranian artist Afshin Pirhashemi, the gallery has announced in a post on its Instagram account.

Through his oeuvre, Pirhashemi examines the complexities of life in modern-day Iran through photorealistic portraits that often bleed at their edges into expressionist compositions, becoming dramatic tableaux.

Fascinated by the role of women in contemporary Iranian society and their relationships to the world around them, the artist taps into the psychosocial dimensions of contemporary Iran.

Pirhashemi explores manifestations of



This combination photo shows artist Afshin Pirhashemi and his artworks.

power as they appear or are negotiated through gendered bodies and spaces.

While his brushwork remains idealistic, his prudently harmonized portrayals of his flamboyant characters, paired with strong symbolic titles, Pirhashemi takes the viewer on a guided tour through a narrative and painterly language he has created for himself.

Born in 1974 in Urmia, Pirhashemi lives and works in Tehran. Pirhashemi studied at the Rome Art Academy and completed his artistic training at Iran's Azad University.

His works are housed in public and private collections throughout West Asia and Europe, and he is the recipient of awards from the 6th Tehran International Art Biennial in 2003 and the 2004 Beijing Art Biennial Award. Ayyam Gallery also hosted a Pirhashemi

solo exhibition in 2017. The London branch of the gallery had earlier organized a solo exhibit for the artist in 2014.

He has showcased his artworks in solo exhibitions at

Homa Gallery, Seyhun Gallery and Barg Gallery in Tehran.

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organization that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists.

With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship program that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Fajr art festival to acknowledge Iranians honored at global events

A R T TEHRAN — The Fajr Festival of Visual Arts has called on Iranian artists who have been honored at international events to participate in the festival.

"Interested artists who have received international awards at the biennials and festivals in 2019 and 2020 are invited to attend the new section named 'World Stars of Iranian Art'," director of the festival Ali-Ashraf Sandoqabadi said in a press release on Tuesday.

"We have been in contact with several associations which have so far introduced 300 artists to the secretariat. However, others who are interested can get in touch with the secretariat of the festival," he added.

He mentioned that the submitted works will be published in the book of the festival.

He said that the organizers will also honor the veteran artists, adding, "Last year, the honoring ceremony was planned but was postponed due to the spread of coronavirus, but this year we have plans to hold the honoring ceremony."

He also said that an exhibition of lithographs by curator



A poster for the 13th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts.

Ahmad Vakili will also be held on the margins of the festival. "The winners of the Visual Arts Festival for Youth of the past three years as well as the winners of the two previous

editions of the Fajr Festival of Visual Arts, the fifth Iranian International Calligraphy Biennial, and the 11th National Biennial of Contemporary Iranian Ceramic Art can submit their works to the secretariat. Their works will also be judged for the final awards," he concluded.

The Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran will be hosting the 13th edition of the festival this year.

The festival is organized every year by the Visual Arts Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

A selection of 900 works went on view in different sections of painting, photo, sculpture, calligraphy, miniature, illustration, cartoon, graphic design and new media in the previous edition of the festival.

Almost 450 works by about 340 artists competed for the Golden Tooba at the festival.

"Chaharsu-e Honar", a new section dedicated to displaying works from galleries in Tehran and other cities, also offered artworks for sale, while Charkhaneh, the other section of the festival, was dedicated to discussing the art of photography in other provinces.

Philippe Grimbert's "A Secret" revealed in Persian

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Persian translation of French author Philippe Grimbert's second novel "A Secret" has recently been published by Mahi Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Mahasti Bahreini.

Often children invent a family, another origin, or other parents. The narrator of the book has invented a brother for himself; an older brother, more handsome, stronger, whom he evokes in front of vacation buddies, strangers, and others who cannot contradict the

imaginary brother's existence.

This tyrannical ghost haunted his younger years. Surrounded by silence, bowing under family guilt, the narrator feels the need to recount a past, which he imagines as smooth and peaceful until Louise, an old friend of his parents and confidante of the child, comes clean and suddenly reveals a heavy, overwhelming secret to him.

This invented brother, Simon, really existed, and he died in a concentration camp with his mother, Hannah, Maxime's first wife. Suddenly, all the weight of this dark and hidden past emerges and

upsets the representation of the world that the child had forged.

He then imagines Maxime and Tania, his parents, living their culpable love. As for the dead without burial, the heroes of a tragedy that had been hidden for too long, they will provoke a real turnaround, it is this revealed secret that gives birth to the narrator's vocation as a psychoanalyst.

Here the work of writing has become a work of mourning, and the author, while revealing his most intimate life experiences, shows readers how the

one who has suffered from silence can become the one who will deliver others from it.

This book was crowned in 2004 by the Goncourt Prize for high school students and in 2005 by the Literary Grand Prix for readers.

He demonstrates with as much rigor as emotion how the powers of the novel can go a long way in the exploration of the secrets at work in people's lives.

Grimbert's debut novel "Paul's Little Dress" (La Petite Robe de Paul) was released by Grasset in September 2001.